



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

*A Six Week Introduction to the Doctrine,
Vision & Ministry of Redeemer Church*

WELCOME!

The leadership and members of Redeemer Church welcome you to this *Membership Matters* class. Our prayer is that these sessions will enable you to understand the vision, doctrine, and ministry of Redeemer Church and to find your place among us.

In Scripture, we see that to be a Christian is to be part of a church. There is no such thing as an independent or unaffiliated follower of Jesus. The gospel of Jesus Christ invites all people, without distinction, to participate in one new community. This new community shares one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one hope. They are one body striving for unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. By God's grace, Redeemer Church is a local expression of this new covenant community, and into this community, we invite you.

In this community, we love and are loved, serve and are served, give and receive, and are built up by God's various gifts, which He distributes through the members of His church body. We thank God in advance for the special gifts you will bring to this community, as well as the ways you will be blessed by the ministry of others. To God be glory in the church forever and ever. Amen.

All Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version
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The

MEMBERSHIP PROCESS

COURSE

Our six week *Membership Matters* course is designed to help you discern God's will concerning your place at Redeemer, as well as provide you with a scriptural basis upon which to make your commitment to membership. Check off each session once you have attended the class and read the course materials.

- Session 1 | Overview, Identity & Vision
- Session 2 | Our Doctrine
- Session 3 | Our Polity
- Session 4 | Upreach: As God's Worshipers
- Session 5 | Inreach: As God's Family
- Session 6 | Outreach: As God's Missionaries

CARE GROUP

While walking through the membership process, we also urge you to begin participating in a Care Group. To find a group that meets in close proximity to you got to www.redeemerfortworth.org/caregroup

COVENANT

Please submit the following forms, which can be provided to you upon request or found online at www.redeemerfortworth.org/membership.

- Covenant & Church Discipline Signature form. This ensures that you have read the Redeemer Church Covenant as well as the statement on church discipline, and are willing to make such a commitment.
- Membership Profile. This tool helps us get to know you better. www.redeemerfortworth.org/membership-profile

CONVERSATION

An elder will contact you to schedule an interview once your forms have been received. The purpose of this conversation is to afford you an opportunity to ask any questions of the church's leadership that you might have, share any concerns, and allow us to hear you share (verbally) your personal testimony of faith in Jesus Christ. During this conversation, we will also have the opportunity to talk about baptism (believers' baptism by immersion is required for membership).

CONGREGATION

Each applicant is invited to briefly share their testimony of faith in Jesus Christ at a members' meeting, providing the opportunity to our members to affirm your desire to join our church family.

Redeemer Church

COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and, on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love, to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel to all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to educate our children in the Christian faith; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment, to avoid all gossip, backbiting and excessive anger; to seek God's help in abstaining from practices that bring unwarranted harm to the body or jeopardize our own or another's faith.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the guidelines of our Savior to secure it without delay. We moreover engage that when we move from this place, we will, if possible, unite with a church where we can carry out the articles of this confession and the spirit of this covenant.

*As God's worshipers,
family, and missionaries,
we exist to equip God's
people to delight in his
glory and to declare his
glory to our neighbors
and the nations.*

Session One

OVERVIEW, IDENTITY & VISION

WHY JOIN REDEEMER CHURCH?

It is important to help prospective members understand what life at Redeemer Church looks like and what we value as a body. Let's look at a few passages from Scripture that speak about the life of Christ's church and consider how that impacts the way we relate to one another.

IDENTITY IN CHRIST

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Col. 3:1-4 ESV)

The opening verses of Colossians 3 speak to the matter of identity. Your identity defines who you are, drives where you find your ultimate significance, and determines your life priorities. We will be the first to admit that while God created us to find our identity in him, all of us have sought to find our ultimate significance in things less satisfying than God himself, such as money, education, acceptance, or a job position, to name a few. However, the good news is that we can be reconciled to God through the work of Jesus Christ. We experience not just forgiveness, but also reconciliation with God through Christ. Those who have been reconciled to God have been fundamentally transformed such that their identity now and forever stands in who he is and what he has done through the gospel. The new identity that believers find in Christ changes our relationships to God, to the church, and to the world. In relation to God, we become his worshipers. We are also adopted into his family and are now members together of one body, his Church. Having been changed by the work of God in our lives, we are now his ambassadors, carrying the message of the Gospel to the world.

NEW LIFE

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. (Colossians 3:5-11 ESV)

New life in Christ is a radical change. It is not just a new attitude. It comes from the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian. This fundamental change will work itself out in our lives as we grow in Christlikeness. Christians are called to put away the sin that once characterized their

lives and put on Christ. The old way of life is set against new life. We could not live that new life apart from God's work in us (Colossians 3:1-4). We now live in light of who we are called to be, renewed in knowledge after the image of our creator. This is a process that is sometimes referred to as discipleship. The word disciple is related to the word for student. It is a process of growing through the work of the Spirit of God in our lives, participation in the local church, and personal devotion to God through studying his word, prayer, and other means. As you consider membership at Redeemer Church, we want to ensure that you know what it means to find your identity in Christ and experience new life in him.

COMMUNITY

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:12-17)

In light of our new identity in Christ and the new life that follows, Colossians 3:12-17 describes how Christians relate to one another. We live together in compassion and patience. We bear with each other and forgive one another. And this is not just a set of moral imperatives. It is the result of the peace of Christ that rules in our hearts. We were called to pursue this as part of a community. This passage mentions thankfulness three times. It also speaks of worship together, prayer, and the word of Christ dwelling richly in us. We are called to this as a body of believers. As members of Redeemer Church we are called to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus and give thanks to God the Father through him. We want to encourage those who join Redeemer Church to pursue this kind of community with others in the body in natural, organic ways. Encouraging one another in Christ and seeking to learn from one another comes as we know one another and walk together.

Notice the connection in this passage between the word of Christ dwelling richly in us and the way we relate to one another. Christ's church is built and shaped by the word of God. You will see this emphasis in the exposition of God's word in sermons and we endeavor for that emphasis to feed into both our worship together and the way we relate with one another.

Taken together, these sections of Colossians 3 speak to how those who have come to Christ should grow in Christlikeness as a part of his church. Whether you just recently professed faith in Jesus Christ or have been walking with him for decades, our chief aim in Membership Matters is your discipleship. Our foremost desire is to equip you in submitting to the authority of Jesus Christ and treasuring the gospel that is "of first importance" (Matt 28:18-20; 1 Cor 15:1-4). In particular, we see this course teaching Jesus-followers to obey all that he has commanded in regard to the visible expression of his kingdom on earth, the local church, and living with each other in it through the power of the gospel. Stated differently, no Christian can rightly say, "I don't need other Christians," or "I'm only a member of the universal church." While the universal church exists, obeying all that Jesus commanded us includes all he commanded us

through his apostles about the local church, including loving one another, gathering with one another regularly, submitting to one another in discipline, obeying particular leaders, correcting one another, bearing each others burdens, etc. (Matt 18:15-20; Gal 6:2; Eph 5:21; Heb 10:25; 13:17; 1 John 3:23). Our hope is that Membership Matters encourages your Christian growth, joy, and tangible obedience in all these areas related to the gospel and the local church who should authenticate the gospel with their lives.

CARE

Matthew 18 is a chapter containing a number of accounts. Each one builds upon the other to make a larger point. This chapter is sometimes referred to as “the sermon on the church.” It stresses the care and concerns believers should have for one another. The chapter opens with disciples asking “who is the greatest?” and Jesus’ response to become like a child stresses humility in how we approach our own place in Christ’s kingdom. The next accounts discuss the severity of sin (Matthew 18:7-9), the care we should have for those who stray like sheep (Matthew 18:10-14), and how to approach those who have sinned against us (Matthew 18:15-20). It then follows with two accounts stressing the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation (Matthew 18:21-35). Taken together the chapter is stressing how we should live together as a church. We should start from a place of humility, have care and concern for the wellbeing of others in the body, and desire to live in forgiveness and reconciliation toward one another.

We want to ensure that those pursuing membership at Redeemer Church see the value of intentional care for one another. We desire to encourage a culture where we live in humility together, with concern and care for one another and a willingness to pursue forgiveness and reconciliation.

