

DISCOVER
FELLOWSHIP

A LOOK AT THE DISTINCTIVES OF

Fellowship Bible Church of Batesville

© Fellowship Bible Church of Batesville
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The History of Fellowship

“Where exactly did this church come from?”

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.”

Ephesians 2:19-20 NIV

In Depth: The History of Fellowship Bible Church of Batesville

The history of Fellowship Bible Church stretches back almost 2,000 years to the founding of the Church. Like those before us, we are grounded in Christ, standing on the foundation of the Apostles, the Church Fathers, and the Reformers. Who we are today is largely shaped by those who have gone before us. Our ancient heritage is that of all Christians.

In 1972, the Fellowship Bible Church “movement” began. Dr. Gene Getz, along with several families, launched the first Fellowship Bible Church in North Dallas. A few years later in 1977, Fellowship Bible Church Little Rock was started. To this day, it has been a thriving church and now has about 5,000 people in attendance. There are now well over 200 Fellowship Bible Churches worldwide.

In April 2000, a small group of people in Batesville began to feel God’s calling in the following areas:

- 1) That there was an interdenominational need not being met in the community;
- 2) That a different type of church leadership and structure might meet this need; and
- 3) That a contemporary informal style of worship might reach unchurched people.

In order to explore these callings more fully and to try to determine God's will through prayer and worship, the group began to meet together. Sunday morning worship was held in the home of Gary and Stacey Griffith. Wednesday evening prayer and discussion was held in the home of Mike and Susan Middlecamp. On May 24, 2000, "Fellowship Bible Church of Batesville" (FBCB) was agreed upon as the name for the new work.

Seeking guidance, the church was led to Community Bible Church (CBC) in Russellville. CBC, along with Foothills Fellowship Bible Church (FFBC) in Heber Springs, provided guidance to our new church and a steering team was assembled from the three churches. Our church elected three men to be part of the steering team: Mike Middlecamp, Danny James and Gary Griffith. These men, together with men from CBC and FFBC, met together for the first steering team meeting on Sept. 13, 2000, at FFBC in Heber Springs.

The steering team agreed that FBCB would worship three Sundays per month in the Griffith home. By the end of 2000, FBCB had outgrown the Griffith home. On Jan. 7, 2001, the worship service was moved to the Citizens Bank Annex. On May 6, 2001, the first elders of the church, Mike Middlecamp, Danny James and Gary Griffith, were ordained. In February 2003 a storefront in downtown Batesville was bought, renovated, and used for the worship service. On Feb. 11, 2007, with the downtown Batesville location no longer providing sufficient space, Sunday worship was moved to the Batesville Middle School.

In 2008, FBCB purchased the historic Landers Theater on Main Street. After extensive repairs and renovation, the church began meeting for worship at the Landers on June 20, 2010.

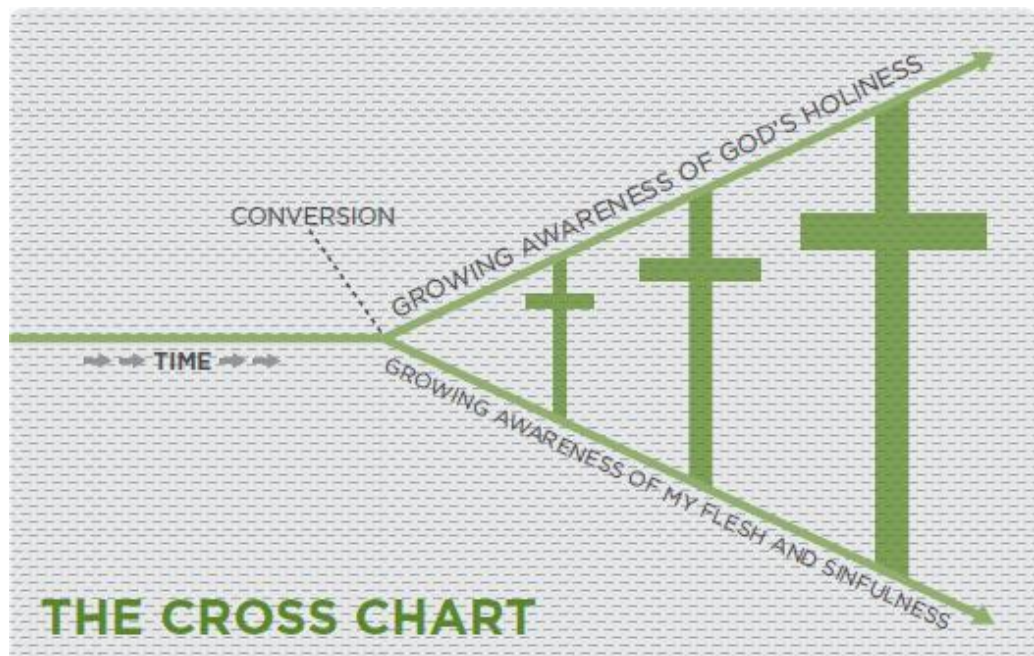
Throughout this time, God has continued to use Fellowship Bible Church as a life-changing instrument in the community of Batesville. The Lord continues to bless this congregation in both faith and number and we are grateful for His love and guidance.

But it all starts and ends with the Gospel

Fellowship Bible Church exists to lead people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and then to equip them to love God and serve him in our church, in our community and in the world. The basis of our fellowship is dependent upon each member having entered into a vibrant relationship with Christ.

Romans 6:23 (NIV)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.



“What is the Gospel?”

SIN

God made us to worship him. He was our Father, living and walking among us, giving us everything we needed to live, and yet we chose to sin against him—a cosmic act of treason punishable by death ([Gen 2:17](#); [Rm 6:23](#)). As a result, we were separated from God, and we try to be our own gods, declaring what is right and wrong, and living life by our own standards. Sin is not simply breaking God’s law, but rejecting God as our Lord, serving/worshiping other things instead of Him.

JESUS LIVED

Despite our pride and ignorance, Jesus, who created the world and is God, lovingly came into human history as a man ([John 1:14](#); [Rm 1:3](#); [8:3](#); [Gal 4:4](#); [Philemon 2:7, 8](#); [Col 1:22](#); [1 Tim 3:16](#); [Heb 2:14](#); [1 Jn 4:2](#); [2 Jn 7](#)). He was born of a virgin, ([Mt 1:23](#); [Is 7:14](#)) and he lived a life without sin. Because of his great love for us, he went to the cross and took on the punishment of death that we justly deserved ([Rm 3:25](#); [1 Jn 2:2](#)). Before his death and after his resurrection, he preached that the good news of God’s kingdom, love, promise, forgiveness, and acceptance was fulfilled in him, in both his life and death.

JESUS DIED

Our first parents in the garden substituted themselves for God, and, at the cross, Jesus reversed that substitution, substituting himself for sinners ([1 Cor 15:45–48](#)). When Jesus went to the cross, he willingly took upon himself the sin of those who would come to trust in him. That means that if you trust him as your Lord and Savior, Jesus went to the cross and took upon himself all your sin—past, present, and future—and that he died in your place, paying your debt to God and purchasing your salvation ([Rm 10:9](#); [Mt 10:32](#); [Lk 12:8](#)).

JESUS EXCHANGED

Jesus not only took the punishment for your sin, but he also lived a perfectly righteous life. When you trust in Christ, your sins are forgiven and you are declared righteous by God, the ultimate judge. The righteousness of Christ is attributed to you as if you lived a perfect life. [2 Cor 5:21](#) tells us this: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” We are the villains, turned into the adopted, children of God.

Martin Luther called this the Great Exchange: “Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, just as I am your sin. You have taken upon yourself what is mine and have given me what is yours. You have taken upon yourself what you were not and have given to me what I was not.” The famous Christian hymn, “Rock of Ages,” says the same thing: “Be of sin the double cure. Save from wrath and make me pure.”

JESUS ROSE

Jesus' dead body was then laid in a tomb, where he lay buried for three days. On the third day, Jesus rose in victory over Satan, sin, death, demons, and hell ([Lk 42:1](#); [Mt 28:1-8](#); [Mk 16:1-8](#); [Jn 20:1](#)). After spending some more time eating, drinking, laughing, and teaching with his closest friends (Jn 20-21), he ascended into heaven, and today is alive and well ([Acts 1:6-11](#)).

He is seated on a throne, and he is ruling and reigning over all nations, cultures, philosophies, races, and periods of time. Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead, and those who trust in him will enjoy eternity in his kingdom of heaven forever. Those who do not will suffer apart from him in the conscious, eternal torments of hell (Rev 21). He is King of kings and he is Lord of lords ([Rev 17:14](#)), and he is ruling and reigning over all people, commanding everyone everywhere to repent. And now he commissions us with the Holy Spirit to be missionaries, telling this amazingly good news that there is a God who passionately, lovingly, continually, and relentlessly pursues us.

