



# Membership Class Notes Winter 2023

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WAKE  
CHAPEL  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH



# Church History

## A brief overview of church history—from Jerusalem to Fuquay-Varina

If you were to drive down I-40 headed for Wilmington, the first rest area you'd come across would be just outside Benson. If you were to stop by you might notice a large map of North Carolina on the wall behind glass. On that map there is an arrow labeled, "You are here!"

This discussion is designed to give you a "you are here" on the map of church history.

Let's begin with a passage from the book of Acts and then plot a few significant dates on a timeline ending with today.

*<sup>41</sup> So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. <sup>42</sup> And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. <sup>43</sup> And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> And all who believed were together and had all things in common. <sup>45</sup> And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup> And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. –Acts 2:41-47*

A few hundred years later, in 313, Roman emperor Constantine would issue the **Edict of Milan**, in effect 'tolerating' Christianity. Within ten years it would be the official religion of the Roman Empire.

In 1054 the **Great Schism** would split the church into what is now called the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. For the most part they would still look the same to us. It wouldn't be until the Protestant Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that true reform would come to the church.

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther would nail his **95 Theses** to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, Germany. Most of the attention was on his attack of the Catholic Church for the selling of indulgences. But of most importance was his stand on the Bible as the final authority for the church, and the doctrine of salvation by faith, not by works.

After the Reformation many **denominations** would form over the centuries. One of the easier methods of organizing these denominations is to sort them by their form of **government** (polity).

**Episcopal:** a hierarchical form of church government in which chief local authorities are called bishops. They see their authority as handed down by apostolic succession. This form of government was the only form until the Reformation. **Who uses it?** Episcopal, Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox, and Methodist churches

**Presbyterian:** a method of church governance typified by the rule of assemblies of presbyters, or elders. Local churches are governed by a body of elected elders called the session, groups of churches are governed by a higher assembly of elders known as the presbytery, presbyteries can be grouped into a synod, and synods can join together in a general assembly. **Who uses it?** Presbyterian, Reformed, and Lutheran churches.

**Congregational:** also known as congregationalism is a system of church government in which every local church congregation is independent, ecclesiastically sovereign, and autonomous. **Who uses it?** Baptists, Free churches, Churches of Christ, and independent Bible churches use this model.

### **Wake Chapel is a congregationally governed church.**

Wake Chapel began in 1856 when twenty or so people were saved at a brush arbor revival. Two years later one acre of land was donated on which to build its first meeting place. The Sanctuary we meet in today is the third building, built in 1923, and remodeled in 1968.

When organized in 1856 Wake Chapel aligned itself with the **Christian Church** denomination.

In 1792, James O'Kelly, dissatisfied with the role of bishops in the Methodist Episcopal Church, separated from that body. O'Kelly's movement, centering in Virginia and North Carolina, was originally called the Republican Methodist Church. In 1794 they adopted the name Christian Church.

Working with similarly minded movements from New Hampshire and Vermont, O'Kelly believed that members could, by looking to scripture alone, simply be Christians without being bound to human traditions and the denominations that had been brought over from Europe.

The Christian Church merged with the National Council of the Congregational Churches of the United States in 1931 to form the Congregational Christian Churches. In 1957 after twenty years of discussion and work, the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church, itself the product of the merger of two German-American denominations, forged the United Church of Christ.

However, in 1984, the membership of Wake Chapel Christian Church voted to withdraw from the United Church of Christ choosing to organize itself as an independent **non-denominational** church.

As far as the name of the church Wake Chapel Christian Church—the “Christian” part of the name (that used to be its denominational identifier) is no longer functional, as the denomination no longer exists, except as part of the UCC, from which this church withdrew decades ago. It now only refers to a piece of this church’s past.

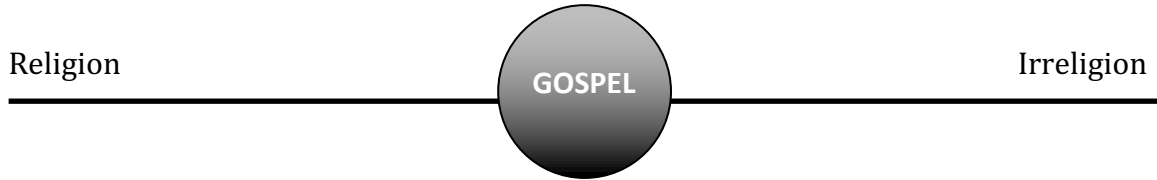
The name’s other components “**Wake**” and “**Chapel**” have a more straightforward significance.