UNITY

Ephesians 2:11-22 and Colossians 3:11 describe the unity that Jewish and Gentile believers found in Christ. They came from different backgrounds and were different from one another in both their culture and their former relationship with God. Yet, we see that God made them both into one new body, doing away with hostility between them. Though they were once strangers to one another, they became fellow citizens and members of God’s household. This unity that believers experience is unique in this world and it is a mark of Christ’s church.

As God’s family, we find our unity in the gospel and our common identity in Christ. Sometimes churches find unity in other commonalities such as a common social group or common interests, but we must find our unity in Christ and his message. This is imperative if we are to keep first things first as a church. As we grow in unity, it is expressed in our fellowship and care for one another. Such active and intentional pursuit of unity should characterize the whole of our lives together (e.g., Acts 4:32; Eph 4:1-3; Phil 2:1-6; Col 3:14).

For all who pursue membership at Redeemer Church, we hope to preserve the unity of the Spirit. One way we do that is through this new members’ class. Unity is also pursued through the preaching of the word of God and participation in life together through Care Groups. By instilling within all who enter our church the fundamentals of Christian living in community, we are all further equipped to respond in Christ-honoring ways when the world, our flesh, and

the devil threaten our unity. Moreover, we hope the materials in this class will contribute to your discernment about whether to join Redeemer Church or seek membership at another faithful, gospel-preaching church. Always feel free to ask any pressing questions you may have during each class session.

We also draw together in unity through Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism represents our personal identification with Christ, but it is also an opportunity for the person being baptized to publicly proclaim faith in Christ and for the members of Redeemer Church to give assent to that profession of faith. We also come together in unity at the Lord's Supper. It is a time when we mark our continued confession and unity as a body. When we take the Lord's Supper together, we give common assent to the faith of those with whom we take Communion.

MISSION

2 Corinthians 5:11-15 speaks of the compulsion to tell others about what God has done on our behalf. As those who have been shown grace from God, we are called to proclaim what God has done on our behalf. The good news of Jesus Christ should truly be good news to us! As those who once were alienated from God but have found new life in Christ, we now are freed to live for him. This means the proclamation of the gospel both near and far and service to our community, friends and neighbors.

We want to ensure that all who join Redeemer Church are familiar with the various avenues for service and outreach to the world as well as the biblical passions driving them. Membership Matters should acquaint you with how the Bible presents God's passion to make his name famous through his people and how we unite together to serve in contexts of local ministries and frontier missions (Hab 2:14; Rom 15:8-21; 16:25-27). Essentially, we want Membership Matters to help you make disciples of Jesus Christ alongside the other brothers and sisters at Redeemer (cf. Matt 28:18-20).

HOW TO JOIN REDEEMER CHURCH

On this side of the cross and resurrection, Jesus Christ makes his heavenly authority visible on earth through local churches (Matt 16:18-19; 18:15-20; 28:18-20). The church is God's object-lesson of divine wisdom (Eph 3:10-11). The church is a living reminder that God has worked in Christ to disarm the rulers and authorities (Col 3:15), break the power of sin (Rom 6:12), and eventually bring all things in subjection to Christ (Eph 1:20-21; 1 Cor 15:24). Therefore, it is incumbent upon the elders and membership of Redeemer Church to maintain the distinction between the world and those whose lives display the liberating power of the gospel.

To help preserve this distinction and disciple people entering the church, the following measures of care exist in the process of joining Redeemer Church. These measures are not one's entryway into the kingdom of God. Only the gospel of Jesus is the gateway into the kingdom. Nevertheless, true belief in and submission to the gospel is very tangible in its love for God, its devotion to the saints, and its zeal for mission. As much as possible, we want to make sure that those joining Redeemer Church are equipped and committed to these things.

1. CLASS

To become a member, one must complete all six sessions of the Membership Matters class and read the Membership Matters material. The class is designed to disciple those new to our church, to encourage unity in our body, and to clarify our mission. Membership Matters will also provide an overview of church life at Redeemer and of how you can participate as part of the body. If you miss a session, please talk to leadership about scheduling a make-up session.

2. CARE GROUP

We also urge you to begin participating in a Care Group. Alongside corporate worship and members meetings, Care Groups exist as one of our primary care structures. Care Groups are smaller gatherings of 10-20 people that help foster gospel community that makes Christ supreme in every area of life. If possible, meet with the Care Group that meets closest to your household. Proximity enables care to occur more frequently and serves evangelism efforts to a particular neighborhood or region.

3. COVENANT

Once finished with Membership Matters, a person must complete two forms expressing their willingness to join Redeemer Church. The first is the “Membership Profile” form. The membership profile helps us get to know you and come to understand your spiritual background more clearly. The second form is the “Church Covenant & Discipline” form (see Appendix A). This ensures that the individual has read the Church Covenant, the Statement of Faith, and our process of church discipline, and is willing to commit to all in good conscience. Both forms are available by request or accessible online at www.redeemerfortworth.org/membership.

4. CONVERSATION

Next is a conversation with an elder. This conversation provides a context for the leadership to get to know you further, hear your profession of faith in Jesus Christ, and discern the most beneficial way forward. It also provides a setting for you to ask questions about the church, share any remaining concerns, and help us understand how you enjoy serving the church.

5. CONGREGATION

In this last measure, those desiring membership will attend a Members’ Meeting and testify of the Lord’s redeeming work in their own lives and of their desire to join and serve the Redeemer body. The elders will also express their recommendation for membership and allow sufficient time for members to express any Scriptural concerns should they have any. If no Scriptural concerns exist, the membership will vote to receive each candidate into membership and commit to serving alongside them in the love of Christ and strength of God’s Spirit (see Bylaws I.2).

Questions?

*We are
Evangelical,
Reformed,
Evangelistic
Baptist,
Elder-Led,
&
Covenantal.*

Session Two

OUR DOCTRINE

WHY IS DOCTRINE IMPORTANT?

As we stated in Session 1, the first and most important consideration when choosing a church is its doctrinal beliefs. We must be personally convinced that a church's beliefs are biblical. That is why doctrine is such a high priority at Redeemer Church. We are convinced that what an individual believes determines how that person lives their life. Despite popular notions that theology has nothing to do with daily Christian living, we hold tenaciously to the belief that our understanding of God is the most practical element of our daily walk with Him.

The purpose of this session is to introduce to you the theological moorings that anchor us as a church and work their way out in daily living. Because the biblical content of our faith is so vast, there is simply no possible way to go into depth about every doctrine we hold to in one session. To make the best use of our time, we will approach this session as a discussion of several distinctives that make up "Our Theological Identity."

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Christians have declared what they believe from the earliest days of the church using common statements, creeds, or affirmations. Colossians 1:15-20, Philippians 2:6-11, and 1 Timothy 3:16 have a confessional nature and are captured within the New Testament letters. The Apostle's Creed is another example from the early church. It specifically addresses theological issues that arose in the life of the early church. Upon the profession of their faith, those being baptized would proclaim these truths. Those who did not believe in the deity of Christ would not have been able to proclaim the Apostle's Creed with a clear conscience. These early creeds showed a connection to the teaching of Christ proclaimed by the apostles, what was universally accepted among the churches, and what was consistent with the whole teaching of Scripture. As ideas and movements change around us in our own day, it can be easy to lose sight of how our own world affects us. These historic creeds and confessions give us a marker of the faith that was delivered to the saints.

The Apostles' Creed

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

As new issues arose through the centuries, more detail was added to confessions of faith to address the specific challenges raised at the time. No one considered the need to address the inspiration and authority of Scripture in detail until it was attacked in the 19th century. There was no change in what the church believed, but there was a need to add clarity in response to new challenges that were raised. The issues of family and ethics have appeared in our own time, and statements of faith have been clarified to address the particular challenges of our current day.

The First and Second London Baptist Confessions, The New Hampshire Confession, and the Abstract of Principles are statements of faith commonly referenced among churches of like faith with Redeemer Church. Our statement of faith draws upon those statements and is in general agreement with them. We also affirm the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, which is a broader statement. Together, these statements contain doctrinal commitments that are historically Christian, Evangelical, and Congregational or Baptist.

Historically, Christian teachings include those held by the universal church throughout history such as the Trinity or the person, nature, and deity of Christ. Teachings that are Evangelical are essential to the gospel such as the authority of Scripture or salvation in Christ. Teachings that are Congregational or Baptist include how we view the ordinances of baptism and communion, how a New Testament church should be organized, and how we should relate to one another and the world.