JESUS, NOT RELIGION

Religion centers on what you do for God. It gives you a list of rules that you must follow if you want to be saved. The Gospel doesn't tell us how to save ourselves. It announces what Jesus has done to save us. The Gospel is not about what you need to do. It is about what Jesus has done. If you confuse the Gospel with good advice rather than good news, then you don't have Christianity anymore. You have religion.

Ironically, religion often is the very thing that keeps a person from coming to Jesus. Jesus critiqued the religious people of his day most harshly. As Tim Keller says, there are two ways to be your own savior and Lord: one is by breaking all of the rules, the other is by keeping all of the rules (religion). Religion says God must bless me because I obey him, but Christianity says I obey God because he has blessed me. To become a Christian involves not only repenting of your bad deeds, but also of your damnable good works: works done out of pride in order to earn your salvation and put God in your debt.

THE GOSPEL IS THE CENTRAL STORY OF THE BIBLE

A gospel-centered reading of the Bible sees it not as a record of good people earning God's blessing, but bad people receiving God's blessing because Jesus earned it for them. At the center of the Bible is the good news that God treated Jesus the way we deserved and he daily treats us the way Jesus deserved. The center of the Bible is Jesus. He is the hero. We are the villains, turned into the adopted, children of God.

A QUICK COMPARISON OF RELIGION AND THE GOSPEL *

RELIGION	GOSPEL
"I obey; therefore I'm accepted."	"I'm accepted; therefore I obey."
Motivation is based on fear and insecurity.	Motivation is based on grateful joy.
I obey God in order to get <i>things</i> from God.	I obey God to get <i>God</i> – to delight and resemble him.
When circumstances in my life go wrong, I am angry at God or myself, since I believe, like Job's friends, that anyone who is good deserves a comfortable life.	When circumstances in my life go wrong, I struggle, but I know that while God may allow this for my training, he will exercise his fatherly love within my trial.
When I am criticized, I am furious or devastated because it is essential for me to think of myself as a "good person." Threats to that self-image must be destroyed at all cost.	When I am criticized, I struggle, but it is not essential for me to think of myself as a "good person." My identity is not built on my performance but on God's love for me in Christ.
My prayer life consists largely of petition and only heats up when I am in need. My main purpose in prayer is to control circumstances.	My prayer life consists of generous stretches of praise and adoration. My main purpose is fellowship with him.
My self-view swings between two poles. If and when I am living up to my standards, I feel confident, but then I am prone to be proud and unsympathetic to people who fail. If and when I am not living up to standards, I feel humble but not confident – I feel like a failure.	My self-view is not based on a view of myself as a moral achiever. In Christ I am at once sinful and lost, yet accepted. I am so bad he <i>had</i> to die for me, and so loved he was <i>glad</i> to die for me. This leads me to deeper humility as well as deeper confidence, without either sniveling or swaggering.
My identity and self-worth are based mainly on how hard I work or how moral I am, so I <i>must</i> look down on those I perceive as lazy or immoral. I disdain and feel superior to others.	My identity and self-worth are centered on the One who died for his enemies, including me. Only by sheer grace am I what I am, so I <i>can't</i> look down on those who believe or practice something different from me. I have no inner need to win arguments.
Since I look to my pedigree or performance for my spiritual acceptability, my heart manufactures idols – talents, moral record, personal discipline, social status, etc. I absolutely <i>have</i> to have them, so they are my main hope, meaning, happiness, security, and significance, whatever I say I believe about God.	I have many good things in my life – family, work, etc., but none of these good things are <i>ultimate</i> things to me. I don't absolutely <i>have</i> to have them, so there is a limit to how much anxiety, bitterness, and despair they can inflict on me when they are threatened and lost.

*Keller, Timothy, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*, 2012, p65

Our Vision & Values

“Where are we going?”

We want to be a vibrant, Gospel-centered church that is filled with such joy and life that our witness overflows into our community, bringing spiritual, social, and cultural renewal.

Values of Fellowship Bible Church of Batesville

The Gospel is the Center: At Fellowship we believe that the single most important message for people to hear is the Gospel. The Gospel tells us that we are weaker and more sinful than we ever before believed, but, in Christ, we are more loved and accepted than we ever dared to hope. This message is at the center of everything we do here at Fellowship. From sermons to small groups to the music we sing in worship, the Gospel message is communicated repeatedly. We believe that when the Gospel hits home to our hearts, it changes everything!

**For a deeper discussion on the Gospel, refer to Appendix A*

We do not exist for ourselves: Someone once said that the church is the only institution that exists for the good of those who are not yet members. We believe this wholeheartedly at Fellowship. We aim to be a church that makes a difference in our city, reaching beyond the four walls of our building — bringing the gospel in word and deed to our community. We are constantly asking: If we were gone tomorrow, would the people in our city miss us? We are always looking for creative ways to be a faithful presence of Christ in our community.

Community is non-negotiable: One of the clearest ways the Gospel displays its power is by drawing together a diverse group of people into a vibrant Christ-centered community. To foster this, we have built community groups into our DNA. We encourage our members not only to attend on Sundays, but also to connect during the week in smaller groups for discussion, encouragement, and prayer. We believe that engaging with one another in vital Christ-centered relationships brings spiritual growth.

**For a deeper discussion on small groups, refer to Appendix B*

Worship should be deep and wide: We are always trying to strike a balance between the head and the heart in our worship services. We believe that worship should be intellectually engaging with a strong teaching element (our teachings always focus on a biblical text). We also believe that heart knowledge and application of Biblical principles should be the aim of the doctrine we preach. In addition, our services blend both ancient and modern elements. We do not want to be stuck in the past, nor do we want to ignore our rich traditions. We strive to bring the old traditions together with a modern, contemporary service.

**For a deeper discussion on worship, refer to Appendix C*

God cares about culture: We believe that God is a God of beauty, imagination, and creativity. He created the world and calls us to use our gifts to create things of beauty and imagination in our everyday lives. At Fellowship we see value in supporting the arts and culture in the city of Batesville. We renovated an historic theater because we believe that God is glorified when we make things beautiful. We support the arts through our Gallery Imago and encourage our members to glorify God in the way they engage in their everyday secular work.

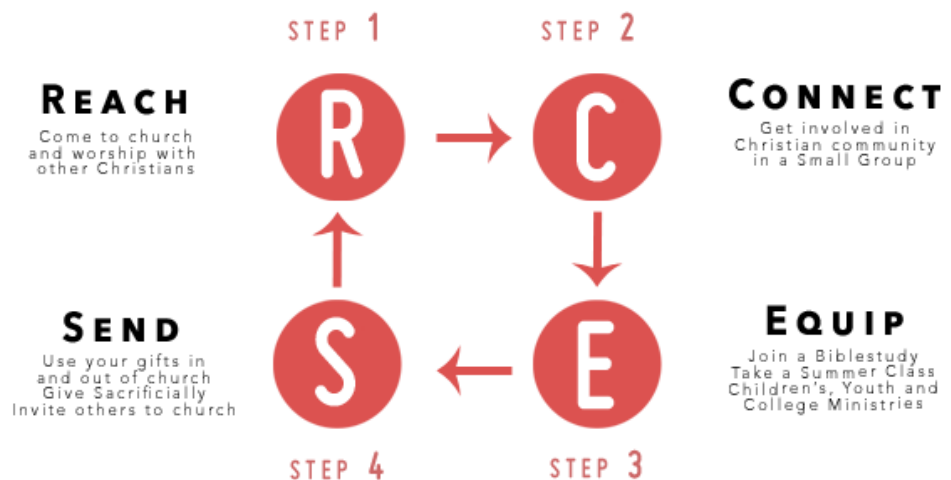
**For a deeper discussion on the arts and culture, refer to Appendix D*

Our Strategy & Mission

“How will we get there?”

A clearly defined mission is one of the most powerful methods an organization has to create and maintain unity. A mission statement is a declaration that attempts to capture in words what one feels in passion. For Fellowship Bible Church of Batesville, our mission statement embodies not only our purpose for existing; it also describes the kind of atmosphere we seek to create. We believe that we can sum up what God has called us to do in four key words:

Reach Connect Equip Send



Reach

Building bridges of influence to our community

- We use our location and building to build bridges into our community.
- On Sundays we anticipate unbelievers/seekers/outsideers to be among us. We therefore avoid “insider speak.” We avoid Christian-ese and explain all concepts so that a person without any prior knowledge of Christianity will understand.
- We understand that we do not exist for ourselves so we are always thinking of events and service opportunities that will attract and invite unbelievers and un-churched folks into our community.
- We encourage our members to bring friends. We place a high value on friendship evangelism.
- We avoid focusing on issues that distract unbelievers from the gospel (i.e. political platforms, style of dress, etc.). We want to eliminate all barriers that might keep a person from hearing and believing the gospel.