‘**Wake**’ refers to the county in which it resides.

The term ‘**chapel**’ usually refers to a Christian place of prayer and worship that is attached to a larger, often nonreligious institution, or that is considered an extension of a primary religious institution. It may be part of a larger structure or complex, such as a college, hospital, palace, prison, funeral home, church, synagogue or mosque, located on board a military or commercial ship, or it may be an entirely free-standing building, sometimes with its own grounds. **Chapel** has also referred to independent or nonconformist places of worship in Great Britain—outside the established church.

**The name fits very well; after all we are a Christian place of prayer and worship, for Wake County.**

# What is the Gospel?



In answering the question “what is the gospel”, let’s start with identifying its two equal and opposite enemies. It has been said that just as Jesus was crucified between two thieves, so you might say the gospel is crucified between these two errors.

Theologically they are called **legalism** vs. **antinomianism**, or **moralism** vs. **relativism**. But for this study we’ll refer to them as **religion** vs. **irreligion**.

Which one of the following statements sound better?

*“You must believe and live right to be saved.”*

*“God loves and accepts everyone just as they are.”*

Your options are: they are both right, they are both wrong, or one is right and the other is wrong.

**Definition of the Gospel:** The gospel is the *message* about how we have been rescued from peril.

The very word gospel (*evangel*) has as its background a *news report* about some life-altering event that has already happened.

**The gospel is good news, not good advice**

The gospel is not primarily a way of life. It is not something we *do*. The gospel is something that *has been done* for us, and that we must respond to.

“Because the gospel is good news, it is to be announced; that is what one does with news.” - D.A. Carson

**The gospel is good news announcing that we have been rescued or saved**

What does the Bible tell us that we can be rescued from? Saved from what peril? The Bible tells us we can be saved from the *wrath* of God. This is all laid out in Genesis 3—we'll get to that in a moment. Simply put, because of our sinful disobedience we are under the curse of death and have no *standing* before God.

Our real problems are not our **horizontal** relationships—our real problem is our **vertical** relationship with God. We need to be made right with God—the One who made us. His promised punishment of death is the peril the gospel tells us we can be rescued from!

**The gospel is good news about what has been done by Jesus Christ to put right our relationship with His Father**

Becoming a Christian, being saved, is about a change in status. You are either right before God or not. Forgiven, or not. Guilty, or not. Pardoned, or not.

*16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 **Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.** –John 3:16-18*

**Let’s now take this definition of the gospel and lay it over the narrative of Scripture.**

	<b>GOSPEL NARATIVE</b>	<b>GOSPEL TRUTHS</b>
<b>God</b>	Where did we come from?	From God: created for relationship
<b>Man</b>	Why did things go so wrong?	Because of sin: alienation and death
<b>Christ</b>	What will put things right?	Christ: substitution and restoration
<b>Response</b>	How can I be put right?	Through faith: grace and trust

**Where did we come from? Answer: God**

God is the creator of all things (Gen. 1:1). He is perfectly holy, worthy of all worship, and will punish sin (1 John 1:5, Rev. 4:11, Rom. 2:5-8). God, having lived in community within the trinity, created us for a relationship with himself through which to display His glory.

**Why did things go so wrong? Answer: Sin**

All people though created good have become sinful by nature (Gen. 1:26-28, Ps. 51:5, Rom. 3:23). From birth, all people are alienated from God, hostile to God, and subject to the wrath of God (Eph. 2:1-3)

**What will put things right? Answer: Christ**

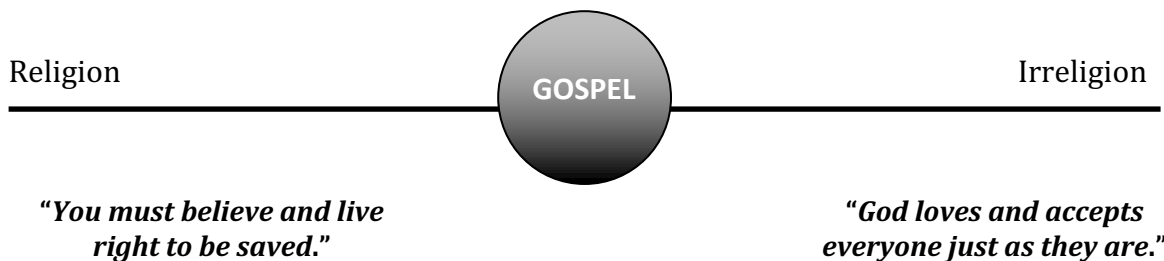
Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man, lived a sinless life, died on the cross to bear God’s wrath in the place of all who would believe in Him, and rose from the grave in order to give His people eternal life (John 1:1, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 7:26, Rom. 3:21-26, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Cor. 15:20-22).