Our connection to the universal church is affirmed through our common faith with Christ's church through all ages. Our statement of faith also sets out distinctives that define our local congregation. We present some of our distinctives here to assist our guests and inquirers as they learn more about us. A more detailed articulation of our beliefs can be found in the "Statement of Faith" section of our Constitution and Bylaws in Appendix C. We ask those pursuing membership at Redeemer Church to look through that section and ask questions you may have.

OUR THEOLOGICAL DISTINCTIVES

As a church, we value the truth. God calls us to uphold his truth and conform ourselves to it in word and deed (1 Tim 3:15). We are to follow the pattern of the sound words of the apostles, discerning between empty philosophy and faithfulness to Scripture (Eph 4:11-16; Col 2:8; 2 Tim 1:17; 1 John 4:1-5). God's truth did not always characterize us. With the rest of humanity, we, too, morally opposed the truth about God (Rom 1:18). Only by a work of divine grace do we now embrace and celebrate the truth that is in Jesus Christ and that reveals him unto us for salvation (John 14:6; 1 Cor 2:6-16; 2 Tim 2:25). We still may not know God's truth exhaustively due to our own sin and human limitations, but we do know God's truth sufficiently for salvation and life with God. The following distinctives help summarize some of our own commitments as a church to upholding and practicing God's truth.

EVANGELICAL

To be an evangelical church first and foremost means that we strive to be faithful to and centered upon the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as God has revealed it in Holy Scripture (Rom 1:1-7; 1 Cor 15:3-4). God saved us through the gospel; he continues to transform us by the same gospel; and he means for the gospel to set the priorities of all we are both in confession and in practice (1 Cor 9:19-23; 15:1-2; Col 1:23). Historically speaking, this also means we uphold the essential truths of the Christian faith—such as the existence of the triune

God, the complete deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, his virgin conception, his incarnation as the eternal Son of God, the pervasive sinfulness of all humanity, Christ's substitutionary death as the only way of salvation, his physical resurrection, his sure and bodily return, salvation by God's grace alone through faith in Christ alone, and the infallibility and divine authority of the Bible—and seek to walk humbly in accordance with them.

REFORMED

To be Reformed means that we stand with those saints throughout church history who joyfully affirm that God, the world's Creator and King, is at the center of the gospel. The Bible reveals that God designs, preordains, creates, and controls everything to achieve his eternal purpose in Jesus Christ, so that he may receive all praise (Rom 16:25-27; Eph 1:9-10; 2 Tim 1:9). That is especially true in how God saves us: in our natural state, fallen people lack all power to believe the gospel; in love, God freely and unconditionally chose to redeem a countless multitude of sinners through Christ; with unwavering devotion, Christ died as an atoning substitute for their sins, securing them for eternal glory; and with unconquerable power, the Holy Spirit ensures that all of these so chosen not only believe the gospel, but also persevere till appearing before the presence of God's glory with great joy. In short, being Reformed means being thoroughly God-centered in our view of God's world and his purpose in grace, so that our hearts cannot help but worship, "To God alone be the glory!"

EVANGELISTIC

To be evangelistic means that we, as missionaries, are constrained by the love of Jesus Christ to extend the free offer of salvation to all people without distinction (Isa 45:22; Matt 28:18-20; Acts 10:43; 17:30; 1 Cor 1:18-25). God's love indiscriminately offers to all peoples Christ in all his saving power through the gospel; and people must believe the gospel in order to be saved (John 3:16-21). Christian proclamation is God's chosen means by which sinners hear the gospel (Luke 24:47; Rom 10:14-15; 15:20-21). Therefore, we plead with sinners to acknowledge God's love for them in Christ so that they may not perish and we pray they will respond in repentance and faith (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 14:21; 1 Cor 15:1-2). God's sovereignty over everything, even salvation, does not compromise but compels our devotion to primary evangelism and discipleship, since his gracious will ensures that rebels will believe (John 10:16; Acts 13:48; 18:9; 2 Tim 2:10; Rev 5:9-10).

BAPTIST

To be a Baptist church refers to our convictions about what the Scriptures teach on the nature, practice, and priorities of a local church (also known as our "ecclesiology"). At the very least, that means we affirm the autonomy of the local church, maintain regenerate church membership, enjoy the priesthood of all believers, and celebrate the two ordinances of Believers' Baptism and the Lord's Supper (see our Statement of Faith and the Baptist Faith & Message 2000). Baptism is an opportunity for the person being baptized to publicly profess faith in Christ while the congregation gives assent to that profession. Communion is an opportunity for the congregation to profess together their continuing walk with Christ. We also see the Great Commission as a cooperative effort, and so we partner with other SBC churches for mission through the Cooperative Program, the International Mission Board (IMB), and the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. Being a Baptist certainly does not mean that we alone have the edge on truth, but it is our humble contribution to practicing only what will promote further gospel faithfulness.

ELDER-LED, DEACON-SERVED AND CONGREGATIONALLY ACCOUNTABLE

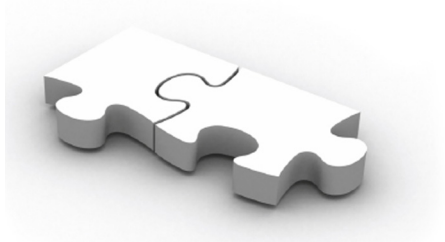
To be an elder-led church means that we recognize, affirm, and submit to the leadership of biblically qualified elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Eph 4:11-16; 1 Tim 3:1-7; 5:17-21; Tit 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:1-4; Jas 5:14; Heb 13:7, 17). These elders provide the spiritual oversight of the congregation through prayerful submission to God's word which expresses itself in the regular discipleship, leadership, protection, and care of God's flock.

To be deacon-served means that we recognize and affirm those whom the Spirit gifts as exemplary servants (1 Tim 3:10). Unlike elders, deacons are not entrusted with authority to lead the church. Rather, they focus on serving the church in practical ways, ensuring that the elders can focus on the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:2, 4).

To be congregational means that church members are accountable to one another. Members have a role in protecting the gospel through their affirmation of new members and care for those who are struggling. Members also have a voice on matters of consequence within the church such as the election of elders and deacons, receiving and sending of members, and major budget decisions. Thus, we practice congregational accountability under the spiritual care of elders (e.g., Acts 15:2-6, 22; 1 Tim 5:19-20; cf. Matt 18:17).

COVENANTAL

To be covenantal refers to how we see the biblical covenants bringing coherence and cohesion to the overall storyline of Scripture. The covenants define and guarantee God's relationship with man, and they also direct its Christ-centered focus. They are unified in purpose and progressively reveal the foreordained plan of God to redeem a people for his glory in Christ. Through the series of interrelated covenants God has revealed his purpose and will for mankind and all things. From Adam to the present day and into eternity, all who are truly God's people receive forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation only on the basis of Jesus' perfect righteousness, received only through faith in him. This unified, Christocentric, covenantal understanding of Scripture stands in intentional contrast to any system that would teach that God's people in any previous era were to be saved by works.



OUR THEOLOGICAL DISTINCTIVES & REQUIREMENTS FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

We affirm these distinctives as important in the sense of being profitable and health-producing for Christians to believe. We are further convinced that as one comes to appreciate these beliefs, he/she will grow to love and honor the Lord Jesus Christ more fully and understand more richly what it means to live by his grace.

Acceptance of all these distinctives, however, is not required for membership in Redeemer Church. One can join and be a participating member of the church without holding to any but the evangelical distinctives mentioned in the first section of this session.

It is our absolute and unwavering conviction that to be strong in truth without being gentle in manner is unbiblical. It is also our profound conviction that to be gentle in manner while not adhering to scriptural truth is also unbiblical. By God's grace, we desire to be both as we press on in the Lord's glorious design for Redeemer Church to be used "to equip God's people to delight in his glory and declare that glory to our neighbors and the nations!"

Questions?

Session Three

OUR POLITY

Polity. It isn't a Bible word. Yet it does capture a subject the Bible describes. If you've ever asked what the Bible teaches about elders, deacons, authority, membership, discipline, etc., you are seeking to understand church polity. Polity refers to the way we organize ourselves beneath Christ's rule to conduct church life. This session will highlight three areas crucial to our polity: we are **elder led**, **deacon served**, and **congregationally accountable**.