Connect

Growing relationships with God and one another

- One of our main convictions is that spiritual growth is impossible outside of authentic, vital, Christian community. Therefore community groups are part of the DNA of our church.
- We have streamlined our weekly church schedule so that nothing competes with community groups. We do not do a Wednesday night service for example.
- We encourage all members to be involved a community group if at all possible (we realize there are life stage situations, or health issues that might limit a member’s involvement).
- We offer quarterly opportunities for newcomers to get connected to a community group. We work to make sure that each person gets into a group that suits their needs.
- In addition to community groups we have monthly connecting events designed to help newcomers meet other people in our church.
- We encourage our members to aggressively welcome newcomers. Inside the Sunday service we have a time where we stand up and great each other. This is a strategic moment to look around for new faces in order to great them. Outside the service, many of our members have been known to invite new folks over for dinner or lunch after church as a gesture of welcome. We want to reach out to others the same way that Jesus reached out to us.

Equip

Handing out tools for the spiritual life

- We recognize that according to Ephesians 4, the pastor is not the minister of the church. The pastor's job is to equip the saints for the work of ministry. In other words, every member of our church is a minister. The pastor's role is to equip the ministers so that they minister effectively.
- We have a decentralized ministry structure so that ministry happens without being bogged down by bureaucracy. We want to facilitate ministry in a way that each person in the church feels free use his/her unique gifts to edify the church.
- We periodically offer ministry fairs to help our members get connected to a ministry in the church that suits their gifts.
- We occasionally offer classes that focus on particular areas of the Christian life.

Send

Sending and becoming launchers to the rest of the world

- Scripture tells us that we are the "light of the world." This means that we are not to isolate ourselves, but to be engaged in the world around us.
- We support several overseas missionaries, church plants, and local social justice agencies.
- We encourage our members to engage with non-believers through word (evangelizing, speaking the gospel, inviting friends to church to hear the gospel), deed (serving the poor and other works of service in our community), and culture (being good citizens wherever God has put them, doing their secular work to God's glory, see Jeremiah 29).

Our Beliefs & Doctrine

“What things do we hold together?”

One of the early church fathers once wisely said, *“In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, love.”* At Fellowship Bible Church of Batesville, we believe that proper doctrine is crucial to building a vibrant and unified body. We must agree on the essentials.

However, we also realize that we must allow for diversity in the non-essentials. We want to stay focused as much as possible on that which unites us rather than focusing on that which has the potential to divide us.

The Bible

*2 Timothy 3:16-17
2 Peter 1:20-21
Hebrews 4:12*

We believe that the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments are verbally inspired of God, error-free in the original writings and the supreme authority of faith and practice for the believer in Jesus Christ. We further believe in the historical-grammatical interpretation of Scripture. By this, we mean that we seek to use grammar, literature, history, and culture to unlock and understand the meaning the original human writer intended for the original readers. We hold that meaning to be the correct understanding of any particular passage.

God

*Deuteronomy 6:4
Genesis 1:1
John 1:1-3*

We believe in one true and living God, who is the creator of all things. One in essence, He is infinitely perfect and eternally exists in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Though each person of the Godhead possesses the same nature, each functions differently in respect to God’s dealings with man.

God the Father

*Matthew 6:9
John 5:19-24
Ephesians 1:3-6*

The first person of the Trinity orders and directs all things according to His own purpose, pleasure and grace. He created the universe apart from any pre-existing materials and without any means other than His Word. He has decreed all things that come to pass for His own Glory. He graciously

Hebrews 1:1-3
Hebrews 11:3
John 1:1-4

involves Himself in the affairs of men, hears and answers prayer, and saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ.

God the Son

John 1:14-18
1 Corinthians 15
Hebrews 2:17-18
Romans 3:24-26
Revelation 20:11-15
Colossians 2:9

Jesus Christ is both the eternal Son of God and the virgin-born Son of Man. Fully God and fully man, He surrendered nothing of His deity during His earthly life. He led a sinless life and He satisfied the Father's justice concerning sin through His death. We believe in His bodily resurrection, His physical ascension, and His visible imminent return to this earth to establish His earthly Kingdom.

God the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 12
Ephesians 2:10
John 3:1-8
John 15:16; 16:4-15
Ephesians 1:13-14
Galatians 5:16-26

The third person of the Trinity executes the will of God in our world. It is the Holy Spirit who applies the salvation Jesus Christ secured through his death on the cross. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers the church to live a lifestyle pleasing to God. He endows each local church with special gifts that equip believers to accomplish distinct ministries, planned beforehand by God the Father.

Human Nature

Genesis 1:26-27
Genesis 2:7; 3:3-4
Romans 1:18-24
Romans 3:10-23
Romans 5:12
Ephesians 2:1-3

We believe that people were directly created in the image of God to enjoy His fellowship and to fulfill His will on this earth. Humanity fell into sin by a voluntary act of personal disobedience to the will of God. Consequently through this one act of disobedience, all people are spiritually dead. All are subject to the certainty of both physical and spiritual death apart from Jesus Christ. The fall of humanity was a once-for-all historical fact. Its spiritually deadening effect spread to each person, who is then born with a sinful nature and sins habitually in thought, word and deed.

Satan

2 Corinthians 11:14,15
Revelation 12:7-9
Ezekiel 28:11-19
Zachariah 3:1-2
1 Peter 5:8
Luke 10:18
Revelation 12:17
Revelation 20:10

We acknowledge the existence of the devil, Satan. Although he was created by God, he rebelled against God and is now the archenemy of God and all of His creation, especially man. Cast down to earth, he seeks to lead the whole world astray. Satan and his demons can masquerade as angels of light and deceive many. However, the day will come when he and those he has deceived will be cast into the lake of fire and eternally punished.

Salvation

John 1:12; 3:16
John 5:24; 14:6
Titus 3:4-7
Acts 4:12
Romans 3:21-26
1 Corinthians 15:1-4
Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-9
Hebrews 10:10-12
1 John 5:11-13
Galatians 3:26

We believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins as the only sufficient sacrifice. All who believe in Him are declared justified by the Father on the grounds of Jesus' death and resurrection. All who receive the Lord Jesus Christ by grace through faith have been regenerated and baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. They are thereby the children of God forever and members in the one true church. This salvation results in righteous living and good works as the believer submits his behavior to the Word of God and the direction of the Holy Spirit.

The Church*Hebrews 10:24-25**Acts 2:41-47; 4:1-16**1 Corinthians 12:14**Matthew 16:13-28**Matthew 28:18-20**Ephesians 2:19-24*

We believe that all those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit belong to the one true church, the body of Christ. Believers are directed by Scripture to associate in local churches, which are the only visible representation of Christ's invisible church. The local church is autonomous in its relationship and selects its own members to the Biblical offices of Elder and Deacon. The Lord's supper and baptism are the two ordinances of the church, instituted by Christ as symbolic acts of faith and obedience. The church glorifies God by leading people to Christ, disciplining them to maturity, and sending them out to make disciples of all the nations.

The Future*Matthew 24:36**1 Thessalonians 4:15-16**John 14:1-3**Acts 2:9-11**Titus 2:13**II Timothy 4:8*

We believe that the next great event of human history is the imminent, personal return of Jesus Christ. This is the BLESSED HOPE for which all those who love Jesus Christ yearn. The exact time of Christ's return remains a mystery, known only to the Father Himself. We believe that Christ's return could happen at any time and is as certain as His first coming.

The ordinances of the church are a vital part of the worship and life of Fellowship Bible Church of Batesville. The word “ordinance” signifies that Christ instituted Baptism and the Lord’s Supper as symbolic acts of faith and obedience.

The Ordinances:

Baptism

I Corinthians 15:1-4
Matthew 10:32
Romans 6:3-7, 10-11

Fellowship Bible Church of Batesville upholds baptism as a sacred injunction of the Scriptures. It is an essential first step demonstrating a new order has come. By baptism we reveal that a coup has taken place in the secret recesses of our souls. The government of self has been overthrown; a new authority now reigns and rules—Christ, the living Lord!

Every believer serious in his or her faith should be serious about baptism. Baptism pictures Christ’s death and resurrection and serves public notice to the world of one’s death to sin and new life in Christ. Our practice of baptism is immersion. It was clearly the practice of the early church and followed the Jewish tradition of baptizing new proselytes. Baptism is a perfect expression of our salvation and a vibrant symbol of how it was accomplished.

The Ordinances:

The Lord’s Supper

Matthew 26:26-30
Mark 14:12-26
Luke 22:7-20
I Corinthians 11:24-25
Psalm 24:3-4
I Corinthians 11:17-34

The Lord’s Supper, or Communion, is the second ordinance we practice at Fellowship Bible Church of Batesville. The meaning of the Lord’s Supper is primarily summed up in the command of Christ: “This do in remembrance of Me.” It is first and foremost a memorial of Christ and His redemptive death. Second, it is an expression of our fellowship with one another. We do not believe that the “elements” actually become the body and blood of Christ (physically or spiritually) or that they themselves impart any benefit to the partaker. However, the act of taking communion may strengthen our walk with Christ and fortify our faith.

