

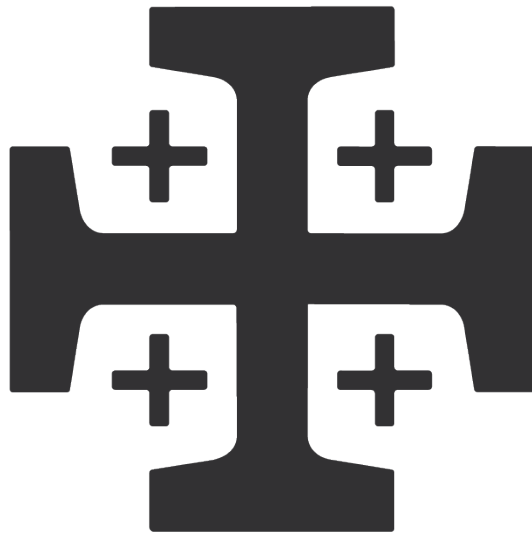
FRONTLINE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

TEACHER NOTES



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FRONTLINE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

SESSION 1: MISSION

OUTLINE OF SESSION 1

TEACHING: 30 MIN

Welcome
Who We Are: History
Who We Are: Values
Mission

EXERCISE: 15 MIN

Praying for Your “Three”

TEACHING NOTES (30 MIN)

WELCOME

Teacher Notes: Welcome people to the membership class, and thank them for coming. Briefly introduce yourself with your name and position in the church. Frame up what the class will look like today.

Membership matters. We live in a time when it is far too easy to disconnect from one another and God. Membership in the local church is a powerful tether to the presence of God and other believers. But what does it actually mean to become a member of a local church?

Discussion Question: What are some other places where you are a member (Costco, YMCA, etc.)? How is that different from membership in the local church?

We all have different ideas of what membership might mean and why we should join. Some of you may see membership as something you should do because you've been attending the church for a long time. Some of you want to become members because that is what you have always done at church. Others of you might be skeptical, wondering why we even have membership.

As we consider church membership, we shouldn't think of it like joining a gym or signing up for a subscription. It is more like being a member of a family or a member of the body. You can't just pay your dues, reap the benefits, and sit on the back row—unseen and unknown. Rather, membership at Frontline is like committing to a family, along with our mission and values. It means we are headed in the same direction together, shoulder-to-shoulder, as brothers and sisters.

In this class, we want to lay before you who we are as a church. We want to help you see how our mission, values, and distinctives come to bear on the lives of our members. And we would invite you to prayerfully ask Jesus whether he is connecting you to this church.

WHO WE ARE: HISTORY

Frontline Church is one church, with multiple congregations. God has allowed Frontline to plant churches across the Oklahoma City metro and central Oklahoma, yet our shared story reminds us that God's faithfulness has been the common thread across the years. Frontline gathered for the very first time on Easter Sunday 2005, with twenty people meeting in Josh and Nancy Kouri's living room. In those early years, Frontline's growth was exciting, challenging, chaotic, messy, and miraculous. The church eventually moved into the heart of OKC in Automobile Alley. The church was gritty, and the gospel of Jesus Christ was changing people. God saved dozens of

people at Frontline, and there was a sense of revival as people from all walks of life were baptized in our Sunday gatherings.

The church continued to grow and reach new communities around the metro, leading us to plant several Frontline congregations. In 2010, we started our first congregation, Frontline Shawnee. The very next year, in 2011, Frontline South opened its doors. That same year, our Frontline Downtown congregation moved into the First Christian Church cathedral on Robinson Ave. In 2014, we planted Frontline Edmond. Then, in 2020, Frontline Yukon was born.

Teacher Notes: Take a minute or two to share about your specific congregation's history. Maybe include the circumstances of planting, as well as any key points in your congregation's story.

WHO WE ARE: VALUES

From the very beginning of our church, there have been several values that came to shape who we are and why we exist. We hold these values close, and pray they come out of our hearts as we live in community together. You can write these down in the blanks on your worksheets.

1. CHURCH FOR THE CITY

In our culture, we tend to see four different ways the church can posture itself toward the city.

First, there are churches against the city. A church that postures itself against the city has adopted a combative mentality. We build walls to keep the city out, only ever emerging to mount attacks.

Second, there are churches of the city. This kind of church adopts the identity of the city, thereby losing the unique and holy calling to be salt and light in the world. We have little to no discernment for how the city's values stand opposed to the teaching of Jesus.

The third posture are churches in the city. Here the overriding attitude toward the city is one of indifference. A church in the city shifts their focus inward, neglecting the mission of God to go and bless the world.

Lastly, there are biblically faithful churches for the city. As a church for the city, we maintain our unique identity as the people of God in the world, but we do so without retreating from the world. We actively go into the world and bless the city with the very presence of God.

Since our inception, we have sought to be a church for the city, which is why we are named Frontline Church. Our name serves as a constant reminder that we are called to be on the front lines, engaging our city with the gospel and working for its good.

2. INHABITING TENSIONS

We believe healthy churches inhabit tensions. In our polarized world, we often feel the pressure to pick sides, to define what “camp” we fall into. For instance, we might think we can either be a Spirit church or a Word church. We can either embrace God’s sovereignty or Man’s responsibility. Some might think that we have to choose between theological depth, or accessibility. We should either hold to ancient traditions or pursue modern innovations. And the list goes on.

But sometimes Scripture holds up a tension between two seemingly contradictory ideas. When that’s the case, we want to resist simply picking sides. This isn’t about passivity or moderation for its own sake. Instead, when the Scriptures present beauty and goodness in the tension, we want to live there. We don’t want to take an easy out when the Scriptures demand we walk the narrow path.

3. INTEGRATED THEOLOGY

Theology is important to us at Frontline. It helps us to see God as he really is. You might see us read nerdy books or use big words, because we desire to learn more about God. But if we stop there, we miss out on so much more. Our beliefs can’t just live in our heads. They have to move down into our hearts. This is what we call integration. Integration aims to love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. (Mt 22:35–38)

At Frontline, we believe that integrated theology shapes our loves and desires. It enables us to embody what we profess to believe. Theology moves from our head to our heart to our hands. We will find ourselves anchored in the midst of cultural storms as theology becomes firmly rooted in our very identity and lives.

4. COMMUNION WITH GOD AND PEOPLE

We were made for communion. Deep within each one of us, there is a desire to belong to something bigger than ourselves. This desire is built into our DNA, into the way God made us. The God who created us has eternally existed in community as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This Triune God created us in his image, with a longing for relationship with him.

At Frontline, we believe that communion with the living God leads to communion with one another. We can move toward each other because we’ve been brought together into one body in Jesus. We can welcome each other as family because we already belong. This kind of community drives us beyond the temporary, rapid, and easy. It asks us to abide in deep, lasting relationships.

MISSION

Our mission was birthed out of a desire to be a church shaped by these values. For us, the heart and soul of our church lies in our mission. This is why we exist. It drives all that we do. This is what we hold up as of first importance. The Mission of Frontline Church is...

Multiplying Gospel Communities that Love God, Love People, and Push Back Darkness

Let me repeat that so you can write it down.

Multiplying Gospel Communities that Love God, Love People, and Push Back Darkness

Every aspect of our church is driven by this mission. It brings us together with one goal and mind. It reminds us why God has placed us here, and sets our eyes on what we collectively strive for. It begins with multiplying gospel communities. We want to see gospel communities spread all over our city—communities that are together because of Jesus, under Jesus, with Jesus, and for Jesus. We are together because of his grace, under his authority, with his presence, and for his glory. Gospel communities should be marked by love for God and love for one another. This love drives us to move into the world and push back darkness by proclaiming the gospel and demonstrating the kingdom. Everything we do comes back to this mission.