**ELDER LED,
DEACON SERVED,
&
CONGREGATIONALLY
ACCOUNTABLE**

ELDER LED

There is only one "great Shepherd of the sheep," the risen Lord Jesus (Heb 13:20). At the same time, Jesus administers his care through qualified men called "shepherds" or "pastors" (Eph 4:11). The New Testament also calls these same men "elders" and "overseers" (Acts 20:17; Tit 1:5, 7). Jesus gives elders authority to oversee the congregation (1 Tim 3:5; Heb 13:17).

Responsibilities of Elders

Elders lead, feed, protect, and care. They **LEAD** God's flock by managing the church's affairs (1 Tim 3:4-5), setting an example in godliness (1 Tim 3:1-3; 1 Pet 5:3), and overseeing people's souls (Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:2). Elders also **FEED** God's flock, nourishing the people with the truth of God's word, so that the church follows the voice of Jesus and conforms their lives to his lordship (1 Tim 3:2; 5:17; Tit 1:9). Elders also **PROTECT** God's flock. Protection includes correcting false doctrine (Tit 1:9), guarding people from divisive and deceptive people (Acts 20:28-31; Tit 3:10-11), as well as developing practices that uphold justice and protect the vulnerable. Finally, elders **CARE** for God's flock, helping the saints by servitude and prayer as needs arise (Acts 20:35; Jas 5:14).

**LEAD
FEED
PROTECT
& CARE**

Some churches choose to operate with a single elder/pastor. But the New Testament model is a plurality of elders leading each church (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Tit 1:5). Insofar as these elders lead like Jesus, the congregation will benefit and mature.

Qualifications for Elders

It's also important that members know what qualifies someone to serve as an elder. For starters, the Bible restricts the office of elder to **MALE** leaders (1 Tim 2:12-14). But not just any male leader. The brother must **ASPIRE** to serve as an elder (1 Tim 3:1), giving evidence that the Holy Spirit is compelling him to lead the church (Acts 20:28). The brother must also exhibit godly **CHARACTER**. Instead of being a recent convert, he must exemplify a mature devotion to Jesus in relation to his family, the church, and the world (1 Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:1-4). He must also be **COMPETENT** in God's word, "skilled to teach" (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:9). Not only should he possess the requisite knowledge but also the ability to communicate it to others.

Response to Elders

With qualified elders in place, the Scriptures instruct us to respond in several ways. One is to **HOLD** them accountable (1 Tim 5:20). Submission is always in relation to what honors Christ. But where the elders honor Christ, **SUBMIT** to their leadership (Heb 13:17). Even more, make their ministry a joy (Heb 13:17). Encourage them, and guard yourself from unwarranted suspicions. As they equip you for the work of ministry, **SERVE** the church with willingness and zeal (Eph 4:12). For those laboring in preaching and teaching, **HONOR** them with material support (1 Tim 5:17-18). Also, wherever they need more grace, **PRAY** for your elders (Heb 13:18). Finally, **APPOINT** deacons. Elders can't lead very effectively without deacons, to which we now turn.

DEACON SERVED

Unlike elders, deacons are not entrusted with authority to lead the church. Nor do they serve as the church's primary teachers. Rather, deacons are those whom the Spirit gifts as exemplary servants (1 Tim 3:10). Their service to the body ensures that the elders can focus on the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:2, 4).

Responsibilities of Deacons

Their service includes tending to the physical needs of members (Acts 6:2-3), promoting unity in the church (Acts 6:1), and supporting the elders through advice, administration, and implementing care (Acts 6:3; Rom 16:2; 1 Tim 3:10, 13).

Qualifications for Deacons

Like the elders, deacons must also meet certain qualifications. Their **CONFESSION** must align with the gospel (1 Tim 3:9, 16). They must also exemplify godly **CHARACTER**. Deacons must be "dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain..." (1 Tim 3:8). Their marriages must be healthy and their households orderly (1 Tim 3:12). They must also be **TESTED** in their service to the church, demonstrating commitment and competency with their responsibilities (1 Tim 3:10, 13). When deacons serve faithfully, not only will the church have servants to imitate but the church will also receive from the word more steadily.

CONGREGATIONALLY ACCOUNTABLE

The third area crucial to our polity is the congregation, the assembly of those in membership at a local church. On several occasions, the New Testament presents the church acting as one body. In Matthew 18:20 and 1 Corinthians 5:4, Jesus entrusts the church with authority to act in matters of discipline. At the apostles' instruction in Acts 6:5, the church acts to select wise men to oversee the daily distribution. In Acts 15:22, "it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church," to choose certain men for delivering a letter. In 1 Timothy 5:20, elders who persist in sin must be rebuked "in the presence of all." Also, after collecting funds for the poor in Jerusalem, Paul agrees to send those whom the church accredits by letter (1 Cor 16:3).

A congregation is not a passive body of participants.

Such examples reveal that a congregation is not a passive body of participants. Rather, the congregation actively participates in the more serious matters pertaining to a church's life. Thus, instead of a model of church governance that is "elder-rule," we operate under a model described as "elder-led with congregational involvement and accountability."

In practice, this means that the elders determine from Scripture how best to lead the church. On major matters of church life, the elders then involve the church for accountability, constructive feedback, and finalizing a course of action. Such interactions between elders and the church occur during our monthly members meetings. Major matters include:

- amending church doctrine/practices,
- affirming elders and deacons,
- welcoming members (or transferring their care),
- disciplining the unrepentant (or restoring the repentant), and
- approving the budget, salaries, or larger expenses.

Yet congregational accountability should not be reduced to these more formal settings. The church functions to hold one another accountable to Christ throughout the week as well. Members are to exhort one another, that we might not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb 3:13). We stir up one another to love and good deeds (Heb 10:24). We let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom (Col 3:16). By participating in these ways under healthy leadership, may our efforts mature the entire church into Christ.



Questions?

Session Four

UPREACH: AS GOD'S WORSHIPERS

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

For many, worship amounts to an experience or music style often measured by personal preferences. However, the Bible casts worship in a far different light. Worship centers around God's worthiness and describes our response to his worthiness based on the terms he sets and enabled by the grace he gives.

In Scripture, responses to God's worthiness include events wherein one might bow, sing, or gather to celebrate.

"The man bowed his head and worshiped the LORD" (Gen 24:26).

"Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!" (Ps 95:1).

"When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord..." (Acts 13:48).

Responses to God's worthiness also include commitments wherein we devote the whole of life to God's service.

"...to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Rom 12:1).

"...how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess 1:9).

"you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 2:5).

***Worship is both liturgy & lifestyle,
both declarative & demonstrative.***

Thus, we could say that worship is both liturgy and lifestyle, both declarative and demonstrative. To acknowledge God's worthiness will not only inspire praise on Sunday, but also produce whole-hearted obedience daily. All of life, down to eating and drinking, becomes a sacred matter of

worship (1 Cor 10:31; 1 Tim 4:3-4). This is "upreach." God reaches down to us in redeeming love and opens our eyes to his worth. In response, we reach up to God in thankful adoration and total devotion.

For the purpose of *Membership Matters*, our focus below will be gathering for corporate worship, gathering for a liturgy that, we pray, serves a lifestyle.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE WORSHIP?

GOD TRANSFORMS US

According to Scripture, we become what we behold (Ps 115:8; 2 Cor 3:18). We mirror what we marvel at. We conform to what we confess. By regularly gathering for worship, we ask the Lord to order our affections for him. We worship to have our love for God deepened and our fleshly appetites demoted. When we gather beneath the word, our prayer is for the Holy Spirit to enable us to behold God's glory in the person of Jesus. In seeing his truth, beauty, and goodness, we become conformed into his image.

"We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:18).

"...but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

GOD MOTIVATES US FOR MINISTRY & MISSIONS

Worship stands as the apex from which the ministries of the church derive their true motivation and purpose. Worship is the purpose for building up one another in the faith, and worship is the purpose for local outreach and missionary activity.

"May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 15:5-6).

"Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, 'Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name'" (Rom 15:8-9).