We practice “open communion.” The Lord’s Supper is open to all who know Jesus Christ personally as their Lord and Savior and are seeking to live a pure life. We share the Lord’s Supper in the Sunday Worship service on a regular basis. We also highly encourage its celebration in our *Community Groups*.

Our doctrinal convictions are a part of the backbone for our fellowship. They determine our understanding of God and how he is at work in the world. At Fellowship Bible Church we hold such convictions to be non-negotiable. We also hold certain doctrinal positions based upon our understanding of Scripture and the world we live in. These positions are not intended to promote separatism, but rather, to facilitate unity. Due to the potentially divisive nature of these issues, we feel it is necessary to take a position on some of the current issues being debated in the church and our nation today.

A Brief Statement on the Gifts of Tongues and Healing:

Without question, the Charismatic and Pentecostal movements of the last century were used by God to bring many into his kingdom and to challenge many into a deeper relationship with Christ. This trend has continued with the advent of the “Third Wave” of signs and wonders, as popularized by the Vineyard movement. While having positive aspects, these movements have tended to polarize believers in one direction or another and have often resulted in church splits. To promote unity at Fellowship Bible Church, we feel it is necessary to take a position on these issues.

Our understanding of Scripture and Church history leads us to the conclusion that Fellowship Bible Church is not committed to emphasize or practice the sign gifts popularized in these movements. We believe that there is no Scriptural warrant for seeing speaking in tongues or signs and wonders as a central focus of the church’s ministry. We also believe that the era of biblical revelation has ceased, and that prophetic extra-biblical revelation that claims equality with Scripture is contrary to Scripture.

At the same time, we do not seek to deny or suppress the supernatural work of God to heal, to give guidance, or to give restoration. God is not limited in the manner in which He chooses to work—apart from actions that go against his character or nature. We affirm that God does indeed miraculously intervene in the affairs of His people as He sees fit and we rejoice in whatever form that takes.

A Brief Statement on Family and Gender Roles:

We affirm that men and women were each created in God’s image and that both are equal in their value and worth before God. We also affirm that God created men and women as distinct persons with differing roles. These roles were not given as a result of the fall, but were ordained by God as part of the created order before the fall.

These roles are clearly spelled out in Scripture as a blueprint for marriage. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in a lifetime covenant. It is a symbol and representation of Christ’s love for His Church. Within that covenant relationship, God appoints the husband as the servant-leader. His role is to protect, provide and lead his family in the same manner as Christ led and loved the Church. His wife’s response is to enable her husband to fulfill his role by submitting to him as the Church submits to Christ. God appoints the wife as the servant-helper. Her role is to complement and aid her husband as they serve the family together. The husband’s response is to grant her honor and affirm the high calling of her position. Together they combine to create a

stable, satisfying family by which they may both glorify God and prepare the next generation to be servants of Christ.

The unique roles of men and women are also clearly spelled out in relation to the governing of the church. Men and women share equally in the blessings of salvation and the mission of the church. Both men and women share equally in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and their use in ministry. However, Scripture clearly teaches that the role of church Elder is solely restricted to men. This one distinction has to do with the functional order of creation and the calling of leadership, not the worth of the individual. This in no way affirms that women are in some way less equal or less capable than men, but instead is a reflection of the differing roles given to men and women to fulfill Christ's mandate to the Church.

Please refer to the following passages of Scripture for the foundation of our understanding of God's design for the family and the respective roles of men and women: *Gen 2:18; Eph 5:22-24; I Tim 2:11-15; Tit 2:4-5; I Pet 3:7.*

A Brief Statement on the Equality of All Humans:

Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians to affirm the truth of the Gospel and glory in our freedom in Christ. In Galatians 3:26-29, he tells about the position each believer has in Christ: *"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."*

In essence, Paul was tearing down every wall that human beings use to separate one another. He affirmed that before Christ all races are equal (*... there is neither Jew nor Greek*), all social standings are equal (*... there is neither... slave nor free*), and both genders are equal (*... there is neither... male nor female*). All stand before Christ as equals.

We affirm the need of the evangelical church and of Fellowship Bible Church to be on the forefront of the battle for human equality. Jesus spoke clearly to his disciples in John 13: 34-35: *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* We cannot fulfill this command if we create artificial divisions of race, social standings, or genders among those who call themselves disciples of Christ.

We deny any interpretation of Scripture that would imply that those of races other than Caucasian descent are in any way inferior humans. Such an understanding has no basis in fact or history and is nothing less than idle speculation used to promote a racist agenda.

Our Structure

“How does Fellowship work, and how do we work together?”

At Fellowship Bible Church, we believe it is the privilege and responsibility of *every* member to contribute to the task of making disciples. To better facilitate this, we have adopted what could be best described as an equipping-oriented decentralized approach to ministry. Many traditional churches use a model that is more focused on organization – best described as a program-oriented centralized model of ministry. This chart might help to develop the contrast between the two styles of ministry:

A Church that is PROGRAM Oriented and CENTRALIZED in its Ministry Model	A Church that is EQUIPPING Oriented and DECENTRALIZED in its Ministry Model
The Church is organized around programs that draw people from the community into the church facility to attend a specific event.	The Church is organized around equipping people so that they can be sent into the community and world to live as salt and light.
Programs are the key emphasis and the predominant feeling is that you need to “be here” for the specific events.	Personal responsibility is the key emphasis and the predominant feeling is that you want to “be maturing” as a disciple.
The unwritten mentality is that the real ministry is performed by the staff of the church.	The identified mentality of the church is that the real ministry is performed by each member.
The people of the centralized model feel that in order to “really” minister you must be seminary trained and ordained.	The people of the decentralized model feel that in order to disciple others you lead by example and that qualification is determined by character.
In a program oriented church the membership are often characterized by busyness, comfort, and passivity. The church staff is there to help them.	In an equipping oriented church the membership is often characterized by intentionality, responsibility, and purpose. The staff is there to equip them.
In a program oriented church success is measured by numerical progress—by noting the size of attendance, the budget, or the facility.	In an equipping oriented church, success is measured by people progress—by changed lives, acts of service, and the maturity of the disciples.
In a centralized model of ministry the members are identified with the “Senior” pastor. His pulpit and program are the center of the church.	In a decentralized model of ministry the members identify with their small group. These groups are the center for maturity, ministry, and multiplication.
In the church with a centralized ministry small groups are added to the existing choices of programs. Often these are closed to outsiders.	In the church with a decentralized ministry small groups are “the primary” method for making disciples. Often these groups are open to outsiders.

Godly Elder Leadership

Fellowship Bible Church is an **Elder** led church. This is somewhat different than how most churches in the United States are governed, but we believe there is clear biblical background for this style. Most churches in this country are congregational in style—they function similarly to how our democracy is run. Most policies and procedures are determined by majority rule. An Elder rule church is somewhat different in that the Elders make the decisions on the direction of the church after receiving input from the congregation.

Scripture gives clear guidelines on who can be an Elder. These guidelines do not focus upon talent and success. Rather, the qualifications are all spiritual in nature: *I Timothy 3* tells us that an elder is to be . . . *above reproach . . . the husband of one wife . . . self-controlled . . . temperate . . . respectable . . . hospitable . . .* and so on.

We also see our Elders as gifts that Jesus Christ himself has given the church (*Eph. 4:11-13*). We feel they are men anointed by God to lead Fellowship Bible Church into the 21st century. They are all men who strive for the highest integrity. Each has a passion to uphold the members of our body and to strive to see each one fulfill the unique role God has given to us.

New Elders are nominated by incumbent Elders and the body as the need arises. Each nominated candidate must go through a process of interviewing, screening, and prayerful guidance before being ordained as an elder.

- Incumbent Elders shall select candidates to be nominated.
- The body is encouraged to pray.
- Announcement and presentation of the nominated Elders is made before the whole church, and a period of feedback.
- The new Elder shall be ordained to the office before the church by the laying on of hands in prayer.

Accusations or criticisms of Elders are received according to *I Timothy 5:19-21*. If guilt is determined, the offending person shall be counseled with a view towards restoration (*Galatians 6:1-2*). If the sin constitutes disqualification from leadership the erring Elder shall be removed from the office and restored to fellowship according to *Matthew 18:15-17*.

Responsibilities of Membership

Financial Stewardship, Ministry, & Small Group Participation

There are three essential ways in which members relate to the church: financial stewardship, ministry roles, and small group participation.