There are four places we see this most clearly at Frontline. Again, you will write these down on your worksheets.

1. SUNDAY GATHERINGS

As we gather on Sundays, we engage as worshippers who grow in our love for God. During Sunday gatherings, the church comes together to worship Jesus, encourage one another, and intercede for the world. Week in and week out, we gather together to train our hearts to worship God above whatever else stole our attention, our hearts, and our worship that week. Each Sunday, we enter the new week by being reminded that we have been made new by the love of Jesus. We grow in our love for God as we hear the good news in singing, preaching, and sacrament.

Sunday gatherings enable us to love and encourage each other. We have become a family in Jesus. This new family identity is at the heart of the New Testament's commands to love one another, bear burdens with one another, encourage one another, confront each other, and so much more. When we confess sin or pray for each other during our gatherings, we practice loving each other. As we gather on Sundays, we engage as family.

In addition, Sunday gatherings are the leading edge of our mission to push back darkness. The Sunday gathering pushes back darkness as we invite our neighbors to

come and hear the gospel. We push against our sinful urges to be consumers and to isolate ourselves. In praying for our city and world, we ask for God's kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. As we gather on Sundays, we engage as missionaries.

2. COMMUNITY GROUPS

What about the six days in between Sundays? One of the primary ways we engage our mission during the week is through community groups. Community Groups are local, diverse gospel communities that gather regularly for discipleship, care, and mission through discipleship groups, family meals, and missional gatherings.

Frontline is not just a church with community groups. Frontline is a church of community groups. Frontline community groups gather in three regular rhythms—discipleship groups, family meals, and missional gatherings. Each rhythm has its own function and goal.

Discipleship groups are gender-specific groups of three or four who gather regularly to know and encourage one another in their walk with Jesus. In healthy, gospel-centered discipleship groups, we grow in our love for God and each other.

Family meals are casual gatherings around a common table for the sake of community and gospel hospitality. As we linger over the meal, we listen, talk, and pray. These nights encourage love for each other, and give us opportunity for mission.

In missional gatherings, we gather for the sake of people far from God to proclaim the gospel and demonstrate the kingdom. They give us the opportunity to build relationships with those who don't follow Jesus and tell them how Jesus rescued us. They also give us the opportunity to care for the spiritual and physical needs of those in darkness around us.

3. CITY PARTNERS

At Frontline, one of the ways we push back darkness in our city is by serving with our city partners. City partners are organizations thoughtfully chosen by each congregation as a place for missional impact. These partners are already doing the work to love people and push back darkness in our city. We want to wisely come alongside the places where we see God already working. As we serve the poor, marginalized, and needy in our communities, we build relationships within our city.

Teacher Notes: Identify your congregation's city partners and what kind of work they are doing in the city.

4. CHURCH PLANTING AND STRENGTHENING

We believe church planting and strengthening is one of the primary callings that God has given Frontline Church. Our world needs more healthy, gospel-centered churches engaging their cities and neighborhoods on mission. To that end, we give

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sacrificially to financially support church plants across the United States and the world. We build relationships with pastors and leaders in church plants. We provide training and resources for those who feel called to plant churches. We pray for and care for the health of pastors and leaders who are doing the hard work of planting churches. We are unashamedly a church-planting church.

In addition, we plant additional Frontline congregations across the OKC metropolitan area as God leads us. While maintaining a distinct, local uniqueness, all our congregations stand united as one church. We share one name, identity, vision, and mission. We work together and support one another. We are one church. But a Frontline congregation is not simply a “campus” of Frontline. Each Frontline congregation has their own elders, deacons, and leadership teams. There are unique initiatives we engage in our unique contexts. We are one church in multiple congregations.

As you experience the life of our church, in these four places and others, our hope is that you can start to see the way that our mission shapes everything we do as a church.

In addition to our mission and values we have five distinctives that we hold dear. The distinctives of Frontline Church are five core beliefs that we seek to embody. Write this down. Our distinctives are...

Gospel-Centered
Bible-Honoring
Kingdom-Focused
Spirit-Filled
Gender-Redeeming

Each distinctive describes a way of being. These beliefs are not unique to our church alone. However, we believe that God has called Frontline Church to faithfully embody these distinctives in this time and in this place. Through the remainder of our membership class, we will unpack each of these five distinctives, what they mean for the life of our church, and how we can seek to embody them together.

EXERCISE: PRAYING FOR YOUR “THREE” (15 MIN)

How can you partner with us in multiplying gospel communities that love God, love people, and push back darkness? One way is to grow in engaging the unbelievers and unchurched in your life. For many people, the thought of engaging unbelievers with the gospel can feel overwhelming. But it is important to remember a few things. First, we are limited beings, bound by time and space. We can't be everywhere for everyone. Second, God often uses ordinary relationships with ordinary Christians to draw an unbeliever's heart to him. If you can be a friend, you can be on mission. Third, Christians can take small steps to more faithfully engage in mission.

To this end, we invite all of our members to commit to their “three.” These are three people within your sphere of influence who do not follow Jesus or are not connected to a local church. We ask everyone to pray daily for their “three” and engage them in intentional gospel relationships. Your “three” could be your family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, etc. To help you identify and begin praying for your “three,” work through the following exercise together.

1. IDENTIFY YOUR “THREE”

Take 2 or 3 minutes to prayerfully select and write down the names of three people in your life who do not follow Jesus or are not connected to a local church. Whom would you most love to see become a disciple of Jesus? Who is your heart best shaped to reach for Jesus? If you are having trouble identifying three people, just write down as many as you can.

2. ENGAGE YOUR THREE

Once you've each identified your “three,” pick just one of those three people to consider best how to engage them. Take 7 minutes to each answer in turn, out loud, the following questions posed by missiologist Alan Hirsch:

- Am I in close proximity with this person to whom I feel called?
- Am I spending regular time with this person? If not, why not?
- Am I too busy to develop a meaningful relationship with this person? If so, how could I create margin for mission?

3. PRAY TOGETHER

Take 5 minutes to pray out loud for the people your table shared about. Pray specifically for your relationship with them to grow, that God would give you creativity in how to spend regular time with them, and for God to provide opportunities for you to love them, serve them, and share the gospel with them.

Let's commit to continuing to pray for our “three” regularly. If you have started to attend a community group, be sure to share your “three” with your community group and invite them to join you in praying as well.



FRONTLINE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

SESSION 2: WORD & SPIRIT

OUTLINE OF SESSION 2

TEACHING: 30 MIN

Word and Spirit

Bible-Honoring

 Being Bible Honoring

 Reading the Bible

Spirit-Filled

 Spiritual Gifts

 Prophetic Words

Liturgy

Bringing Together Word and Spirit

EXERCISE: 15 MIN

Reading the Bible

TEACHING NOTES (30 MIN)

WORD AND SPIRIT

One of our values is our desire to be a church that inhabits tensions. We believe healthy churches inhabit tensions. When faced with biblical tension, we might be tempted to pick a ditch because it feels more comfortable and neatly wrapped. Yet, we believe that embracing all that the Scripture has for us will require us to embrace tensions. When God invites us to hold a healthy tension, we don't want to resolve it cheaply. We want to inhabit that tension.

In the church today, a passion for the Bible and a passion for the Holy Spirit can seem at odds with one another. Churches typically fall into one of these two camps. You have your "Word" churches, which usually prize doctrine and deep theology. They have a serious reverence towards God. Usually, they see "Spirit" churches as crazy and overly emotional. But on the other side, you have your "Spirit" churches, which prize passion, manifestations of the Spirit, and the freedom found in Christ. Usually, they see "Word" churches as quenching the Spirit and deadening the soul.

But when we look at the early church in the Bible, we see the Word and Spirit come together as one. At Frontline, we want to be a Word and Spirit church. The following exercise will challenge you to consider which side of this tension you tend to fall into to. As we recognize where we fall, we pray that God will grow us in how we inhabit this godly tension.