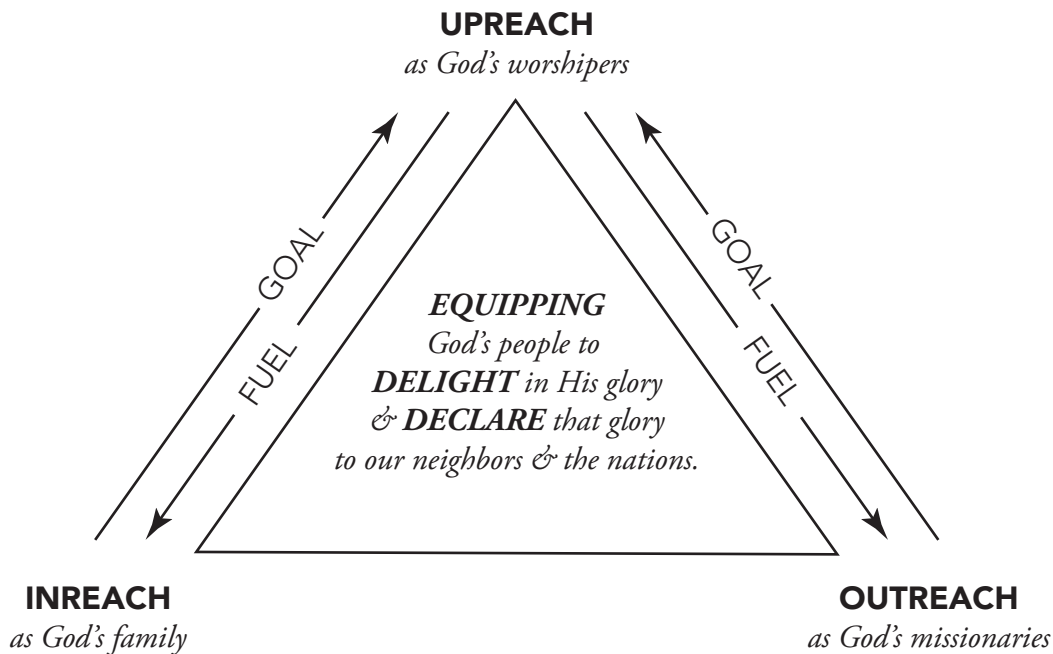
We could say that **worship is both the fuel and the goal** of all the church seeks to accomplish. As John Piper has put it,

"Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. Worship is the fuel and goal of missions. It's the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white-hot enjoyment of God's glory. Worship is the fuel of missions. Passion for God in worship precedes the offer of God in preaching. Where passion for God is weak, zeal for missions will be weak. Missions begins and ends in worship."

Taken from Let the Nations Be Glad (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 17.

We engage in ministry to see Christ's disciples mature in their worship [goal]; and when someone matures in their worship, they are all the more motivated to equip others [fuel]. We also engage in missions to see God make more worshipers [goal]; and when people become

true worshipers, they long to see others enjoying the God they know [fuel]. So, whether it's meeting in care group, discipling a fellow believer, correcting sinful patterns, strengthening a marriage, or seeking and saving the lost, all of these activities have worship as their goal.



WHAT DO WE DO WHEN WE GATHER FOR WORSHIP?

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S CALL

Across the Scriptures, we see a common pattern: God reveals himself to man and man responds to God. As God reveals his power and greatness, we respond in wonder and humility (Exod 14-15). As God reveals his holiness, we respond in confession and contrition (Isa 6:1-5). As God reveals his provision and grace, we respond in love and thanksgiving (Ps 106:1). As God reveals his purpose and plans, we respond in commitment and petition (2 Sam 7:27). God grants new spiritual life, and we respond to him as a worshiping community (1 Pet 2:9-10). Because worship begins with God's call, our Sunday gatherings begin with a call to worship.

WE SING OF GOD'S WORTH

In Hebrews 2, we encounter a wonderful picture. Having identified with his people in suffering and staying faithful through death, Jesus leads his people in praise to God's name. *"I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise"* (Heb 2:12). With Jesus as our leader in God's praise, the church then follows him with songs of praise in the assembly:

“...addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart” (Eph 5:19).

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly... singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col 3:16).

“When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up” (1 Cor 14:26).

By singing together in this way, not only do we reflect the worship of heaven in the present (Rev 5:9-14), but we also foreshadow the day when the great multitude of God’s elect from every nation, tribe, people, and language worship before the Lamb’s throne.

“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb! And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen’” (Rev 7:10-11).

To aid in our corporate praise, we choose songs/hymns, as well as the instruments that accompany them, in such a way as to prioritize congregational singing. Instrumentalists on “stage” are not performers but servants. Their goal is to aid the congregation’s voice, not distract from it. May we be a congregation characterized by energetic, whole-hearted singing for the glory of God!

***“As long as we live there is never enough singing.”
“If any will not sing, it shows that they do not believe!”
- Martin Luther***

WE READ AND HEAR THE WORD OF GOD

As was mentioned earlier, the biblical pattern of worship involves revelation and response. Through reading the Scriptures and hearing the Scriptures preached, God speaks to us.

*“Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.”
(1 Timothy 4:13 ESV)*

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:10–11 ESV)

Amazing as it sounds, God uses the faithful preaching of his Word to speak to his church. The apostle Peter encourages us to recognize those who teach as speaking God’s word to us, and that he who exercises that “gift” does so for the purpose of worship! This does not mean that the church should receive the words of the preacher uncritically. But the church should expect God to speak to His church through faithful, expository preaching from the scriptures, and to receive such teaching with eagerness.

“The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.” (Acts 17:10–11 ESV)

Marvel that God would use ordinary men to speak to his church, and let us worship God by receiving his word delivered through faithful preaching.

“It might sound arrogant or audacious to claim that God Himself is speaking through the pastor each week. After all, this is just a normal guy. You know him. He drives a normal car, he doesn’t have the greatest style, and through babysitting experience, you may know that he has unruly kids. Nothing seems divine about him—and indeed, nothing is. God doesn’t transform the preacher; God uses the preacher. Far from being a braggadocious claim on the role of the minister, this understanding humbles humanity and glorifies God.”
- Jonathan Cruz, *What Happens When We Worship*

WE CONFESS & TAKE THE SUPPER

In response to the exposition of God’s Word, we turn our gaze inward to confess in prayer our failures. Both personally and collectively, to obey the commandments of God, and receive from the Word of God our assurance of pardon by God’s grace and through our faith in Christ by means of His gospel (death, burial, and resurrection). Having examined ourselves in prayer, we take the Lord’s Supper:

**PROCLAIM,
REMEMBER,
PARTICIPATE,
RENEW &
ANTICIPATE**

- to proclaim and remember God’s past deliverance in Christ (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:23-24, 26).
- to participate in the gospel’s benefits (1 Cor 10:16, 21).
- to renew our commitment to one another in Christ (1 Cor 10:17), and
- to anticipate Christ’s return in glory (1 Cor 11:26).

Recommended Resource: “*The Lord’s Supper*” three-part sermon series by Bret Rogers.

(redeemerfortworth.org/sermons/series/the-lords-supper)

WE PRAY

Prayer should be a rhythm in the life of the believer and characteristic of our gathered worship. Jesus did say that his house would be a house of prayer (Matthew 21:13, Isa. 56:7), and such was the practice of the early church recorded in the book of Acts. Time and time again the gathered church prays.

In gathered worship, our prayers are offered to God aloud such that other believers can hear and agree, adding our own “amen.” Corporate prayer should be characterized by active participation, not passive listening. It’s a time where we “help” one another in prayer, resulting in more glory to God for his blessings.

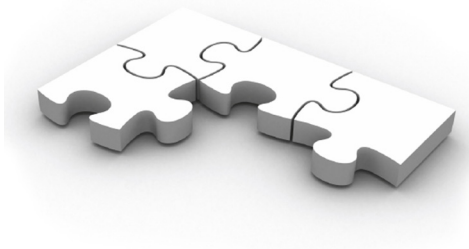
“You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.” (2 Corinthians 1:11 ESV)

“God gets corporate glory when there’s corporate asking.” - John Piper

WE COMMIT & COMMISSION

Just as Isaiah, after seeing the Lord exalted and hearing his voice responded with “here I am, send me” (Isaiah 6:8) so too, we renew our commitments to follow Christ as we are sent back into the world to serve as the aroma of Christ to those who are perishing. This is the pattern of the church: we gather for worship and scatter for mission.

Questions?