Financial Stewardship

While financial giving is not a topic that churches enjoy talking about much, we neglect it to our own spiritual detriment. Generous, sacrificial, joyful giving is an important aspect of following Jesus. In fact, Jesus spent nearly one quarter of his teaching on the topic of money and its role in the Christian life. At Fellowship, we encourage all of our members to regularly give to the work of the Lord through weekly tithes and offerings. The following are Biblical guidelines to help guide us in our financial giving:

Giving should be a joyful response to the gospel. In the New Testament, Paul the Apostle encouraged Christians to give out of a cheerful response to God's grace. In 2 Corinthians 9:7, Paul explains, "Each man should give what he has decided in his own heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Jesus made himself poor for us, so that we might become rich in his love and mercy. The good news of our acceptance by God through the death of Jesus should be our motivation to give. We do not give in order to earn God's love, or obligate God to do things for us. We give joyfully out of response to his grace and mercy towards us.

Giving should be sacrificial and significant. In the Old Testament believers were required to give a tenth of their income to support the needs of the ministry and care for the poor. The New Testament only specifically mentions the tithe once (Luke 11:42), assuming that it would be the minimum of our giving to the Lord.

The ultimate standard of giving is the cross. Just as Jesus gave himself sacrificially, so we are to give sacrificially of our finances.

Giving should be systematic and thoughtful. Paul directed the Corinthian church to set aside a portion of their wealth each week until he could come and take it to famine victims in Palestine (I Corinthians 8:8-10). While spontaneous and unplanned giving is great (you see someone on the street and buy them a hamburger), we should also develop a regular plan of giving. Systematic giving, while less exciting, often yields greater fruit in the long run. It also helps us to build into our lives a regular habit of generosity.

Giving regularly helps free us from the tyranny of greed. Money has a way of enslaving us. Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Matthew 6:24). Greed often captures our hearts without us even realizing it. This is why Jesus warned his disciples to “watch out for all kinds of greed (Luke 12:15). One of the best ways to protect your heart against money idolatry is to give it away. Having an open hand with your money helps to uproot the love of money from your heart.

Giving reminds us that we are stewards of God’s wealth. We are to honor God with our money, recognizing that all of it comes from his hand (1 Chronicles 29:14). A wise steward uses the owner’s money for what pleases the owner. We use God’s wealth in ways that build his kingdom recognizing that our money is ultimately not our own but his.

Ministry Opportunities

The ministry of the church rests in the hands of the members. While the pastor is called to shepherd and equip, Ephesians 4 gives each member a key role in ministry: “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13).

Fellowship offers more than ten general categories of ministry:

- ❖ Small Group Leadership
- ❖ Worship
- ❖ Creative Arts
- ❖ College
- ❖ Missions

- ❖ Youth
- ❖ Men's/Women's/Children's
- ❖ Greeter/Usher

Within each ministry area, vital work is organized and shared. Each member's individual gifting will help determine best areas of service. Talents of hospitality, teaching, hosting, serving, cleaning, administering, and many more are necessary in carrying out the Great Commission work. We cannot Reach, Connect, Equip, and Send without the prayed-over efforts of every single member.

Small Group Ministry

Fellowship Groups are the heartbeat of Fellowship Bible. This is where people journey through life, and the Christian faith, together. In a Fellowship Group you can expect to connect with, pray for, and study with other members of Fellowship.

The home setting most groups choose allows for an intimacy not found in the traditional classroom approach. We encourage participation in small groups as ways to deepen in faith and relationships. The church connects through ministry and small groups, and we believe both are vitally important. We also encourage all groups to adopt a quarterly missions project.

Some groups change annually, though others carry through the years. Our staff can help you find a group most suited to you.

Gospel-Centered Church

Something that you will hear often at Fellowship is that we are a “gospel-centered” church. While the phrase is simple enough to understand, it might be unclear exactly what we mean when we use it. Here is a concise explanation of what it means to be a gospel-centered church:

- *The gospel is not assumed, but preached as central.* Many people confuse “being moral” or “being religious” with being a Christian. Because of this we never assume that people understand the difference between Christianity and religion. At Fellowship we emphasize that Christianity is all about what Jesus has done for you (Christianity) rather than what you do for Christ (religion). All obedience is simply a response to what God has already done in Christ. Whenever we approach the topic of moral obedience, it is always contextualized by the gospel.
- *The gospel is not preached as the beginning only, but the whole Christian life.* Tim Keller says that the gospel is not only the ABC’s of the Christian life, but also the XYZ’s. The gospel is not a message that we move on from as we grow in Christian maturity; rather, Christian growth happens as we drill deeper into the central truths of the gospel. Because of this, we believe that the gospel should be preached to believers as well as non-believers. Martin Luther once said that his job as a minister was not only to preach the gospel to his people, but to beat it into their heads continually. At Fellowship, we assume that your main problem is that you do not believe the gospel *deeply enough*.
- *Sin is not viewed as simply bad behavior, but also as good behavior done to put God in our debt.* Religion says, “I will work to please God so that *He will have to bless me.*” The Gospel says, “God blesses me by grace and my works are a response to his grace.” The religious sinner is most clearly seen in Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son. In this parable, there are two prodigals: the younger brother who rejected the Father by breaking all the rules, and the elder brother who rejected the Father by *keeping all the rules*. At Fellowship, we emphasize that obedience for the wrong reasons is just as sinful as

breaking the rules. Religion and irreligion are both ways that we seek to be our own saviors and our own lords.

- *All sin is rooted in idolatry.* An idol is anything other than God that we look to in order to gain our ultimate significance and security. It is taking a good thing and making it into an ultimate thing. All sin is rooted in idolatry. So whenever we commit any sin, we must look underneath and ask, “What is the sin beneath the sin. What good thing am I making into an ultimate thing that is leading me to commit this sin?” For example, if I am tempted to commit sexual sin, often the problem is that I have made romantic love or beauty into an idol. A gospel-centered church not only attacks the sin, but seeks to uncover the root of idolatry beneath all sin.
- *Our message is essentially news, not good advice.* The essence of Christianity is not, “do this and live,” but, “it is done for you.” Ultimately, Christianity is an announcement about what Jesus Christ has done in history for you. In the ancient world, the word “gospel” was used to announce the arrival of a new king. Heralds would travel throughout the Roman Empire, announcing the “gospel” of Caesar. In the Bible, the gospel refers to the announcement that King Jesus has conquered sin and death and sits triumphantly as King of the Cosmos. When we preach the gospel, we are not telling people what they need to do in order to gain God’s acceptance, but instead announcing that Jesus has opened the way for us to be accepted freely by God.
- The culture of a gospel-centered church is marked by:
 - a. Openness and transparency about our sin.
 - b. Willingness to confess and repent.
 - c. Boldness combined with humility.
 - d. Joyful responsiveness in worship to God’s grace.
 - e. Speaking the truth in love.
 - f. Unity around the essential message of Jesus—de-emphasis on minor issues.
 - g. The church becomes a hospital for the broken.
- Refer to the chart on page 6
- Richard Lovelace explains what can go wrong when a person does not build their identity upon the gospel:

“Many . . . draw their assurance of acceptance with God from their sincerity, their past experience of conversion, their recent religious performance or the relative infrequency of their conscious, willful disobedience . . . Their insecurity shows itself in pride, a fierce defensive assertion of their own righteousness, and defensive criticism of others. They come naturally to hate other cultural styles and other races in order to bolster their own security and discharge their suppressed anger.” —Richard Lovelace

We want things to be different at Fellowship. As we learn to base our identities in the gospel rather than our own good works, we will become an environment of love and humility rather than defensive criticism and pride.

In summary, the gospel is the key to creating a healthy, joyful, and compelling church community. As Tim Keller has said, “The gospel is a bomb; it has dynamite in it.” As we get it deep into our hearts (and into the heart of our church) it explodes, bringing radical joy, humility, and personal transformation.

Small Groups

Why small groups?

Fellowship is a church that is structured around small groups. We are not just a church that “has” small groups; we are a church “of” small groups. Since we believe that small groups are the main atmosphere for Christian growth and discipleship, we want all of our members to be engaged in these communities. In short, small groups are a BIG DEAL here at Fellowship.

Our conviction about small groups grows out of a strong belief that Christians cannot grow outside of vibrant Christian community. We need more than a classroom and the deposit of information to grow; we must be deeply involved in a community of people where we can know and be known. Put another way, we need more than the Bible and the Holy Spirit to grow; we need other Christians in our lives to “spur us on to love and good works.” Before we get into what happens in a typical small group, let’s look at what the Bible says about the importance of community.

We were created to live in community:

As a human being, community is in your DNA. You were created by God to live in vital relationships with other people. To understand why community is so vital, we must first understand that we were made in the image of God—and exactly what sort of God in whose image we were made.