Exercise Set-Up: In your notes, there are two columns which outline characteristics of Word and Spirit churches. On your own, take a couple minutes to read through those two columns and answer the accompanying questions above them.

Questions: (1) Which of these two columns are you more comfortable with or have more experience with? **(2)** Which of these two columns are you more concerned about being neglected in the local church?

WORD

Process
Knowledge
Sermon
Intellect
Reformation
Obedience to God
Principles
Justification
Faith in God
Biblically-Informed Wisdom

SPIRIT

Event
Experience
Worship
Affections
Revival
Intimacy with God
Power
Sanctification
Love for God
Spiritually-Imparted Discernment

Post-Exercise Reflection: In this exercise, you had to list which column you feel most concerned about being neglected in the church. You can assume the opposite column to the one you answered is the one you're most in danger of neglecting. Now, take two minutes to look at the column you did not choose. Circle one area in that column that you can take a step to grow in. Now that we see that we all have a temptation to one side of this tension or the other, we want to step back and see what it would look like to more fully embrace both Word and Spirit.

How do we inhabit the tension of being a Bible-honoring and Spirit-filled church?

BEING BIBLE-HONORING

In order to grow as a Bible-honoring church, we have to gain a real sense of why Scripture matters. God tells his people that life is found in his word.

... man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. (Deut 8:3)

Christians turn to God's word again and again, because we find God there. In the Word of God, we see and receive the love of God. When we receive the Bible with eagerness, it begins to shape our vision of the good life. Not only our actions, but our imaginations become transformed by God's word. When we have a Bible-imagination, the things we love, hate, desire, and long for come from Scripture.

Honoring the Bible means that the Bible has weight in our lives. The Bible gets first say when it comes to what we believe, how we worship, how we live our lives, what we see as good or praiseworthy, and how we evaluate what is beautiful or desirable. Honoring the Bible means that we learn to "speak Scripture" as our mother tongue. Scripture may not be the only language that we want fluency in. But before we speak in the language of politics, philosophy, science, or culture, we submit any and all other words to the Word of God. We don't worship the Bible; we worship God. Yet, the God we worship has given us the Bible as his authoritative Word. So, we translate the Bible into every part of our lives.

However, many of us have never been taught how to spend time alone with God. Talking about Bible fluency only overwhelms. Reading the Bible becomes a real struggle that often makes us feel shame and embarrassment. We may easily get bored, distracted, or confused. The busyness of our day-to-day life prevents us from getting time alone. We don't know where to begin or what to do. If that's you, you are not alone.

READING THE WORD

Because we may not have been taught to spend time alone with God, the Bible can be intimidating for us. It is a big book that is not always easy to read or understand. So what does it look like to grow as a Bible-honoring Christian in the way we read

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Scripture? We can grow in the way we read Scripture by starting with these six practices. You can write these down in the blanks.

1. PRIORITIZE COMMUNION

When we read the Bible, we are not just learning information about God. Instead, it is one of the primary ways we connect with God. We should come to the Bible with prayer and humility, knowing that the Spirit of God wants to shape us through it. Being unhurried and attentive here will make all the difference. Take time to hear how God might be specifically speaking to you at this moment.

2. SUBMIT TO THE WORD

As the Word of God, the Bible is the highest authority for our church. Before we turn to the voices of the world, we seek God's wisdom through his word. To be Bible-honoring people, we must bring ourselves underneath Scripture. It has the final say over our lives. We humbly and eagerly receive its teachings, corrections, and rebukes. As James 1:22 tells us, we must not be hearers of the word only, but doers of the word.

3. LEARN THE CONTEXT

Each book of the Bible was written in a particular context for a particular reason. When we are unaware of the context, we can take passages and make them mean something the author never intended. We have to look at a whole passage and ask who wrote it and why they wrote it. We must also recognize the genre of each work. Some Scriptures are poetry, while other parts are historical records, both of which should be interpreted differently.

4. LOOK FOR CHRIST

All of Scripture is about Jesus. To understand it fully, we need to listen to what it is saying about him. Jesus himself was quite explicit on this point. "You search the scriptures... it is they that bear witness about me" (Jn 5:39). The message of Scripture is only accurately and fully heard if we hear the message about Jesus in it. A fundamental question when reading any part of the Bible is, "What does this passage tell me about Jesus?"

5. MAKE IT A HABIT

God calls us to be people of the Book, who constantly have God's word on our minds and hearts.

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. (Josh 1:8)

The more and more we read the Bible, the more and more it makes sense to us. Some of you just need to start somewhere, maybe a chapter at a time. Don't be

discouraged if your grasp of certain words, phrases, and passages seems unclear after one reading. That's actually how it is meant to be! We come to the Bible again and again, because there is always more to quench our thirst.

6. READ WITH OTHERS

The Bible is the word of God for the people of God. It is meant to be read with others in community. We practice this distinctive together when we submit to the preaching of the word on Sundays. We also engage this in Community Groups when we study God's word in our discipleship groups. We don't want to just be Bible-honoring people, but we want to be a Bible-honoring church that strives to come under God's word together.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

As we submit to God's word, we also want to be a Spirit-filled church. We believe that gospel ministry should be marked by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. As we rely on the Spirit, we expect to see him work in miraculous ways. We desire to see more people saved, healed, and changed by the work of the Spirit. We want our church to grow in the fruit of the Spirit. We want to surrender to the Spirit in every area of life. So how can we grow as a Spirit-filled church?

One way to grow in being Spirit-filled is by leaning into our spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to each Christian for the good and upbuilding of the church. These gifts are demonstrations of the Spirit's presence among his people. Spiritual gifts are not personality traits, but they are the various ways that the Spirit works in and through the church. Some may be permanent, while others are circumstantial. Some may seem more supernatural, while others may seem less supernatural. However, all of them are given and empowered by the Spirit as he wills.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Cor 12:4–7)

We believe that all of the gifts mentioned in the New Testament are still active today, including tongues, healing, and prophecy. Scripture commands us to pursue all of the gifts because they demonstrate his love and kindness towards us.

So how do we know what spiritual gifts we have? There are a variety of gifts mentioned in the New Testament. You can take a look at your worksheet for this session and see a list of those, however the New Testament lists were not meant to be exhaustive. They describe the multitude of ways that the Holy Spirit works among his people. You can't just take a test and figure it out.

At the end of the day, spiritual gifts are the ways we love others. The Bible encourages us to pursue them as ways to love one another, and as we do this, our spiritual gifts will naturally manifest themselves.

PROPHETIC WORDS

In Scripture, we see emphasis placed on the spiritual gift of prophecy. This gift in particular tends towards encouragement and edification within the church. As such, we are all called to pursue and earnestly desire to prophesy.

Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. (1 Co 14:1)

In the New Testament, prophecy is when a person communicates something that God has spontaneously brought to mind. It could be a word, a verse of scripture, an impression, a dream, or a picture. However, it does not carry the weight of Scriptural authority. When someone speaks a prophetic word today, it may contain errors. Therefore, prophecy should always come underneath the authority of Scripture and be submitted to the discernment of the church. At Frontline, we want to be a church that leans into the prophetic. The Spirit still speaks today, and we can hear his voice, if we listen. He speaks to us in and through the Scriptures, but he also speaks to us through other people for our upbuilding.

One way we can pursue this gift is by leaning into what we call “listening prayer.” Listening prayer is being open-handed with God and attentively waiting for whatever he wants to say to us. Many times, the Spirit is speaking, but we aren’t listening. Listening prayer simply postures our hearts to hear God speak. When we take time to stop and listen, he might give us a prophetic word of encouragement for someone else.