Session Five

INREACH: AS GOD'S FAMILY

The church is a rather shocking familial community when considered against the backdrop of the fallen world. Sin, division, hatred, hurt, and brokenness have plagued families since the first family, Adam and Eve, rebelled against God. Yet now the world witnesses one family, who looks peculiarly different—even if still imperfect. That family is the church, a community of people no longer living under Adam but under the uniting rule of the last Adam, Jesus Christ. God recreated these people and then united them with other recreated people to function as his new family, and not just any family, but a family who reflects God's image, love, and grace through their union with Jesus.

UNITY, LOVE, COMMITMENT, WITNESS

In moving forward with Session five, we should note at least four aspects that characterize God's new family: **unity, love, commitment, and witness**. We will then outline several tangible ways we seek to care for one another as family at Redeemer Church. In short, the following should help you see how the biblical portrait of the church as family should shape Redeemer and you.

UNITY IN CHRIST

We begin with our unity in Christ. On one occasion in Jesus' earthly ministry, Jesus' own mother and brothers desired to see him. Jesus uses it as an opportunity to teach: "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8:21). His point wasn't to dishonor his earthly family members, but to teach on belonging to the most important family of all through a relationship with himself. Being a true child of God was not tied to one's ethnicity or class or abilities or heritage; it was tied to one's disposition to Jesus. The account looked forward to the day when God would gather into one family people from all nations, because of Jesus' finished work.

Jesus' cross reconciles people to God and to one another (Eph 2:1-21), secures the forgiveness of sins for all peoples without distinction (Luke 24:47), and binds people together under one new covenant (Matt 26:28). And as the resurrected Lord, Jesus unites people in one Spirit (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 4:3). All who are joined to Christ experience the same adoption (Gal 4:5), become God's children (John 1:12-13), enter God's household (Eph 2:19), call upon the same Father (Gal 4:6), share familial affection (1 Cor 16:7, 20, 24; 2 Pet 1:7), serve one another as brothers and sisters (Rom 12:5-16; Col 3:12-17; Gal 6:10), and participate in the same eternal inheritance (Acts 20:32; Gal 3:28).

It comes as no surprise, then, to see them gather regularly in each other's homes to pray, pour over the truth, share meals, bear burdens, and meet needs (Acts 2:44-46; Rom 12:13; Gal 6:2; Heb 10:25). They are family. Such a family tie precludes any form of pride and favoritism and cliquish attitudes. All who are united in Christ are equals in the family, without distinction (Gal 3:28). Moreover, we stick together. The blood of Christ binds us together in ways that

no earthly relationship can fully comprehend, even among our closest kin. We are not held together by our ethnicity, social compatibility, hobbies, vocation, economic class, or life-stage. Our unity revolves around a heavenly reality that we all share in the Lord Jesus. He is the foundation of our relationships.

CROSS-CENTERED LOVE

That also means that Christ's love will characterize our relationship to each other. We love each other, because God in Christ first loved us, the full, tangible expression of which we see in the cross (John 3:16; 13:34-35; 1 John 4:9-10, 19). The cross stands at the center of our love. Our love is not like the false notions of love, which usually amount to some form of weak

Christian love is a genuine affection for another's ultimate good in God such that we spend ourselves sacrificially to see them obtain it.

emotionalism or dispassionate duty. The love we learn from the cross is different. Christian love is a genuine affection for another's ultimate good in God such that we spend ourselves sacrificially to see them obtain it (Mark 10:45; Rom 12:10; 1 Cor 9:19-23; 10:31-11:1; 13:4-7; 1 John 3:16; 2 Cor 8:9; 12:15). That's the love we find in Christ for us; and that's the love that should characterize our church and you.

Love will not passively wait to be asked; it will take initiative in seeking the eternal well-being of others. Love will not make self-calculations; it will consider the interests of others as better than our own (Phil 2:4-5). Love will not keep people at arms distance; it will make all necessary investments to see the other prosper in the Lord and his work. Love will not primarily ask, "Why aren't they doing this for me?" but "How can I pour myself out for them?" Such love is reflected in the Redeemer Church Covenant, but some concrete examples of this love include things like bearing each other's burdens (Gal 6:2), seeking to do good to one another (1 Thess 5:15), being kind to one another, forgiving one another (Eph 4:32), rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep (Rom 12:15-16), contributing to the needs of the saints, and showing hospitality (Rom 12:13).

COMMITMENT TO ONE ANOTHER

In a very real sense, then, we are also committed to one another. We live in a culture averse to commitment, or perhaps committed as long as the commitment doesn't inconvenience "me" or "my plans." The love of Christ produces a different spirit in the church. **In the same way Jesus committed himself to us, even despite our sin and rebellion and weakness, we commit ourselves to each other, even when the relationships are hard, offensive, and messy** (Gal 6:1-2; Col 3:13; Jas 5:19-20).

And the commitment runs even deeper, because the local church isn't only a people we love, but a people we are (1 Cor 1:12-13; 10:16-17; Eph 3:10-11). Our commitment to our brothers and sisters is bound up with our Christian identity, with our belonging to Christ. To belong to Christ is to belong to each other. As John Stott put it while commenting on Acts 2:42-47, "[the Lord] didn't add [people] to the church without saving them, and he didn't save them without adding them to the church."

Among other reasons, this is why we stress the biblical importance of membership at Redeemer Church and also sign a Church Covenant. Commitment to brothers and sisters in our local church is part of who we are, and we value accountability to the union Jesus established between each member of his local body. As Timothy Savage puts it, “The universal church is only as strong as its local manifestations are viable” (The Church, 15).

We are very aware that it’s impossible to obey the “one-anothers” of Scripture apart from a commitment to one another both in word and deed (cf. John 13:35). We understand that the Spirit gives a variety of gifts to each of Jesus’ followers, not for them to enjoy in isolation but for them to serve the well-being of the local church with whom they assemble (Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:7; Eph 4:16; 1 Pet 4:9-11). We refuse to pack our weeks so full of maybe even good things, that we have little time or energy to serve our local church. Our Monday-to-Saturday schedule must include interaction with other saints with whom we are in covenant fellowship to support and encourage and strengthen on a regular basis. Even our personal budgets should be mindful of the needs of our family members (Acts 2:45; 2 Cor 8:9).

WITNESS TO THE WORLD

Living together in this way will then serve as a visible testimony to the world. **People will know that we belong to Jesus, when they witness the persuasive, tangible expression of his life flowing through the relationships of his family members** (John 13:35; 17:21-24). Our unity, love, and commitment must shine the self-less love of Jesus into a world darkened with sin and wrecked with despair. As family, the church stands as a glowing beacon of hope to the world that true peace and companionship comes only through the relentless, self-sacrificing love of Jesus Christ. Thus, one of the strategic ways we can love the world more is by loving one another more. The fire of our love for each other should glow and radiate the warmth of Christ to the dark and cold world that knows no such love.

STRUCTURES OF CARE

In order to nurture our growth in this unity, love, and commitment Redeemer Church has three primary structures of care in place. We by no means want to reduce our community to these three gatherings alone. In fact, our prayer is that these three gatherings serve as a catalyst for living together as God’s new family throughout our weeks and not just at specified meeting times.

GATHERED WORSHIP & DISCIPLESHIP HOUR

Being that Session 4 covered gathered worship, we will not spend as much time developing it here. We will only say that the early churches sought to gather every Sunday, the Lord’s Day, for song, discipleship, prayer, giving, and taking the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 11:17-33; 14:26; 16:2; 1 Tim 4:13; Heb 10:26; Rev 1:10). And they gathered this way in addition to other fellowship and mission occurring throughout the week.

Our gathered worship aims to encourage and equip Redeemer Church as a whole. Discipleship Hour also serves this end, but in a smaller setting and usually with a much narrower focus.

Adult Equip Classes may study a particular book of the Bible, a particular topic related to Christian living, or cover the practical outworking of our faith.

Student classes move through a six-year curriculum that equip them with an overview of the Bible and how to study it, with the basics of the Christian faith, and with practicing the Christian faith in the public square.

The children's ministry begins with praying for children as infants and gradually acquainting them with the Bible's storyline and main focus in ages 2 through 4. At age 5 the children then proceed to particular themes in Scripture like God's faithfulness or his redemption, and by ages 8-12 the teachers help them wear the truth of Scripture in daily life.

CARE GROUP MEETINGS

Care groups are the basic units for Christian community at Redeemer Church.