Christ secures our ransom by substitution—Himself in our place. He will also eventually restore everything that has gone wrong with the world, in effect taking us back to the Garden.

**How can I be put right? Answer: Faith**

God calls everyone everywhere to repent of his or her sins and trust in Christ in order to be saved (Mark 1:15, Acts 20:21, Rom. 10:9-10).

Believing in Christ does not mean that we’ve been forgiven of our past just so that we can try harder to live a right life. Neither does it mean that God will accept us just the way we are. Believing in Christ means *transferring our trust away from ourselves and resting in Jesus* as our only hope for righteousness.





## FAQ

**Q: Do I have to be a member at Wake Chapel to volunteer?**

A: In most cases yes, and especially with children, which also involves a background check, and a waiting period in most cases.

**Q: What meaning and mode of baptism does Wake Chapel believe most Biblical?**

A: "Believer's baptism. Acts 18:8 says, "*And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.*" This fits with the regular pattern in Acts: the gospel is preached, people believe, and they are baptized.

**Q: What are your thoughts on the appropriate age for younger members?**

A: A young person must first be clear on the gospel and baptism, and then it is a matter of wisdom, prudence, and common sense. (Member's are eligible to vote at 16 years of age)

**Q: What options do I have for giving financially to Wake Chapel?**

A: You may give in our service, online through our website, or through your bank's ACH transfer (bill pay).

**Q: How are missionaries supported at Wake Chapel?**

A: Through *designated* giving.

**Q: What are the next steps should I decide Wake Chapel is a good fit?**

A: (1) Membership application, (2) interview process, and (3) congregational vote.

## The Case for Membership

Before we answer the question “what does **church membership** look like?” let’s attempt to understand its basis in scripture, first *technically*, and then *practically*.

The following passage, perhaps more dramatically than others, virtually demands an organized structure for individual membership within the local church.

*17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. – Heb. 13:17*

Two questions fall naturally out of this passage. (1) If there is no biblical requirement for belonging to a local church, then which leaders should a Christian obey and submit to? (2) And whom will pastors give an account for?

Regarding the first question, **the Bible clearly commands Christians to submit to and honor local church leadership** (1 Tim. 5:17). So, if there is no such thing as local church membership, then who are Christians to submit to and obey? *Any* pastor, or *any* elder, from *any* church?

As to the second question, **the Bible clearly commands pastors and elders to care for specific people.**

*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: <sup>2</sup> 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; <sup>3</sup> not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. <sup>5</sup> Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” - 1 Peter 5:1–5*

*<sup>28</sup> Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. <sup>29</sup> I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. - Acts 20:28–30*

Is *any* pastor accountable for *any* member of *any* church? What about churches full of crazies? Organized meaningful membership is the obvious implication of this passage.

## ***Church Membership Sightings in the NT***

1 Corinthians 5:1-12 gives us Paul's instructions on removing someone from membership for unrepentant gross sin. Question: How can you kick someone "out" of church if there isn't a way to get "in"?

In Acts 2:37-47 there is a numerical record of those who have professed Christ and been filled with the Holy Spirit (v. 41) and an acknowledgement that the church was tracking its growth (v. 47).

In Acts 6:1-6 elections take place in order to address the specific problem of certain widows being neglected in their daily needs. So the gathered church was addressing problems within their numbers and taking steps to fix them.

In Romans 16:1-16, we see what appears to be an awareness of who is a church member—specific names, specific places, in specific cities and towns.

In 1 Timothy 5:3-16 again we see a clear teaching on how to care for widows in the church. It's obvious from this passage that the local church in Ephesus is organized and working out a plan.