If listening prayer is new to you, don’t worry—It’s probably new for others in the room too. Here are a few guidelines for practicing listening prayer. Again, you can fill in the blank here.

1. POSTURE YOURSELF

Physical postures and practices can help to focus your attention on the moment. Perhaps this means kneeling with your face to the ground. Perhaps this looks like standing with open hands. There are a variety of physical postures that may be helpful.

2. INVITE THE SPIRIT

Briefly pray and invite the Holy Spirit to speak. Ask him questions like, “Is there a word of encouragement or comfort that you would like me to bring to anyone?” Or “Is there anything that you have been speaking to me about that I have ignored?”

3. DON'T FORCE IT

We won't receive a picture or impression every time we engage listening prayer. And that's okay. If you don't sense anything, don't be discouraged. Also, resist the temptation to force a picture in your head. We don't create prophetic words. We receive them from God.

4. TEST WITH SCRIPTURE

If you do get a prophetic word, always test it with Scripture. The Spirit of God will never contradict what he has spoken in the word of God. This requires us to continually grow in our knowledge of the Bible. It is generally good practice to also seek the counsel and wisdom of our elders, especially when we are in doubt. They can help us know whether, with whom, and when to share something.

5. SHARE

If you receive a prophetic word for someone, share with them. As you share, avoid grand pronouncements or definitive language. Instead, consider saying, "I have a sense..." or "I feel like God is saying..." You might get it wrong, so share with that sense of humility. At the same time, prophecy requires risk and faith. You might look silly. You might get it completely wrong. But you have to be willing to fail so that God might powerfully use the gift of prophecy to build up the church.

As we faithfully seek to practice the gifts of the Spirit, and especially that we may prophecy, we believe that God will bless, grow, comfort, and build up our church into the image of Jesus Christ.

LITURGY

Weekly we encounter the beautiful union of Word and Spirit is in our liturgy. Liturgy is the intentional order and practices of our Sunday gatherings. Liturgy points us toward God's word, and it creates a space for the Spirit to move within us.

Some of us may associate liturgy with Roman Catholicism. Reciting prayers and receiving a benediction may seem rigid and inauthentic. But rather than mechanical repetition of pre-written words, we believe the Spirit uses liturgy to shape and form our hearts toward Jesus. When we recite creeds, stand for the reading of God's Word, and confess our sins together, we are training ourselves to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Even when we don't "feel" the words we are saying, liturgy speaks truth to our heart and recalibrates our affections.

Here are some common elements of our Sunday liturgy.

Call to Worship. Beginning each of our services, the Call to Worship is an invitation to the feast of grace, to receive help from the presence of God. Through the reading of Scripture, the Spirit of God is calling us to worship him.

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Confession and Assurance. We confess our sins and our need for grace with one voice, followed by a proclamation of the forgiveness we have received through the sacrifice of Jesus. It teaches us how to repent, confess, and remember the gospel throughout our lives.

Intercession. We pray for God's justice and goodness to be poured out on Christians, non-Christians, leaders, cities, and nations. Intercession teaches the believer how to participate in the mission of God through prayer.

Benediction. Benediction comes from a Latin word meaning "blessing." It is a pastoral impartation of grace upon the people. Most often a passage of Scripture is read as a charge over the people of God before they are sent from the gathered body. The benediction blesses the people of God as they are sent on mission.

BRINGING TOGETHER WORD AND SPIRIT

What does a church look like that inhabits this tension of Word and Spirit? Andrew Wilson describes it like this,

Imagine a service that includes healing testimonies and prayers of confession...Creeds that move the soul and rhythms that move the body. Imagine young men seeing visions, old men dreaming dreams, sons and daughters prophesying, and all of them coming to the same Table and then going on their way rejoicing. (Andrew Wilson, Spirit and Sacrament)

We pray that God makes us just such a church.

EXERCISE: READING THE BIBLE (15 MIN)

The following exercise aims to help you practice embracing both Word and Spirit in your daily life. In the Bible, we find unity of Word and Spirit. The Bible is the very Word of God. Likewise, the Bible was inspired by the Spirit of God. We are going to open our Bibles together and walk through an exercise to help us learn to study the words of the Bible and listen to the Spirit as we read the Bible.

1. Read the Passage. Have a volunteer read Ephesians 3:14-19 aloud.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

2. Listening Prayer. Have someone set a 5-minute timer. Each person should spend the time in prayer, quietly listening and asking the Spirit to speak. As you listen, write down any pictures or impressions that it seems God brings to mind. What word or phrase stands out to you in the passage? As you reflect on the passage, what are you thinking or feeling about God? What might the Spirit be saying to you? What might God want you to know, do, or become?

3. Study. Take 5 minutes to read back through the passage yourself and look for three things, listed here. As you read on your own, try to write down at least one thing from each category.



A star: anything that shines out in the passage and draws attention—it can be something important, or something that strikes you

.....



A question mark: anything that is hard to understand—something that you would like to be able to ask the author about

.....



An arrow: anything that applies personally to your everyday life

.....

One-to-One Bible Reading: A Simple Guide for Every Christian, David Helm

4. Sharing. Invite a volunteer share what the Spirit highlighted for them through this exercise. They can share a star, a question mark, or an arrow—or any other general sense from the Spirit they are willing to share.

FRONTLINE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

SESSION 3: GOSPEL & KINGDOM

OUTLINE OF SESSION 3

TEACHING: 30 MINS

The Kingdom of God

The Gospel and the Kingdom

 Gospel Faith and Kingdom Works

 Gospel Hospitality and Kingdom Generosity

 Gospel Proclamation and Kingdom Demonstration

Sacraments

EXERCISE: 15 MINS

Gospel Hospitality

TEACHING NOTES (30 MIN)

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Discussion Question: Can you think of any one-time events that have happened within your lifetime that had a massive impact on shaping culture or the world? How did this momentary event transform the world so quickly?

Even though Jesus spent only three years in the public limelight, the world was transformed through his ministry. While we can point to historical events in our lifetimes that define a generation, the world has been defined by the person of Jesus for the past 2000 years. How did this happen? What did Jesus teach that compelled people to leave everything behind to follow him? Jesus proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:14–15)

Write this down. **The kingdom of God is wherever God is recognized and received as king.** But because of sin, creation has been bent from God’s good design. Psalm 2 tells us that “the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain; the kings of the earth set themselves... against the LORD and his Anointed” (Ps 2:1-2). Humanity’s goal in our sin is to “tear off [God’s] bonds” and deny his good order. What does it look like when we cast off the bonds of God’s kingship? God’s authority and will are rejected, filling creation with chaos and futility. That is where God intervened. Jesus came to establish the kingdom of God on earth. He came to bring all things in submission to God through his own rule and reign.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus constantly taught about the kingdom of God—what it is like and how to enter into it. He taught about how God’s kingship would transform our lives and our communities. In fact, the book of Acts tells us that he spent his final days on earth talking about the kingdom of God.

But the kingdom of God is not what we expected. Jesus was born into poverty and obscurity. He taught that the kingdom belonged to the meek, the lowly, and the poor. In God’s kingdom, the first would be the last; the greatest would be the servant of all. Jesus had no army, but would rather bless his enemies than slaughter them. If Jesus was bringing a kingdom, it sure didn’t look like it.

THE GOSPEL AND THE KINGDOM

The kingdom of God would not come through might or power or violence. **Instead, the kingdom was breaking into the world through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.**

✝ FRONTLINE

In his life, Jesus took on a body and became fully man while remaining fully God. He lived on earth as a man without sin. Wherever Jesus went, the enemy lost his grip on creation. Jesus healed the sick, forgave sins, cast out demons, and raised the dead. Each miracle of Jesus was a bold statement: “the kingdom of God has arrived—darkness beware.” The good news that we call the gospel is that God had come in Jesus to defeat his enemies, rescue his people, and create a new kingdom where his rule and reign would always be recognized.