The early church met regularly in smaller groups in each city (Acts 2:46; 12:12; 20:8; 20:20; Rom 16:4-5; 1 Cor 16:19; Phlm 2).

And many of the "one-anothers" befit contexts small enough to practice them (Heb 3:13; 10:24-25; Gal 6:2; Col 3:16; Jas 5:16; 1 Pet 4:8-9; Eph 4:32). So, consisting of about 10-20 people, these smaller

groups of Redeemer meet weekly to foster gospel community that regularly makes Christ supreme in every area of life. We do this through...

Many of the "one-anothers" befit contexts small enough to practice them.

Biblical Truth.

The church devotes itself to the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42; 4:33). Indeed, "all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17). Some care groups review the sermon text each week, while others may study a particular book that develops a biblical theme. Whatever the case, we seek to apply biblical truth in specific ways to our lives, so that we might be further conformed to the image of Christ.

Gospel Motivation.

True and lasting change that glorifies God must stem from a heart motivated by God's boundless love and grace as well as his awesome holiness and judgment. Both are announced in "the gospel," a message that doesn't merely get people into the kingdom, but serves their ongoing transformation for the kingdom. The Holy Spirit uses the gospel to save the church (1 Cor 15:1-2), enlighten the church (2 Cor 4:4-6), motivate the church (1 Cor 9:23; 2 Cor 9:13), unite the church (Phil 1:27), humble the church (Phil 2:1-8), protect the church (Gal 1:9-11), warn the church (2 Thess 1:8), embolden the church (Eph 6:15), and so forth. Therefore, the goal in care groups isn't merely behavior modification, a kind of new ethic without the power of the cross. Rather, the goal is to admonish one another in the gospel such that by treasuring who God is for us in Jesus Christ, we are compelled to live in ways pleasing to him.



Authentic Community.

We must move beyond the superficial. Genuine love for one another doesn't grow when we hide in the dark but walk together in the light (Acts 19:18; 1 John 1:5-10; Jas 5:16). Through formal discussion questions in a group setting or sincere questions one-on-one, we strive to spur one another along in the faith (Heb 3:12-13), weeping with those who weep and rejoicing with those who rejoice (Rom 12:15). That also means care groups become a context for people to voice their needs, and then for others to pray and help meet those needs when voiced (Jas 2:14-17; 1 John 3:17-18). Whether through conversation, prayer, study, or service, we seek to invest in each other's lives to fight sin, treasure Christ, and cultivate brotherly affection and service (Heb 10:24; Jas 1:22). Christian growth doesn't happen in isolation; it's a community project.

*Christian growth doesn't happen in isolation;
it's a community project.*

Missional Living.

The church is a community of people characterized by God's mission to save the world (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 2:47; Rom 1:14). Our lives should demonstrate on all fronts a commitment to the ongoing march of the gospel (1 Cor 9:19-23). Thus, care groups provide a great context for accountability and partnership in the advance of the gospel wherever we live, work, and play. Group members can meet together at local parks, invite neighbors to front-yard grillouts, target neighborhoods for outreach, and pray for lost coworkers and friends. Care groups can also listen for specific needs of any neighbors living in closest proximity to them, and then seek to do them good (Gal 6:10; 1 Thess 5:15). The goal is to enter people's lives, bear witness to the love of Jesus, give them a tangible expression of his love in the church, and ask God to make more disciples through us.

Care groups may vary according to age, special needs/interests, geographical location, family orientation, etc., but they seek to make the above vision the goal of their existence. These small groups usually meet weekly for about two hours, though some groups are tailored differently.

MEMBERS MEETINGS

In addition to gathered worship and care groups, the elders also lead the church in monthly members' meetings in which the congregation is able to interact with each other regarding the vision of the church, the work of ministry, the advance of the gospel, and other family matters. These meetings can be filled with much rejoicing in the Lord's work that he is doing through us and among us. Or they can also be filled with great sorrow over sin that needs to be addressed with corrective discipline. These meetings serve a crucial role in shepherding the church and holding one another—including the elders—accountable to Christ and all he stands for.

OTHER FAMILY MINISTRIES

Besides our three primary care structures, other ministries exist within Redeemer Church. The idea is to provide sufficient and varied opportunities for men and women to participate in, but without becoming “activity-driven” or even unnecessarily remove people from the primary care structures already mentioned. Some of the additional ministries include:

- **Worship Ministry:** worship leader training; singers; instrumentalists, seasonal choir
- **Audio / Media Team Ministry:** sound booth volunteers, sound, computer
- **Men’s Ministries:** Tuesday Men’s Bible Study; Men’s Prayer Breakfasts; Men’s Retreat, Quarterly Men’s Meetings
- **Women’s Ministries:** Women’s Bible Study; Women-Encouraging-Women Events; Women’s Retreat, Hospitality Team, Women’s Prayer Team
- **Youth Ministry:** Tuesday Night Youth Bible Study (ages 12-18);
Children’s Ministries: Delighting in God (“DIG”) Children’s Ministry; Nursery Ministry; Special Event Childcare Rotation, Children’s choir
- **Care Group Leadership** (includes training through Pastoral Discipleship)
- **Pastoral Discipleship:** Spring/Fall 8-week class on 2nd and 4th Tuesdays

Questions?



Session Six

OUTREACH: AS GOD'S MISSIONARIES

Equip, delight, declare. These verbs represent a progression in the vision of Redeemer Church. Equipping ministries (i.e., “Inreach”) enable God’s people to delight in God’s glory (i.e., “Upreach”). Delight in God then overflows into declaring his glory to our neighbors and the nations (i.e., “Outreach”). We reach out to others. That happens through local ministry, like personal evangelism and acts of mercy toward those living in closest proximity to us. Outreach also happens through frontier missions, like cross-cultural engagement among peoples with no access to the gospel. But why do we participate in outreach? Also, how should we go about it? The following seeks to answer these questions.

EQUIP God’s people to DELIGHT in his glory and DECLARE that glory to our neighbors and the nations!

MOTIVES: WHY DO OUTREACH?

The Bible rarely answers the “why” question with a single motivating factor. Rather, it often describes several motivations driving the Christian life. The same is true for outreach.

One reason we do outreach is that **GOD IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP**. The world suppresses the truth and refuses to worship God (Rom 1:24-25). Yet God deserves praise and thanksgiving not only from us but from the whole world (Ps 22:27). From every tribe, tongue, language, and nation, God acted in Jesus to redeem a people to enjoy his worth and worship him (Rev 7:9-10).

Another reason to do outreach is our **UNION WITH CHRIST IN MISSION**. In a prophecy about Jesus, the Servant of Isaiah 49:6, Paul finds a command for himself: “...*the Lord has commanded us, saying, I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth*” (Acts 13:47). The point is that Jesus’ mission as the Servant continues now through his people. When Christ lives in you, he extends his salvation to others through you.

Still another reason for outreach is **COMPASSION FOR THOSE IN DARKNESS**. Once we were sitting in darkness without hope. But in compassion God brought us the Light and rescued us. In the same way Jesus came to seek and save the lost, we follow in his steps. We want others to enjoy the same God we have come to know in Jesus Christ and in the fellowship of his Spirit.

Other motivating factors could include the authority of Jesus (Matt 28:18-19), the purpose of God (Gen 12:1-3), the example of Paul (1 Cor 9:19-23), the design of the atonement (John 11:52), etc. Combined, all these motivating factors compel outreach to others. When reaching out to others, though, what message do we bring them?

MESSAGE: WHAT DO WE PROCLAIM?

Sadly, many evangelism books and classes get so focused on methods or results that they skew the gospel. In some cases, felt needs become the primary concern versus our true need of reconciliation with God. In others, self becomes central to the message versus God. Sin gets redefined as “failing to meet your potential” versus what it is, rebellion against God.

Humans are merely sick versus dead and incapable of saving themselves. Repentance gets traded for an assent to facts followed by false assurance. The person of Christ gets reduced to a ticket into heaven versus the Treasure and center to fellowship with God.

“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

To avoid these errors, we must persist in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel delivered by the apostles is that God has acted in the person and work

of Christ to reconcile sinners to himself. In Romans 1:16, *“the gospel...is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”* In Galatians 1:7, Paul rebukes the church for “turning to a different gospel,” and he then adds: “not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.” There is only one gospel that saves. There is only one *“name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12), the name of Jesus. We must preach this gospel and no other. At the same time, adequate attention to how we preach the gospel is also important. That comes next.