## ***Practical support for local church membership***

### *One another passages*

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

**Love one another:** *John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17; Romans 12:10; 13:8; 14:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 3:22; 4:8; 23; 4:7, 11-12; 2 John 1: 5*

**Encourage one another:** *Romans 14:19; 15:14; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25*

**Serve one another:** *Galatians 5:13; 21; Philippians 2:3; 1 Peter 4:9; 5:5*

**Accept one another:** *Romans 15:7, 14*

**Strengthen one another:** *Romans 14:19*

**Help one another:** *Hebrews 3:13; 10:24*

**Care for one another:** *Galatians 6:2*

**Forgive one another:** *Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13*

**Submit to one another:** *Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5*

**Commit to one another:** *1 John 3:16*

**Build trust with one another:** *1 John 1:7*

**Be devoted to one another:** *Romans 12:10*

**Be patient with one another:** *Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13*

**Be interested in one another:** *Philippians 2:4*  
**Be accountable to one another:** *Ephesians 5:21*  
**Be concerned for one another:** *Hebrews 10:24*  
**Be humble toward one another in love:** *Ephesians 4:2*  
**Be compassionate toward one another:** *Ephesians 4:32*  
**Be at peace with one another:** *Romans 12:18*  
**Be of the same mind to one another:** *Romans 12:16; 15:5*  
**Be kind to one another:** *Ephesians 4:32*  
**Do not be consumed by one another:** *Galatians 5:14-15*  
**Do not anger one another:** *Galatians 5:26*  
**Do not lie to one another:** *Colossians 3:9*  
**Do not grumble toward one another:** *James 5:9*  
**Do not be conceited toward one another:** *Romans 13:8*  
**Do not pass judgment on one another:** *Romans 14:13; 15:7*  
**Do not slander one another:** *James 4:11*  
**Confess to one another:** *James 5:16*  
**Live in harmony with one another:** *Romans 12:16*  
**Instruct one another:** *Romans 16:16*  
**Greet one another:** *Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 13:12*  
**Admonish one another:** *Romans 5:14; Colossians 3:16*  
**Spur one another on toward love and good deeds:** *Hebrews 10:24*  
**Meet with one another:** *Hebrews 10:25*  
**Agree with one another:** *1 Corinthians 16:20*  
**Give preference to one another:** *Romans 12:10*  
**Sing to one another:** *Ephesians 5:19*  
**Comfort one another:** *1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11*  
**Live in peace with one another:** *1 Thessalonians 5:13*  
**Carry one another's burdens:** *Galatians 6:2*

Practically speaking, how are we to be obedient to these commands apart from a local body of believers?

### *The metaphor of the Body of Christ*

Church membership is implied in the metaphor of the *body* in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Actually, the meaning of the words church *member* is a member of a body, like hand and foot and eye and ear. That's the imagery behind the word *member* in the text.

*"Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ."*

So the question this imagery raises for the local church that Paul is describing in 1 Corinthians 12 is: Who intends to be treated as a hand or foot or eye or ear of this body?

# Standards of Membership

**Church Membership is *how* the world knows who represents Jesus.**

Church Membership is a declaration of citizenship in Christ's kingdom—a declaration to the world, by a local church, on behalf of an individual, declaring them to be a credible representative of Jesus.

More specifically, church membership is a formal relationship between a local church and a Christian, based on the church's affirmation and oversight of a Christian's discipleship and the Christian's submission to living out his or her discipleship in the care of the church.

There are several components of this declaration:

- The church body formally *affirms* an individual's profession of faith and baptism as credible;
- The church body promises *to give oversight* to that individual's discipleship;
- The individual formally *submits* his or her discipleship to the service and authority of this body and its leaders.

The church body says to the individual, "We recognize your profession of faith, baptism, and discipleship to Christ as valid. Therefore, we publicly *affirm* and acknowledge you before the nations as belonging to Christ, and we extend the *oversight* of our fellowship." On the other hand, the individual says to the church body, "Insofar as I recognize you as a faithful, gospel-declaring church, I *submit* my presence and my discipleship to your love and oversight."

The *standards* for church membership (becoming a member) are no higher or lower than the standards for being a Christian, **with one exception**. Church membership begins when a local church affirms an individual Christian's profession of faith. As Jesus did with Peter, the church asks the person *who Jesus is*. As Peter did with Jesus, the person responds by saying that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God—**and knows what these words mean**. In other words, to join a church a person must understand and believe the gospel.

The only additional requirement (**the exception from above**) is baptism. Church members must be baptized, a pattern that is uniform in the New Testament. Peter said to the crowds in Jerusalem, "Repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38). And Paul, writing the church in Rome, simply assumes that everyone who belongs to the church in Rome has been baptized (Rom. 6:1–3). Baptism doesn't save a person (not a requirement for salvation), but Jesus means for His saved people to publically identify with Him and his church. You could say it's how they wave the flag.

Church membership, put another way, is not about “additional requirements.” It’s about a church taking specific responsibility for a Christian, and a Christian for a church, before the eyes of the watching world.