In Genesis we learn that humans are made in the image of the triune God. This means that, as humans, we are made in the image of a God who is a “We,” not a “Me.” Notice in Genesis God says, “let *us* make man in *our* image.” God’s three-ness has huge implications for what it means to be human. Since you are made in the image of the God who exists in community, you are a being who has community hard-wired into your DNA. You were built for community. When you ignore relationships, you are cutting against the grain of your humanity. We cannot isolate ourselves without becoming deeply broken and lonely. As God told Adam at the beginning, “it is not good for man to be alone.” Adam was lonely *not* because he was imperfect, but because he *was* perfectly made in the image of the triune God.

At Fellowship, we don't want anyone to be alone. We were built to know and be known because we are made in the image of God. Community groups exist to foster this basic "life together" for which we were built.

We are redeemed to live in community:

Not only are we created for community, we are redeemed for community. When Adam fell into sin, humans were not only separated from God, but also from one another. The world was relationally fractured, resulting in racism, murders, strife, alienation, and every other kind of social breakdown. A major aspect of God's work in Christ is to heal the broken relationships caused by the sin.

God's great plan for relational healing is the church. The God of the Bible is a community-forming God. God never brings a person into a relationship with himself, without at the same time bringing them into a relationship with others.

In the New Testament the church is described with strikingly intense metaphors. Christians are likened to "living stones" in a holy temple. In another passage we are called "fellow citizens" of the kingdom of God. We are also called members of the same household. Continually throughout the NT we are called "brothers and sisters." In all of these passages we see that the gospel unites us together in a relationship that is closer than even blood relatives. Jesus connects people of different classes, races, and genders into "one new man."

It is impossible to be a Christian on your own. Many in our culture say, "I love Jesus, I just do not want to be part of the church." But the God of the Bible will not let you do this. If you do not want to be part of the church community, you will have to find another religion. God has redeemed you into a deep, rich, close-knit community.

The context of Christian obedience is community:

While many view the Christian life as a highly personal quest for private spiritual growth, the Bible reveals that growth is impossible outside of community. Even a cursory reading of the New Testament reveals how deeply communal the Christian life is. Most of the "you's" in the New Testament are plural. Almost all of the commands given to Christians can only be carried out in Christian community. For example, the phrase, "one another" is found all the way through the pages of Paul's letters. We are told to bear one another's burdens, forgive one another, speak the truth to one another, and the list goes on and on. How can you obey the "one another's" of the Bible if you are not deeply engaged in community?

Not only is community assumed in the New Testament, the NT authors directly command believers to come together in community. In the Book of Hebrews the writer says that we ought not “forsake the assembling of ourselves together.” In the book of Acts, the example set by the early church is that the church not only assembled one day a week in the Temple, but throughout the week (day by day) in each other’s houses. The point is clear: Christians ought to be getting together often to “spur one another on to love and good works.”

Love requires community:

Furthermore, Love, the chief mark of the Christian life, can only be practiced in community. The Bible says, “God is love.” All who claim to be his children should resemble him in this most basic character trait. I John says that if we do not “love the brothers” we are not “born of God.”

The only way you can know that you love “the brothers” is if you actually know them. You cannot love somebody that you do not know or have any contact with. There is a famous character in Dostoyevsky’s *Brother’s Karamasov* who considers himself a humanitarian. He loves humanity, and he gives lots of his money to different charities. The only problem is that he hates people. It is impossible to love a generic “humanity” if you cannot stand to be in the same room with an actual human being.

Jesus said that the most defining mark of Christian love is that you actually love your enemy. The power of the early church is that former enemies (Jews and Gentiles) were living together as “brothers and sisters” in a close-knit community. Community is the context where our love (agape) is tested. How do I know if I love others? You must get to know a real “other.” You must get into close Christian community with a person that is different than yourself—even a person who was formerly an enemy. Community is the only place where true agape love is revealed. If a person says, “I love Jesus but not his church,” they are revealing a deep failure to display the most cardinal Christian virtue.

Mission requires community:

While each Christian is called to be on mission, the Christian community as a whole offers a powerful collective witness in the world. The church community is called to be an alternative society in the midst of an ungodly world. As we treat one another with love and grace, as we forgive one another and bear one another’s burdens, and as we model a new way of relating to sex, money, family, and success, we show the non-Christian world the way of the kingdom of God.

Although it is possible to some extent to live out these values individually, God's plan for mission is to use his people as a whole. Our love for the outcast and the stranger, our care for our enemies, and our unity around the gospel becomes a foretaste of the coming kingdom of God. In chapter 2 of the Book of Acts, the church began to gather together in community, and in doing so became a powerful witness to the world. As a result of this vibrant community, the church "had favor in the sight of all the people and God was adding to the church daily those who were being saved."

The gospel is the foundation of community:

The gospel is the only foundation for community. It tells us that, at the bottom, we are all the same. We are all more sinful than we have ever imagined. At the same time, we are all more accepted by God in Christ than we ever dared to hope. When it comes to God, none of us are "more acceptable" than anyone else. All of us come to God as sinners saved by grace. The ground at the foot of the cross is flat.

The truth that we are saved by grace through faith has huge ramifications for community. One of the main barriers to community is our pride. We exclude others because we think we are inherently superior to them and their kind (they are inferior to us and our kind). Our pride stems from the law (false notion that we are right before God and others because of what we have accomplished). Any time we base our identities on our ability to follow the rules (or on our race, culture, financial status, etc.), we create communities of exclusion and division. As Ephesians tells us, the law becomes a barrier that separates people.

But the gospel abolishes the law that divides us. It tells us that our identity is found not in what we accomplish, but in what Christ accomplishes for us. Our acceptance before God and others is based upon Christ's work, not our own. This creates a community of people that humbly accept one another. Our differences are divested of their moral significance. We can unite around our common acceptance before God rooted in grace.

What does a typical small group at Fellowship look like?

Each of our small groups seek to engage in four basic practices:

1. We do life together:

A small group is more than just a Sunday school; it is an extended family or network of friendships. *It is a group that does life together.* This group eats meals together, plays and has fun together, celebrates important events together, and basically walks with each other through the ups and downs of life.

2. We study Scripture together:

If the group lives life together without studying Scripture together, it is simply a social club. *The real power for transformation in our groups is that they are gathering around Christ and his Word.* All of our groups are committed to making the gospel the center of their time together. Because it is the gospel that unites us and enables us to love one another as family, it is the foundation for everything the group does together.

The study in our groups is *discussion-based*. The small group is not the time to hear another sermon. This is an opportunity to hear how the gospel is at work in the lives of others in the group. It is a time to learn from the unique perspectives that others bring to the table. It is a time to ask hard, honest questions, and to share our struggles with obedience to God's word. It is a time when we can challenge one another to follow Christ in the unique contexts of our lives.

3. We pray and encourage one another:

In a medium-sized church like ours, it is very difficult for the pastors to meet all of the needs represented in the congregation. Inevitably there will be discouraged members who we will not be able to encourage on a weekly basis, there will be physical needs that we will not be aware of, and prayer needs that will go unmet. The small groups are the place where *physical, spiritual, and emotional needs are specifically and consistently addressed.*

We encourage all of the small group leaders to make prayer and sharing of needs a consistent part of the group's life together. On many occasions small groups have provided meals for moms after pregnancy, visited sick members in the hospital, and provided counsel and encouragement for members struggling with doubts and sins.

4. We do mission together:

Finally, our groups are committed to being on mission together in Batesville. If a group stops looking outward it will soon lose momentum and die. God designed his people to be on mission together in the world. We are not only called out of the world into a relationship with Jesus and one another, we are also sent into the world to be on mission for Christ. We are called in to be sent out! Like a tornado, God is constantly spinning his people out on mission.

Knowing this reality, we ask all of our groups to engage in at least one mission project per semester. This could be any number of things. Some groups pass out quarters at the local laundry mat; others have packed Operation Christmas Child boxes at Christmas time; others have provided food for a youth or college outreach. There are many ways that the groups engage in mission, and each group is unique in its particular focus.

Where do small groups fit in our overall plan for discipleship?

Just like any organization has a plan for accomplishing its overall objectives, at Fellowship we have a clear plan for our chief objective. The mission of our church is to reach out with the message of the gospel and to make disciples here in Batesville. Small groups are a vital part of this plan. The path of discipleship then looks like this:

Sunday Service → Discovery Class → *Small Group involvement* → Send out/Service

After attending Sunday services we hope that all of our attendees will take the next step and go to the Discovery class. Having become a member, the next step is to find a small group and get plugged in. *If you are not engaged in a small group, you are missing out on our main strategy to make disciples.* We have noticed that members who are involved in small groups grow faster, are more involved using their gifts, and stay connected to church more than attendees not connected to a small group.

Fellowship's Philosophy of Worship

What is worship? Why do we do what we do?

Worshipping Jesus corporately at Fellowship is something we take very seriously. There is no more powerful way to begin each week than by placing God and his message of hope in the Gospel at the forefront. Because of its vital nature, we have carefully identified our vision and values for worship at Fellowship Bible Church.