METHOD: HOW DO WE PROCLAIM?

In the power of the Holy Spirit

In Acts 1:8 Jesus says, *“...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* A primary focus in Acts is how Jesus’ Spirit empowers the church to speak the gospel. Every time the Spirit fills people, they open their mouths about Jesus. In Acts 4:31, the people pray for God’s help; and it says, *“the place in which they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”* Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 1:5, *“our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.”* We don’t go in confidence that our methods and our strategies save anybody. If anybody is saved, it will be the result of God’s Spirit working in us and in them. Therefore, we must pray for the Spirit to fill us. Without the Spirit, our efforts will be vain.

In a manner consistent with its content

In 2 Corinthians 4:1-5 Paul writes, *“Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.”* Sadly, people often hold out false promises: “Come to Jesus,” they say, “and God will heal your cancer, save your marriage, actualize your goals, and make you feel better.” Others will use entertainment to draw people in. Others resort to flattery, excluding

harder truths about sin, repentance, judgment. But this is not the way of the apostles. They came by “the open statement of the truth.”

They also proclaimed the gospel as humble servants: “*For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.*” We cannot preach grace while being puffed up with pride. We cannot preach God’s mercy and patience toward sinners, while being unmerciful and impatient toward sinners.

In a manner that is intelligible and helpful to its audience

In Acts 17 Paul shares the gospel with Jews who know the Scriptures. He also shares with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who do not know the Scriptures. In both cases, Paul acknowledges how their worldviews compete with the claims of Scripture. To use an analogy, people are not like blank hard-drives onto which Paul might download Christianity. Their hard-drives already have corrupt files that prevent them from receiving the gospel files accurately. Like Paul, we must lay the groundwork. Loving people means working hard to know them, to know how they think, to know what framework they are hearing you from, and then building a foundation on which Christ is rightly understood and offered.

Our manner should also be helpful helpful. In 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 Paul says that he made himself a servant of all, that he might win more of them. Paul may have had the rights and freedoms to act a particular way with Jews, but he willingly set them aside to build onramps to the gospel. At the same time, he adjusted with Gentiles so as not to confuse his participation in a meal with idolatry. While never changing the gospel, we too should make necessary adjustments to build inroads to the gospel. The only stumbling block he wanted before others is the cross, not our personal preferences, education choices, political affiliation, etc.

“For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.”

(1 Corinthians 9:19–23 ESV)

According to Scripture's Rich Storyline

Various evangelism methods are out there—Romans Road, Four Spiritual Laws, The Wordless Book, Way of the Master. These methods often capture key elements in the gospel message: God, Sin, Christ, Faith. In that way, these methods can be quite helpful. But if we're not careful, we can forget how the gospel comes through a rich storyline that intersects with people's lives in very specific ways.

Perhaps you've heard that storyline summarized as Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation. These movements in God's storyline answer some of life's biggest questions: How'd this all begin? Why are things so wrong? Who will make everything right? Where's the world going? The Bible answers those questions, and it does so in relation to various themes that describe our experience (e.g., home/exile; nakedness/shame; marriage/fidelity; justice/peace; image/identity).

Every person you know shares experiences that intersect with Scripture's storyline. Better yet, Scripture's storyline retells their story in the truest light, and then offers them salvation and wholeness in the person of Jesus Christ. Whether it's depression, broken relationships, infidelity, abuse, family issues, race relations, politics, self-image, poverty, abusive authority, creation care—the Bible has many inroads to the gospel. We lose this dynamic, though, if we reduce the gospel to a simplistic formula and then force that formula onto people in superficial ways.

Accompanied by Good Deeds

Romans 15:18, *"For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and [by] deed..."* 1 Peter 2:12, *"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 John 3:18 says, *"Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth..."*

What's the pattern? When the apostles preached Christ, they did not live in ways that contradicted Christ. They lived in ways that embodied Christ. The deeds themselves are not

the gospel. But the gospel necessarily produces good deeds in God's people; and those deeds demonstrate the gospel's power to make people more like Christ.

Thus, when we preach God's generosity in the gospel, others must see generosity from us. When we preach how Christ liberates from sin, others must see us pursuing holiness.

When we preach God's generosity in the gospel, others must see generosity from us.

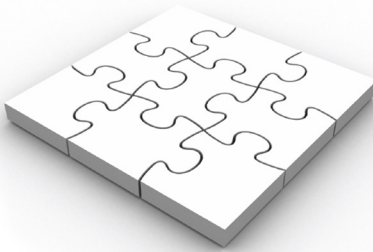
When we preach how Christ's work unites, others must see a people united under Christ. When we preach how Christ came not to be served but to serve, others must see us serving like Christ. We can't just hand people tracts with no willingness to serve. We must also embody what Christ is like. Our deeds demonstrate the truthfulness and integrity of the message we preach.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH OUTREACH

- Praying for lost people that you know
- Natural opportunities that arise as we walk with the Lord and build relationships (enter, build, know, share, serve)
- Planned opportunities for outreach: Pregnancy Help Center; campus evangelism; VBS/Backyard Bible clubs; World Relief; etc.
- Supporting those engaged in frontier missionary efforts (e.g., Barnabas Teams; short-term ministry trips; hospitality)

Questions?





Redeemer Church
COVENANT & DISCIPLINE FORM

I have read the Redeemer Church covenant and have read and agree to all the procedures outlined in “Article VII: Discipline” of Redeemer Church’s bylaws.

Name: _____

Address:

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Please complete this form and return it to us if you are interested in continuing toward membership in Redeemer Church.

A Thumbnail Sketch of the **DOCTRINES OF GRACE**

COMPLETE INABILITY OR UTTER DEPRAVITY

Because of the Fall, humanity is unable of himself/herself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God. His/her heart is deceitful and corrupt. His/her will is not free, but is in bondage to his/her sinful nature. Therefore, he/she will not--indeed, cannot--choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ--it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him/her a new nature. Faith is not something human beings contribute to salvation, but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation. Repentance and faith are God's gifts to the sinner, not the sinner's gifts to God.

See Ps. 51:5, 58:3; Is. 53:6, 64:6; Jer. 17:9; Jn 3:3, 8:44; Rom. 3:10-12, 5:12; Eph. 2:2-3; Eph. 2:8-9; I Cor. 2:14; 2 Tim. 2:24-26

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

God's choice of certain ones unto salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as repentance, faith, etc. On the contrary, God gives repentance and faith to each individual who He has selected. These acts are the result, not the cause of God's choice. Election, therefore, was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in human beings. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Holy Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus, God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

See Deut. 7:6-7; Is. 55:11; Jn. 6:44, 6:65, 15:16; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:28; 9:11-13; 2 Tim. 1:9

PARTICULAR REDEMPTION OR SPECIFIC ATONEMENT

Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including the faith that unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation.

See Mt. 1:21, 20:28; Jn. 10:14-18, 17:9; Acts 20:28; Rom. 5:8-9; Titus 2:14; Rev. 5:9

EFFICACIOUS CALL OF THE SPIRIT OR IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

In addition to the outward general call of salvation that is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call (that is made to all without distinction) can be, and often is, rejected; whereas the internal call cannot be rejected. It always results in conversion. By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by the will of the humanity, nor is He dependent upon humanity's cooperation for success, the Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to repent, to believe, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God's grace, therefore, is invincible. It never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.

See Ezk. 11:19-20; Jn 6:37; Rom. 8:30; Col. 2:13; James 1:18; Titus 3:5

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS OR PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAVIOR

All who are chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given repentance and faith by the Holy Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God and thus persevere to the end.

See Is. 43:1-3; Jer. 32:40; Rom. 8:35-39; Eph. 1:13-14; I Thess. 5:23-24; Jude 24-25

SUMMARY OF THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE

According to this interpretation of the teachings of the Bible known as Reformed theology, salvation is accomplished by the almighty power of the Triune God. The Father chose a people, the Son died for them, and the Holy Spirit makes Christ's death effective by bringing the elect to repentance and faith, thereby causing them to willingly obey the gospel. The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration, justification, sanctification, glorification) is the work of God and is by grace alone for His glory alone. Thus God, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation (John 1:12-13; Romans 9:16).

We desire and seek to hold to our Reformed convictions humbly, recognizing the sincerity and earnestness of godly men and women who hold to other positions.