In his death, Jesus took the penalty for our sins. On the cross, he suffered as our substitute, reconciling us back to God. However, Jesus wasn’t the victim but the victor. By his death, he overthrew all other authorities and established his rule on the earth. He was raised up as king on the cross. This is why the Gospel writers highlight the royal images of the crucifixion. Jesus was given a splendid purple robe. He held a reed as his royal scepter. A crown of thorns was placed on his head. The Gospels nail the irony: he was crowned as king of all through humiliation and mockery.

In his resurrection, Jesus literally rose from the dead and is alive today. New creation life is now invading the world. Through his rising, Jesus declared to the world that death had been defeated. He ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of God’s throne. From heaven, he rules and reigns as king, continuing to establish God’s kingdom, until that day when it covers the whole earth. We long for the day when King Jesus physically returns to the earth to restore all things in a new heavens and new earth.

Here is the point: the message of the gospel and the message of the kingdom go hand-in-hand. The gospel story is the kingdom story. The unity of the gospel and kingdom is not just an idea to believe. The gospel story of the kingdom of God means everything for our life. Let’s look at three ways that the gospel and the kingdom go hand-in-hand. You can write these down in the blanks as we go.

1. GOSPEL FAITH & KINGDOM WORKS

Gospel Faith. We believe that the good news of Jesus impacts every area of our lives. It addresses our sins, wounds, and weaknesses. It meets us in our guilt, shame, and loneliness. The gospel is not just the message by which we come to faith in Jesus. It is the very essence of the Christian life. We live by faith in Jesus. Faith is recognizing the truth of who Jesus is and trusting completely in him.

But how do we come to place our faith in Jesus and others do not? Is it because we are smarter than others, or more righteous than others, or less broken than others? No, we come to faith in Jesus because of his grace in election. Before we had done anything good or bad, before we existed, before creation itself, God unconditionally loved us and chose us to be his sons and daughters.

✝ FRONTLINE

There is nothing we can do to earn God's grace. Rather, the gospel drives us to look away from ourselves and place all of our hope in Jesus and his work alone. We want to spend our whole lives learning to more fully lean into the grace of Jesus by faith.

Kingdom Works. At the same time, if Jesus is truly our king, he has the authority to tell us how to live. We can't say that we trust in Jesus as king, yet continue to live as our own king. To be a follower of Jesus, you have to actually follow Jesus. This doesn't mean perfection. Nor does this mean that we somehow earn God's favor by being good. But, faith always leads to works.

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?... For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. (Jas 2:14, 26)

Under the authority of Jesus, we have been called into a new way of living. The kingdom impacts our lifestyle, speech, marriages, singleness, sexuality, parenting, and relationships. Our counter-cultural ethic is a witness to the power and goodness of the kingdom of God.

2. GOSPEL HOSPITALITY & KINGDOM GENEROSITY

Gospel Hospitality. We believe that, because of the gospel, we have been welcomed into God's family, into God's house. Jesus loved us when we least deserved it. He died and rose again to bring us near. By the Spirit he adopts us as sons and daughters. He calls us to display that same love and hospitality toward one another (Eph 2:13-19).

We prioritize gospel hospitality in our Sunday gatherings and in our community groups. We look for the visitor, the newcomer, and the outsider to greet, engage, and introduce them to community. This kind of hospitality has the opportunity to change lives.

Every time we gather there may be people among us who have never experienced the love of God. Because of the welcome that we have received in the gospel, our welcome to others may be the first taste of the gospel they truly get.

Kingdom Generosity. God gave first and best in offering us life through his Son. King Jesus was so generous that he "emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant" for our sake. (Phil 2:7) Even more, God actually gave us the righteousness of Christ in exchange for our sin. Jesus took on everything we deserve, and we get everything Jesus deserves. We want all of our lives, even our finances, to be a generous response back to God's generosity—to see his Kingdom come and flourish among us.

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Cor 9:7)

✝ FRONTLINE

We approach giving in three primary ways: tithes, alms, and offerings. Tithes, meaning a tenth in Hebrew, are regular financial gifts which support the everyday, ongoing needs of the church. Alms are intentional gifts that go above and beyond tithes which bring relief to the poor and most vulnerable in society. Offerings are occasional gifts to meet specific needs, where the church rallies around a specific gospel cause locally or globally. You will have a chance to engage each of these types of giving in the life of our church.

We ask each member of Frontline to commit to regular financial giving to further the mission God has given us in our city and the world. In the end, our desire is for every believer to experience the joy and blessing that comes with giving.

3. GOSPEL PROCLAMATION & KINGDOM DEMONSTRATION

Gospel Proclamation. Gospel proclamation pushes back darkness by pointing people to the only good news that can save them. We are called to build relationships with those far from God and look for opportunities to tell them about the one who has rescued us. Pushing back darkness means opening our mouths to talk about what God has done for us in Jesus.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Pet 2:9)

Kingdom Demonstration. Through kingdom demonstration, we put our hands to the plough, not wearying of doing good as Jesus brings the kingdom of God. The church is not a “lifeboat” for Christians to get off the sinking ship of the world. The church is a place where the kingdom is present in the world. We care about the spiritual and physical needs of those in darkness around us. We seek to serve our city with the light of Christ. We move toward our neighbors who are poor or are considered outsiders. The light of the gospel works in both word and action. We are called to take action to bring God’s good order, life, and goodness to a chaotic world. In this way, the gospel community adorns the gospel word.

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (1 Pet 2:12)

SACRAMENTS

One of the places where we see the union between gospel and kingdom is in the sacraments. The sacraments are sacred acts of worship that Jesus commanded for all Christians. In baptism and communion, the physical and spiritual come together to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

Sacraments serve three purposes. Write these down:

Sacraments are Signs of Grace. Sacraments are visible signs of invisible grace. They are highly symbolic rituals that represent the benefits we have experienced through the gospel. In the rituals of the sacraments, we physically reenact the climactic moments of the gospel. We tangibly and physically experience invisible spiritual realities.

Sacraments are Means of Grace. When we engage the sacraments through faith, God has promised to help us, sustain us, assure us, and work in us through them. In the sacraments, we come expecting God to meet us with his grace.

Sacraments are Markers of Grace. Sacraments mark us out as citizens of the kingdom of God. We receive a new identity through faith in the gospel of Jesus. Through baptism and communion, God sets us apart and declares us his own. The sacraments reorient how we see ourselves, others, and the world.

BAPTISM

Baptism is the initial step of the Christian life, the first act of faith and repentance. It is the primary way a person identifies themselves as a follower of Jesus in the world. In the Bible, whenever a person comes to faith in Jesus, they are immediately baptized in water. It serves as a physical sign of their intention to embrace the good news of Jesus. In baptism, a professing believer makes a public commitment to follow Jesus and is fully immersed in water. The act of immersion embodies our new spiritual reality: we have died to our old way of life, and have been raised to a new life in Jesus (Rom 6:3–4).

When we are baptized, God speaks over us that we are his children. It is the way God visibly displays what he has done inside us. Throughout our lives, our baptism is a constant reminder of the promises that God has made toward us.

COMMUNION

To strengthen our faith and nourish our souls, Jesus gave us the sacrament of communion, also called the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper. Unlike baptism, communion is to be regularly practiced again and again throughout the Christian life. We celebrate communion each Sunday at Frontline. For those who have taken the initial step of faith and repentance in baptism, the Lord's Supper is a means to remember and receive the love and grace of Jesus anew (1 Cor 11:23–26).

The bread is a tangible symbol of the broken body of Jesus for us. The wine is a tangible symbol of the shed blood of Jesus. Each week, as followers of Jesus eat the bread and drink the wine, we actually commune with Jesus and feast on his presence. But further, as we practice this habit together, we also have fellowship and union with one another (1 Cor 10:16–17).