What is worship?

Worship Is Not

- **what justifies you before God.** It doesn't make God like you better, it doesn't "make up" for your sins of the previous week. That would be "Christian Karma" *Acts 2:46-47*
- **simply a personal experience** between you and God, though that can be part of worship.
- **a style of music**, i.e. Traditional Church Music = "Bad Worship," Modern Rock Songs = "Good Worship." We think that is short-sighted at best.

Worship Is

- a response to and celebration of the Gospel: the forgiveness of sin, hope in this life and the next, the love of God.
- celebrating the Good News with other Christians as a vital part of your spiritual growth and encouragement. *Ephesians 4*
- (corporately speaking) reading scripture, giving, preaching of the word, confession, communion and music.

Our Worship Framework: Worship 1, 2, 3

- **One object and Author:** Our Triune God
Worship is about God from beginning to end. He made worship; he gives life, vision, and redemption. He gives eyes to see, ears to hear and voices to praise him for all His Glory!
- **Two Contexts:** Worship Scattered and Gathered
Scattered worship reveals the scandal of God's Grace. It is our life lived before God. Our "everyday worship" whether on a mission trip or at work. As redeemed children of God our very life is an offering of worship. *Gathered worship* celebrates that though we have the freedom and ability to worship God anytime and anyplace, scripture leads us to worship together as the family of God. Worshipping corporately is one of the best ways to be encouraged in your Christian Faith and important not only for you but as encouragement to your brothers and sisters in Christ. We want our *Gathered Worship* to fuel your *Scattered Worship*.

Hebrews 10:23-25 (ESV)

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

- **Three audiences:**
Our audiences include **God**, the object of our praise and a witness to us as we praise him. God accepts our imperfect worship made perfect in Jesus; **The Church**, which both participates in and witnesses the lives and gatherings of God's people. Our participation in gathering is testimony and encouragement to each other, "speaking the truth in love". Your praise or confession of faith may be what someone needs to hear in his or her dark times; and finally **The World**, which watches and observes from "outside" as we worship God together as the Church. The gathered church allows those "outside" to see God's glory and be drawn in. (1 Cor. 14:25) Tim Keller says the world needs to clearly and coherently see the gospel celebrated.

- "Worship 1, 2, 3" is taken from "Rhythms of Grace: How the Church's Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel" by Mike Cosper

Worship at Fellowship

- At Fellowship we combine scripture and *ancient* creeds/confessions with *modern* worship songs and hymns to create worship that is both deep and wide.
- We believe that *songs teach and form* people. Therefore we are careful to pick songs that not only have a good melody, but also are rich in theological content.

- There is an *underlying story* that we are telling each week in our worship service: first we call God's people into his presence (call to worship). After coming into his presence we come to recognize and acknowledge our sin (confession). We then remind ourselves of the good news that Christ has redeemed us and made us acceptable before God (song of assurance). We then are renewed by the word of God (preaching). We finally sing a song of response and gratitude for the gospel before we are sent out into the world on mission (benediction).
- We try to combine a mixture of *joy and reverence*. God is a holy God; therefore, we must come into the service with a sense of awe and reverence for the Lord. At the same time, the gospel brings us such joyful news that we can't help but be filled with joy and gratitude. We do not want to be a pep rally *or* a funeral.
- We assume *non-believers are present*. Therefore we try to make the worship understandable. We try to remember what it was like to not believe. We try to explain anything that might be unclear or unknown to an outsider. We welcome visitors throughout the service.
- We value beauty and *excellence*. We try to do worship as high quality as we can. We know that if non-believers or visitors are present, excellence is attractive. On the other hand, poorly done music can repel and distract from the message.

Why do we do corporate confessions and liturgy?

- All churches do liturgy: all churches have an order and plan in their service every week. Therefore all churches do a liturgy. It is not a matter of having form vs. no form. The question is what kind of form do you use?
- Ancient/historical confessions help us to anchor our faith in solid theological traditions. If all our songs and prayers come out of our current context, we can tend to be shallow. I am grateful for the young men and women at Hillsong who wrote many of the songs we sing. But if all of our songs come out of the mind of modern people, we are missing the opportunity to be formed by men and women of the past who had a depth of theological training and time-tested lyrics.
- Why do we do confessions of sin? Someone might say, the words I am saying are not my words. I did not write them. Why should I confess the sins that somebody else wrote? There are many good reasons to do this. It is important to note first of all that many of our modern worship songs

contain lyrics of confession. You are confessing sins through the lyrics of many modern songs. A corporate confession is the same thing except we are reciting it, instead of singing it. And again, the confession of sins we read come out of the mind of theologians of years gone by, rather than modern songwriters.

- Read confessions add another dimension to our worship. Instead of a two dimensional worship (band and Bible), we have a three dimensional worship (band, bible, and responsive reading). We think that responsive reading can add a participatory dimension that helps the whole congregation engage in worship.
- At the end of the day, we believe that worship teaches and forms our people. By adding in historical elements, we think our people will have a deeper faith. C. S. Lewis once said that Christians should read old books as well as new ones. I think the same principle can be applied to worship: old and new forms create health and strength in our faith.

A Statement on the Creative Arts

Does art matter?

Fellowship’s mission is summed up in four words: Reach, Connect, Equip, Send. The Creative Arts Collective at Fellowship uses events such as Gallery Imago and Faith In Film, as well as others, to reach out to and connect with people in our community as an avenue for sharing our faith in an unconventional way.

An Avenue of Gospel Light

Explaining the relevance of the gospel to one’s culture is impossible if one does not understand it. At the present moment, we live in an image-obsessed culture and much of our important cultural storytelling is accomplished through the mediums of movies, video and artistic design. These “stories” reveal, more than anything else, a culture’s fears, hopes and values.

In his famous poem, “Mythopoeia,” J.R.R. Tolkien refers to humans as “sub-creators.” This phrase expresses two important theological principles:

First: Every individual human or culture is involved in making and fashioning. The scriptures tell us that humans are made in “God’s image.” Thus any form of artistic creation reflects a common God-given capacity; *every* artist, believer or not, intentionally or not, points to the creator God.

Second: As “sub” creators, artists do not make stars or mountains, oceans or sunsets, rocks or trees; rather, they are born into a world where all of this, miraculously, exists! And for Christian artists specifically, as they re-shape, re-imagine and re-arrange these elements, they engage in acts of worship. Fellowship Bible Church of Batesville is determined to be a church that pursues creative arts as an avenue of gospel light and mission.



**FELLOWSHIP
STUDENT
MINISTRY**

Appendix



Fellowship Student Ministry (FSM) is the student ministry of Fellowship Bible Church. This ministry is for grades 7th-12th.

Our vision is:

Equipping students with the gospel to live for Jesus, live in community, and live on mission

This means that FSM is first and foremost passionate about the gospel of Jesus. Paul says that the gospel is the *power* of God for salvation (Rom 1:16).

And, we are *all* about seeing students transformed by the gospel of Jesus, reconciled and redeemed by Jesus, working together to grow in Jesus, and sent out on mission to live for Jesus.

FSM has two main practices. The first practice is our Wednesday night large worship time, where we sing and worship Jesus, and to study God's Word together. The second, is our guys and girls small groups each Sunday evening, where we dig deeper into God's Word and pray for one another.

We also have several events, trips, and summer activities planned throughout the year. For more info about Fellowship Student Ministry, please visit FSMBatesville.wordpress.com.

Deacons Ministry at Fellowship

What is a deacon, and who can serve?

The origin of the office of deacon

- The New Testament word for deacon (*Diakonos*) is translated *servant*. Sometimes it refers to service in general; other times it refers to particular kinds of service, such as caring for physical needs and waiting on tables (this is actually the root).
- Jesus has a high view of service. In Matthew 20, Jesus tells his disciples, “Whoever wants to be great must be your servant.” Matthew 23 says, “The greatest among you will be your servant.”
- In Acts 6:1-7 we find the division between spiritual and physical deacons. This is the beginning of the official office divisions of elder and deacon.
- Here we see that the elders and deacons have a distinct ministry. We ought not confuse the roles. The division is important for the health of the church and the flourishing of the gospel. Often churches confuse the offices, and in being confused, one of the offices gets lost.
- Deacons did not do all the deaconing themselves. They were facilitating the work. They were overseeing the diaconal ministry of the church as well as performing specific acts of service.

The purpose and function of the office of deacon

- We must take our cues for a deacon’s function from Acts 6:1-7. Here we see three purposes of a deacon:
 - ❖ **Practical Care:** this is the most obvious aspect of deacon ministry. Vs. 1 “Some were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.” The deacons were appointed to wait on tables.