✝ FRONTLINE

Communion is a faith meal for baptized followers of Jesus. If someone has come to faith in Jesus but hasn't been baptized since, we would call them to submit to the initiatory sign of baptism first. Whereas baptism symbolizes our entrance into the Christian faith, communion symbolizes our ongoing need for Jesus. Jesus is both the author and the perfecter of our faith. The sacraments are one of the ways that Jesus continues to meet us, sustain us, and keep us until he returns to finally perfect the work he began in us.

EXERCISE: GOSPEL HOSPITALITY (15 MIN)

Gospel hospitality is one of the most practical ways in which we embody the gospel and serve as a sign and foretaste of the coming kingdom (1 Pet 4:7–9). In both Sunday gatherings and community groups, we are called to move toward people, greet them warmly, and have thoughtful conversations. But who do we prioritize?

Ed Welch suggests that we should prioritize greeting in our gatherings in the following order:

1. **The visitor (what Scripture calls the “foreigner” or “alien”) comes first.**
2. **The visitor who returns comes next.**
3. **The less popular, the introverts, the marginalized, or those sitting alone come next.**
4. **Then come the children.**
5. **Good friends are interspersed through these greetings, but they are left for later if time is short.**

1. LEARNING TO PRIORITIZE

Work through the following questions with your table.

1. What are some reasons why the order listed above might be best when moving toward others and greeting them on Sundays and in community groups?
2. Why might you personally be reluctant to move toward visitors?
3. Who in your life is one step ahead of you in knowing people? What does that person do that you could learn from?

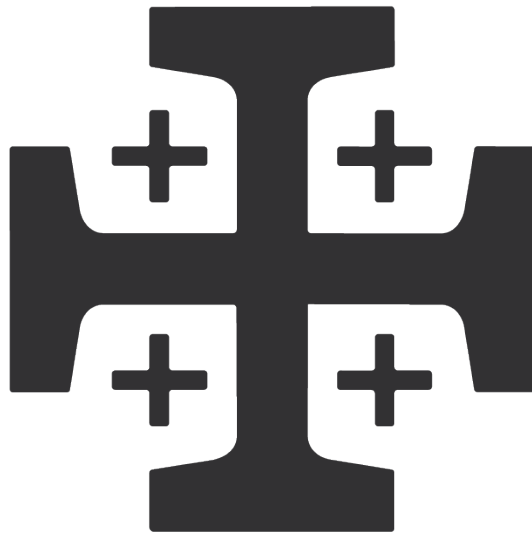
2. LEARNING TO ENGAGE

Work through the following exercise with your table. Don’t look at the chart until you’re done brainstorming (See Worksheet)!

- Brainstorm together some examples of a helpful greeting and initial questions you could ask a complete stranger when greeting them on a Sunday or in a group.
- Afterwards, compare your answers with the suggestions on the chart (See worksheet).

3. PRAYER

Close your time by praying aloud together that God would encourage and equip each of you to pursue gospel hospitality.



FRONTLINE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

SESSION 4: GENDER

OUTLINE OF SESSION 4

TEACHING: 30 MIN

A Biblical Vision of Gender
What does it Mean to Be a Man?
What does it Mean to Be a Woman?
Gender and Marriage
Being a Gender-Redeeming Church

EXERCISE: 15 MIN

Submission and Authority

TEACHING NOTES (30 MIN)

A BIBLICAL VISION OF GENDER

For 20 years, Frontline Church has been committed to being a Gender-Redeeming church. Gender-Redeeming isn't a priority for us because we want to jump on a bandwagon of cultural "hot takes." We believe our gender is an essential part of who we are as men and women. Gender is a gift from God to us, hard-wired into our humanity. It speaks loudly about who we are and what God made us for.

There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. (C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*)

As we explore the Bible's teaching on gender, we are standing on holy ground. As image-bearers, each one of us has been given immense value and worth. We believe that embracing and embodying God's good vision for gender leads to flourishing in the home, church, and world.

When Jesus taught about gender, he regularly pointed us back to the very beginning of the Bible, to Genesis 1 and 2. He affirmed a concept of gender that finds its very roots in creation. When we look at the creation of man and woman in the beginning, a few big ideas begin to emerge. There are four main ideas we want to highlight from the biblical vision of gender. Write these in the blanks as we go.

1. THE PURPOSE OF GENDER

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, he made humans as the pinnacle of his creation. Humanity was designed to be different from all other created things. They were to be the image of God. This means that, in the beginning, our purpose was to reflect who God is in all his beauty and glory. One of the ways that God intends for humans to reflect his glory is through our gender.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Gen 1:27–28)

God did not create a generic, genderless human being. From the beginning God chose to make male and female in his image. Both male and female are important to God's vision of humanity.

2. THE UNITY OF GENDER

God's intention for humanity is for male and female to be united together, sharing their glory as image bearers of God. Godly unity is where the Bible chooses to start our story. When we forget the unity of man and woman, darkness and evil follow—evils like subjugation, manipulation, and misogyny. In reaction, we may embrace a polarized view of the sexes that only serves to reinforce the enmity between men and women. However, Scripture wants us to see men and women united together in dignity, humanity, equality, and shared mission.

3. THE DIFFERENCES OF GENDER

Man and woman are united in their glory as humans, but they both carry unique engendered glory as well. When we look at Genesis 1, Scripture highlights all the glorious unity of man and woman. When we look at Genesis 2, Scripture highlights the beautiful diversity of man and woman.

In Genesis 2, when Adam first catches a glimpse of Eve, he cries out in joy and delight, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh...” In the woman, the man doesn't see an enemy. Nor does he see a copy of himself. Rather, he sees a beautiful image bearer of God—one who is like him but with beautiful differences. He sees someone he can wholeheartedly embrace without shame. In the beginning, human relationships were enriched by uniting what was different.

4. THE GIFT OF GENDER

It is good to be a man. It is good to be a woman. Our gender, male and female, is first and foremost a blessed reality. The good gift of God over male and female is a shared glory. Men and women are united in their humanity, and yet distinct in their gender. They fit together in their differences and fit together in their shared glory. In God's grand creation, men and women are equal in value and dignity but not interchangeable or the same. The differences are divinely ordered and glorious. God works through the different callings and designs of men and women to bring order, beauty, and truth into the world. He redeems and works out our shared calling through our beautiful differences. This is his gift to creation!

Reflection Question: Can you see any ways in which your understanding of gender is shaped more by the world or your past than by what God blesses in men and women?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MAN?

The first man was created from the ground and was given this task: to cultivate and protect the beautiful garden God had created.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. (Gen 2:15)

✝ FRONTLINE

Write this down. **The man had a unique responsibility within the world to work and keep.** The man is charged to defend and cultivate the garden, working to see its good, godly order flourish on the earth. The man is given a holy calling to serve as a watchman over creation. He is designed to guard the garden, his wife, his future children, and the world they are building.

In other words, the man is given a fatherly calling over creation. This doesn't make men better than women, but it does give them a unique responsibility to initiate, lead, protect, and serve as those who will give an account to God. Masculinity is oriented toward self-sacrificial initiative that cultivates and guards a space where growth and flourishing are possible.

Jesus, as a man, fully embodied God's vision for masculinity. He was neither effeminate nor macho. He was tough, yet tender. As a carpenter, he was strong and worked with his hands. As a teacher, he was compassionate and gentle. He boldly confronted religious leaders with authority. And yet he took the place of a servant to wash his followers' feet.

Jesus' masculinity was rooted in who God made men to be. As our vision for masculinity comes in line with God's vision, we begin to see that Jesus himself is the perfect example of godly masculinity. Masculinity isn't something of which men need to repent. It is something men are charged to embrace, as they bring their masculinity under the authority of Jesus. As men stand firm in biblical masculinity like Jesus, it will bring blessing to those around them. This is why the Bible charges men to recapture the beautiful picture of godly masculinity.

Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love. (1 Cor 16:13-14)

Men, God has called you to take up your masculinity and lay down your lives for the good of those around you.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A WOMAN?

Again, write this down. **The first woman was created as a helper for the man, to bring life and rest to a weary world.**

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."... The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. (Gen 2:18, 3:20)

The woman was made to be a helper "fit" or suitable for the man. In Scripture, a "helper" is not a personal assistant. A "helper" supplies strength and life where it is lacking. In the Old Testament, this word, ezer, is used dozens of times: only two times for women, with the vast majority of other uses referring to God himself. Rather than being degrading, this word demonstrates the unique calling of women. Women are

biological, relational, and cultural life-givers. They bring a sense of peace and rest that makes us call out like Adam, “At last!” Adam is called to protect, but without Eve, there isn’t much worth protecting.

Women were made to image God’s life-giving and life-sustaining work in the world, and he wrote this reality into their very bodies. Women create, multiply, nurture, and transform. They bring forth life—yes, sometimes physically from their bodies—but, more broadly, with the whole of their lives. A woman’s ability to be “life-giving” is not limited to her childbearing years. By giving their lives away for the blessing and benefit of those around them, spiritual mothers point us to the heart of God, who first gave all of himself to offer us life.

Femininity is oriented towards life-giving receptivity that provides strength and rest to the weary world. Womanhood points us to the core of what it means to be human: we were made to give and receive love, to be entirely transformed by it, and to see that love bring forth new life. The Christian life is bound up in a love that multiplies and bears fruit. When rightly ordered under Christ’s authority, womanhood becomes a gift to the body of Christ and to the world.

GENDER AND MARRIAGE

Men and women are called to live all of their lives embracing and embodying the gift of their gender. As we obey God, walk in faith, and grow in maturity, we do all of those things as either a man or a woman. When we relate to God or each other, we do so as gendered beings. This is most clearly seen in the covenant of marriage, where man and woman are brought together as one.

Fill in the blank here. **Marriage points outside of itself as a picture of the union between Christ and the Church.** In light of the beautiful differences in our gender, there are distinct roles that a man and woman fulfill if they are called to marriage. God intends that a husband and wife love and serve one another as a picture of how Christ and the Church love and serve one another. Ephesians 5 explores the deeper meaning that is hard-wired into every marriage.

WIFE

Corresponding to the woman’s ability to give life and rest, a married woman is called to bring peace and strength to her husband, as well as joyfully submit to her husband’s leadership—just as the Church submits to Jesus. A wife is called to follow the Church’s example of inviting, receiving, and following the leadership of Jesus. In this submission, she is likewise following Christ’s example, who willingly and beautifully submitted to his Father, though equal to him in dignity, value, and worth. A wife is called to partner with her husband to see their family glorify God. She has both a unique voice as well as gifts that should be honored and cultivated in the marriage, under her husband’s leadership.

Since this submission flows from the image of God and illustrates Christ and the Church, it should never devalue, silence, or subjugate women. A wife is not called to follow her husband no matter what. A wife should never follow her husband into sin. Rather, she is intended to follow him as he follows Christ.

HUSBAND

Corresponding to the man's calling to work and keep, a married man is given the responsibility to love, protect, and lead his wife, just as Christ loves, protects, and leads the Church. A husband is called to follow Christ's example and lay down his own life for the good of his wife. The only way a husband can follow Christ's example is also by following the Church's example—submitting himself to Christ's leadership first. He should spend his life in service to his bride, putting her wellbeing and preferences above his own. He should create an environment where his wife can flourish in her calling as a woman.

A husband's leadership should never be oppressive or abusive in any way. He is never called to subjugate or dominate his wife, for that would dishonor Christ's example of servant leadership. Marital tyranny misrepresents the God who created marriage as a sign of his own love. Rather, a husband should relate to his wife as an image-bearer of God with dignity, value, and worth, who gives life and rules the family alongside him.

BEING A GENDER-REDEEMING CHURCH

If Frontline Church fully embraced being a gender-redeeming church, we would look and feel different from the world. Instead of perpetuating the "battle of the sexes", we would be ambitious to "outdo one another in showing honor." Men would take up the responsibility to protect and lead, so that those around them might grow into their own godly callings. Women would boldly step into their calling to give rest and life where it is lacking, providing blessing and wisdom that refines and beautifies their family and church.

Men and women are called to value each other as they serve and live in community together. This is why the church is called the family of God. Women and men in the church relate to one another as family.

Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father,
younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as
sisters, in all purity. (1 Tim 5:1)

When we have a healthy view of gender, we can begin to interact with one another first and foremost as brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters. As we live in a gender-redeeming community, the glory of God will be displayed, and both men and women will flourish.

✝ FRONTLINE

So if the church is the family of God, how is it intended to function? **As the household of God, two offices of leadership have been ordained in the Church, namely elders and deacons.** A mature man or woman does not have to hold an office in a church to be a spiritual father or mother. In fact, each Christian is called to faithfully steward and lead in the life God has assigned to them. We are all meant to give our lives away in the family of God as brothers and sisters, and one day as wise fathers and mothers. The call to spiritual leadership is not unique to elders and deacons. But elders and deacons are called to spiritual leadership as a unique vocation.

1. ELDERS

Elders are biblically-qualified men who shepherd, lead, and protect the local church. In the Bible, the terms “pastor,” “bishop,” and “elder” all refer to the same role. These terms point to the various roles and responsibilities of an elder. The term “elder” relates to the man’s maturity as a spiritual father in the Church. The term “bishop” or “overseer” relates to the man’s governmental leadership, for which he will give an account (Heb 13:17). The term “pastor” relates to the man’s spiritual obligation to shepherd the flock of God entrusted into his care (1 Pet 5:2).

Each local church should be led by a team of elders who together carry the burden of ministry. A healthy eldership team prioritizes spiritual brotherhood by working together to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3). They stand united in doctrine, values, philosophy, mission, and relationship.

In the Bible, every role in the church is open to women, with one exception: the office of elder. When the New Testament gives us specific qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, it tells us, among other character qualifications, that elders should be men. This is because the office of elder is a leading and protecting role. Elders are called by God to lead the church and protect the church from error and false teachers. They are spiritual fathers in the local church. This kind of role mirrors God’s design for masculinity in general. The “imaging” characteristics men display in fathering and husbanding are the same demanded of them in eldership. So in the New Testament, the office of elder is specifically limited to men.

Male eldership was not established by God because men are more capable or gifted than women, for that would deny the image of God in women. Rather, as we have seen, masculinity is uniquely designed for such a shepherding and protecting role. Some men are called to sacrificially step into the role of Elder for the benefit and protection of men, women, and children in the church.

2. DEACONS

Whereas elders lead the local church by oversight, prayer, and teaching, deacons lead in the church through care, service, and mission. Deacons are defined most simply as servant-leaders. They serve in various practical ways throughout the church to free up the elders to focus on oversight, prayer, and teaching. While every deacon

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is a servant of the church, not every servant of the church is a deacon. Rather, deacons are specific, recognized, established leaders within the church. As with the office of elder, the qualifications for deacons are laid down in 1 Timothy. As representatives of the church, deacons are publicly recognized and installed into this office. In serving the church, they contribute to the overall fruitfulness and health of the body.

While the office of elder is limited to men, both men and women are encouraged to serve as deacons. We see support for women deacons in both the Bible and throughout history. For instance, the qualifications for deacons laid out in 1 Timothy 3 include specific qualifications for women who serve as deacons (1 Tim 3:11). Unlike the office of elder, deacons do not have a teaching role, nor do they hold governing authority in the local church. Therefore, women and men serve alongside one another in this office.