- This care of physical needs is first to members of the congregation. But it becomes a witness to those who are outside the church.
 - Deaconal ministry is both proactive as well as responsive.
 - Deaconal ministry could include things like: financial needs, facility needs, mercy needs, and hospitality needs
 - Although the nature of the office is practical/physical, the motivation for the office is spiritual. Notice the Apostles choose men “full of the Holy Spirit.”
- ❖ **Unity in the Body:** In Acts 6, neglect of the Greeks in distribution of food was causing disunity in the body. The lack of organization to care for the physical needs was creating an unhealthy environment in the church. Deacons were appointed to care for the physical needs, thus promoting health in the church.
- Deacons should view their practical ministry as serving the larger purpose of the church health/unity.
 - Deacons should not be people who are unhappy with the church. They cannot be the loudest complainers, or the dividers, but rather the unifiers, the shock absorbers.
 - Deacons should not be lobbyists, advocating a cause. They are appointed to be builders of the whole.
 - Ephesians 4 says that God has given the members of the church gifts, to serve in various ways to build up the body. The deacons in many ways help facilitate the use of gifts in the body, thus enabling the body to grow and flourish.
- ❖ **Support of the Elders:** Deacons are appointed to support the ministry of the elders. The elders are responsible for the needs of the people. The problem is they did not have time to address this problem without neglecting their primary duties. The deacons are appointed to support the elders so they can pursue their primary task.
- The deacons are not a separate power block in the church. It is not the second house of the legislature through which bills must be passed.
 - The primary duties of the elders are shepherding and overseeing spiritual direction, or as they say it in Acts 6, “the Word of God and Prayer.” The deacons help to free them up to pursue this ministry.
 - The deacons are encouragers and supporters of the ministry of the elders.

The qualifications of a deacon

- 1 Timothy 3:8-13
- The similarities between the qualifications of elders and deacons are striking.
- The main differences have to do with gifts and calling, not character.
- The most notable difference is that a deacon does not need to be “able to teach.” A deacon may indeed be able to teach, but this is not a requirement for his office.
- Another difference is that Paul does not ban “new converts” from the office of deacon. While deacons must be tested, Paul does not feel the need to fence the office off from new converts.
- The actual word for “Elder” implies oversight of the church, whereas the word “deacon” implies a more service-oriented role. Interestingly, Paul omits the section where he compares managing one’s household to taking care of God’s church, implying that the deacon does not take part in the ruling of the church.

How do deacons function at Fellowship Bible Church?

6 primary needs within the church:

- As of now, we have identified 6 practical areas of ministry within the church that need leadership:
 - Finance
 - Mercy/Benevolence
 - Tech/Sound
 - Building
 - Usher (communion and baptistry set-up)
 - Greeting
- Deacons are leaders within the church. As leaders, we foresee two ways in which a biblical deacon is meant to function:
 - Deacons lead in service – they are an example of what it looks like to serve in their area of ministry. They foresee needs, plan, anticipate, and meet those needs.
 - Deacons Facilitate Service –they build a team of people within their ministry area, enlist volunteers, train and build into those volunteers, create a service schedule, conduct meetings

A Statement on Church Attendance

The following is a statement on church attendance. It was crafted to help set an expectation of what it means to regularly attend the weekly worship service. This is not a binding contract, but rather a thoughtful examination of how we intend to live in community together.

Attendance at Fellowship Bible Church

The New Testament pattern of church life is that believers come together on the first day of the week to worship and serve the Lord, and that they regularly sit together at the Lord's Table to remember His death on their behalf (1 Corinthians 11; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Hebrews 10:24-26). Consistent with that established pattern, the members of Fellowship Bible Church of Batesville (FBCB) voluntarily commit to regularly attend services at the church. Faithful church attendance does not earn salvation, nor does it act as a measure to rate spiritual greatness over and against other people. It does, however, reflect a growing commitment to the gospel, the good of the church community, and spiritual health.

We understand this commitment to mean that members will make every effort to be present to worship and serve on more Sundays than not. We also understand it to mean that members would encourage one another in this privilege, and that they should expect and welcome spiritual accountability as part of their membership commitment. We recognize, of course, that some members are unable to fulfill these responsibilities for unavoidable reasons, such as mandatory military service, education, or a prolonged illness. However, apart from those circumstances, we understand that any member who neglects regular attendance at our services and meetings is disregarding Scripture.

Faithful attendance honors Christ and builds up His church. Non-attendance moves in the other direction. It makes light of His name and harms His church in many ways and for many reasons.[1]

1. Faithful attenders confirm the power of the gospel and support evangelism, whereas non-attenders make evangelism harder.

Jesus said, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). Jesus prayed for the unity of His disciples, “so that the world may believe” that the Father sent the Son into the world (John 17:21). For the world to see our love and unity, we must regularly gather together. Everyone who bears the name of Christ—as affirmed by a local church by calling them a “member”—yet who willingly chooses to live their lives apart from the covenanted community of believers is practicing identity theft. They’ve taken Christ’s name, but they don’t honestly identify with his body, the local church. Living unaccountable lives, they make evangelism harder for other Christians, because, often, they aren’t living like Christians.

2. Faithful attenders confirm Christ-centered lives for new believers, whereas non-attenders confuse them.

New believers need good models (Acts 18:24-26; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Titus 2:2-6). When the doctrine they’re taught doesn’t sync with the models they see in the absentees, they become confused. They’re led to believe one can be a “Christian” and yet have little or no connection to Christ’s body. Non-attenders are not only reverse witnesses (see the previous point), they’re reverse models. They disregard and disobey countless passages of Scripture and fail to image God’s character in the most basic ways, even though they claim to be his adopted children.

3. Faithful attenders encourage other regular attenders, whereas non-attenders discourage them.

One reason to gather regularly is for the sake of personal encouragement. “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:24-25). When a church allows non-attenders to remain members, they effectively gut the meaning of membership, which hurts and discourages the faithful.

4. Faithful attenders comfort their leaders by their adherence to the truth, where non-attenders worry them.

Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account.” In light of this verse, a faithful pastor or elder should feel responsible for the spiritual state of every member of his flock. Like a father worried about his son who hasn’t yet come home late at night, a good shepherd doesn’t rest until all his sheep are accounted for. Non-attenders make this task nearly impossible.

5. Faithful attenders are positioned to exhort, correct, and encourage their fellow members according to God’s Word, whereas non-attenders are not.

Because of their absence, non-attenders cannot possibly know when or how the other members of their church community are burdened by sin or suffering. When church members are present and engaged, on the other hand, they can speak the truth in love to one another, just as their Lord exhorted through the apostle Paul. “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:15-16).

6. Faithful attenders will steadily grow in respect to their salvation, whereas non-attenders will not.

“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation” (1 Peter 2:2). Since God has appointed specific means by which Christians grow in their faith, neglecting those means will stifle spiritual health and growth. Hearing the Word of God preached, singing the Word of God in corporate worship, and serving the body of Christ according to the Word of God are just a few examples of graces given to us for our sanctification. They are primarily available to those who gather faithfully with the church.

7. Faithful attenders will be helped to persevere in faith, whereas non-attenders endanger their souls.

While it is true that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, it is also true that God uses the local church to help us persevere in saving faith. In the book of Hebrews, we find that one of the primary ways God guards us from apostasy is through the spiritual strengthening of other believers (Hebrews 3:12-14; 10:19-31, 12:25-13:17). As it has been made clear in all the previous points, we need other believers to help us fight sin and follow Jesus. This means that while your attendance at church does not earn your salvation, it is something God uses to help you persevere in faith and enter into the final rest that has been laid before us in Christ (Hebrews 4:6-16).

These concerns weigh heavily on the elders of FBCB, as they should on the whole congregation. We are called by God to love one another and are duty-bound by Scripture to care for each other by ensuring that we are fulfilling our commitments to the Lord and to one another (Galatians 6:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 3:12-13). We do this because, by God’s grace, we care deeply for the Lord’s honor and the welfare of one another’s souls.

For all of these reasons, we cannot stand idle when a member is not attending church on a regular basis (1 Peter 5:1-3). In these situations, the elders will lead the congregation in making inquiries of the individual’s status and, if necessary, will encourage them to honor their responsibility to attend services. If

the member does not respond to the elders' inquiries or fails to provide us with an adequate explanation for non-attendance, our elders will consider this a matter of church discipline and reserve the right to remove the individual from membership status (Matthew 18:15-18).

[1] Many authors and pastors have addressed the Scriptural foundation for the dangers of non-attendance, but some of the clearest and most concise materials have been produced by pastors Mark Dever and Matt Schmucker, both of whose written work informed the preparation of this statement. See, e.g., Mark Dever. "A Biblical Understanding of Church Membership" in *9 Marks of a Healthy Church*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 147-66; Matt Schmucker, [Why Should Churches Discipline Members Who Consistently Do Not Attend?](#) (9Marks, 2010).

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