EXERCISE: SUBMISSION AND AUTHORITY (15 MIN)

David Powlison reminds us that in various areas of life, we are all called to either submission or authority. “All of us are called to major on submission within some relationships and to major on initiating love within others.” In light of this dual reality, work through the following exercise with your table.

1. Identify Where You Lead and Follow. The following chart lists various Scriptures where God speaks about human authority in different areas of our lives.

- Take a few minutes to read through the list silently. Circle those Scriptures that specifically apply to you, in an area where you are either called to lead or follow. In some areas, you may be called to both lead and follow (e.g., you have parents, and you are a parent).

Sphere of Influence	Called to Lead	Called to Follow
Family	Do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph 6:4)	Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise), that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land. (Eph 6:2-3)
Marriage	Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. (Eph 5:25)	Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. (Eph 5:22)
Church	[Elders], shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. (1 Pet 5:2-3)	Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. (Heb 13:17)
Work	Masters, treat your [servants] justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. (Col 4:1)	Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. (Col 3:23-24)
Government	For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad... He is God's servant for your good... He is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. (Rom 13:3-4)	Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. (1 Pet 2:13-14)

2. Discuss Together.

1. In what ways has God called you to lead others? How can you increasingly lead in a way that honors God's heart for those under your care?
2. In what ways had God called you to follow others? How can you grow in reflecting Christ to those placed over you?

3. Pray Together. Pray for one another to both lead and follow in ways that honor Jesus.



FRONTLINE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

SESSION 5: LUNCH

OUTLINE

EAT LUNCH

MEMBERSHIP AND NEXT STEPS

Why Covenant Membership Matters

Next Steps

Expectations and Requirements of Members

Q&A

OPTIONAL

Meet and Greet

Ministry Fair

Group Connect

TEACHING NOTES

MEMBERSHIP AND NEXT STEPS

We want to take a moment, over lunch, to address why Membership is important and what to expect next as you move towards membership in our church.

At Frontline, we practice covenant membership. The idea of “covenant” runs through the entire Bible. A covenant is not a contract. In a contract, the relationship is contingent on each side holding up their end of the bargain. It’s an agreement that only lasts as long as we sense some form of benefit. A covenant is different. A covenant binds two parties together in a relationship of trust. It’s not about negotiating the benefits we receive or checking off a list of obligations. Instead, a covenant is defined by faithfulness and commitment.

By becoming a member, you are making a covenant to join yourself to a local church. You are committing to love and serve and “do life together” with this particular body. Covenant membership creates a family with whom we fulfill the “one-another” commands of Scripture. You are committing yourself to the elders and leaders of this church, to respect and honor them as those who keep watch over your soul. Members should strive to humbly receive from their elders in moments of formative and corrective church discipline, where our leaders are striving to shepherd our hearts toward Jesus.

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 build itself up in love. (Eph 4:15–16)

Elders likewise take on specific commitments and responsibilities in covenant membership. Elders are commanded to prioritize care and oversight for a specific local church. An elder at Frontline will not give an account for the people of another church. Instead, he will give an account for the people of Frontline Church. Covenant members deserve a higher level of pastoral care, oversight, concern, and devotion because they have committed themselves to this family.

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. (1 Pet 5:1–3)

What does all of this mean moving forward? What are the next steps? There are certain requirements and expectations for covenant members at Frontline Church. By requirements, we mean those things you have to meet before becoming a member. By expectations, we mean those things that you commit to do and grow into.

We are not perfect, and we don't expect perfection. But we do want you to know what it means to be a part of this family before you join.

REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP

- A profession of faith in Jesus
- Submission to the authority of the Bible
- Baptized as a Christian
- Belief in Frontline Members Confessional Statement
- Ongoing commitment to a life of repentance and following Jesus
- Agreement to Expectations of Members
- Is at least 18 years of age

EXPECTATIONS OF MEMBERS

- Regular attendance and participation in Sunday gatherings
- Active participation in a Frontline community group
- Actively engaged in serving on a team at Frontline
- Regularly pray for and missionally engage at least three people who don't follow Jesus
- Regular and faithful giving to Frontline
- Guard unity within the church body
- Follow the leadership of Frontline elders
- Humbly receive church discipleship and discipline
- Pray for the church and church leadership
- If you leave, leave well and notify an elder

EXPECTATIONS OF ELDERS

- Meet the requirements and expectations for members
- Pray for the church
- Care for the church
- Carry out church discipleship and discipline
- Oversee and lead the church
- Steward the resources of the church
- Teach and equip the church
- Guard doctrine and the gospel
- Live as an example to the church

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS TO BECOME A MEMBER?

- **Fill out the New Member Questionnaire** *You must give the link for your specific congregation*
- **Complete Required Reading** *These can be found in your folders and online at frontlinechurch.com/membership *
- **Attend a Membership Interview**
- **Sign the Membership Covenant**

Q&A

Allow time for questions over lunch. If there are more questions than fifteen minutes will allow, feel free to direct participants towards a one-on-one conversation.

OPTIONAL: MEET AND GREET, MINISTRY FAIR, GROUP CONNECT

As you finish eating lunch, consider making space for participants to meet staff members and ministry directors. Or invite community group leaders/apprentices to be present for this portion of the day to give participants an opportunity to connect with a group meeting in their area. This portion of the day is open for creativity. Fill it as best suits your needs.



FRONTLINE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

MEMBERSHIP INTERVIEW AND COVENANT

MEMBERSHIP INTERVIEW

The membership interview is the final step of the membership process. An interview should be led by at least one Frontline Elder, though other Elders and Deacons can help. Membership interviews can be done individually or in a group setting of no more than 8. Our goal in these interviews is to hear a person's story of faith, review the membership expectations, and address any outstanding questions. Generally, each membership interview should include the following:

STORY

Have the person briefly share their story of faith. Ideally, this should be around 3-5 minutes. In particular, we want to know how they came to faith in Jesus, when were they baptized, what has been their church history, and how they ended up at Frontline. **As they share their story, it may prompt additional conversation and follow-up.** Commonly, this may include:

- Not having an accurate understanding of faith and/or the gospel.
- Not having been baptized since following Jesus.
- Only being baptized as an infant.
- Leaving their previous church in an unhealthy manner.

Each of these scenarios requires further dialogue and potential next steps.

(Please note: for those who have only been baptized as an infant and currently have no desire to be baptized since following Jesus, they may still become a member of Frontline if they have a clear theological understanding and conviction of paedobaptism.)

REVIEW

Briefly review the Requirements and Expectations for Members and Elders listed on pages 48-49 of the Membership Workbook (pg. 53 of the Teacher's Workbook). In particular, highlight Community Groups, Serving, and Giving. If they are not engaging in one of these, discuss our vision for it at Frontline and how they can get connected. Often, this will require a follow-up from a Hub Leader or Ministry Lead. **In addition, ask if there are any outstanding questions concerning Frontline Church and membership.**

COVENANT

If they are ready to become a member, have them sign the Membership Covenant found on page 54 of the Membership Workbook (pg. 59 of the Teacher's Workbook). The Covenant should also be signed by the Elder performing the interview. If they are not ready, they can return the Membership Covenant when they are ready.

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

I, _____, willingly enter into Covenant Membership with Frontline Church. By signing this Membership Covenant, I can say with good conscience that I meet the Requirements for Membership at Frontline. By the Spirit's help, I will aim to live in accordance with these expectations by the Holy Spirit's help. I have read and believe the Frontline Members Confessional Statement in its entirety.

I understand that while complete agreement with the Doctrinal Statement of Frontline Church is not required, I will not contribute to division over particular theological distinctives found in that statement. I promise to pursue love and guard unity within the church.

DATE

MEMBER SIGNATURE

ELDER SIGNATURE