It’s true that a Christian must choose to join a church, but that does not necessarily make it a voluntary option. Scripturally speaking, having chosen Christ, a Christian has no other choice but to choose to join a church.

### **What happens when members don’t represent Jesus?**

In a broad sense, church discipline is one part of the discipleship process. To be a disciple, is, among other things, to be disciplined. Discipline is everything the church does to help its members pursue holiness and fight sin. Preaching, teaching, prayer, corporate worship, accountability relationships, and godly oversight by pastors and teachers are all forms of discipline.

However, when the behavior of a member calls into question the credibility of their profession of faith, church discipline may take the form of a congregation removing an individual from membership that it can no longer affirm as a representative of Christ (Matthew 18, 1 Corinthians 5).

When should this means of church discipline be used? Only after an individual member’s sin is known *outwardly*, is itself *serious* (1 Peter 4:8), and is *unrepentant*—where, from all appearances, the person prizes their sin more than Jesus.

Church discipline should always seek as its highest goal the presentation of a good witness for Christ along with the restoration of the member.

### **What we *hope* for every new member of our church:**

Having said these things, certain *expectations* follow. Scripturally speaking, expectations of church membership are *how* Christians submit to a church (being a member).

- That they regularly **worship** together with the gathered body on the first day of the week (Hebrews 10:25).
- That they **serve** the church body by using their God-given gifts and talents (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).
- That they cheerfully and consistently **give** in support of the ministry of the church (2 Corinthians 9:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2).

## Doctrinal Beliefs

The following paragraphs are excerpts from the article *A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity* written by Albert Mohler, May 20, 2004

Today's Christian faces the daunting task of strategizing which Christian doctrines and theological issues are to be given highest priority in terms of our contemporary context, but theological seriousness and maturity demand that we consider doctrinal issues in terms of their relative importance. God's truth is to be defended at every point and in every detail, and responsible Christians must determine which issues deserve first-rank attention in a time of theological crisis.

In recent years, emergency medical personnel have practiced a discipline known as triage—a process that allows trained personnel to make a quick evaluation of relative medical urgency. Which patients should be rushed into surgery? Which patients can wait for a less urgent examination?

The word triage comes from the French word *trier*, which means “to sort.” Thus, the triage officer in the medical context is the front-line agent for deciding which patients need the most urgent treatment. Without such a process, the scraped knee would receive the same urgency of consideration as a gunshot wound to the chest. The same discipline that brings order to the hectic arena of the Emergency Room can also offer great assistance to Christians defending truth in the present age.

I would suggest three different levels of theological urgency, each corresponding to a set of issues and theological priorities found in current doctrinal debates.

First-level theological issues would include those doctrines most central and essential to the Christian faith. Included among these most crucial doctrines would be doctrines such as the Trinity, the full deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, justification by faith, and the authority of Scripture. Christianity stands or falls on the affirmation that Jesus Christ is fully man and fully God. The essential truths of the incarnation include the death, burial, and bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who deny these revealed truths are, by definition, not Christians.

The same is true with the doctrine of the Trinity. The early church clarified and codified its understanding of the one true and living God by affirming the full deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—while insisting that the Bible reveals one God in three persons.

The doctrine of justification by faith must also be included among these first-order truths. Without this doctrine, we are left with a denial of the Gospel itself, and salvation is transformed into some structure of human righteousness.

The truthfulness and authority of the Holy Scriptures must also rank as a first-order doctrine, for without an affirmation of the Bible as the very Word of God, we are left without any adequate authority for distinguishing truth from error.

These first-order doctrines represent the most fundamental truths of the Christian faith, and a denial of these doctrines represents nothing less than an eventual denial of Christianity itself.

The set of second-order doctrines is distinguished from the first-order set by the fact that believing Christians may disagree on the second-order issues, though this disagreement will create significant boundaries between believers. When Christians organize themselves into congregations and denominational forms, these boundaries become evident.

Second-order issues would include the meaning and mode of baptism. Baptists and Presbyterians, for example, fervently disagree over the most basic understanding of Christian baptism. The practice of infant baptism is inconceivable to the Baptist mind, while Presbyterians trace infant baptism to their most basic understanding of the covenant. Standing together on the first-order doctrines, Baptists and Presbyterians eagerly recognize each other as believing Christians, but recognize that disagreement on issues of this importance will prevent fellowship within the same congregation or denomination.

Christians across a vast denominational range can stand together on the first-order doctrines and recognize each other as authentic Christians, while understanding that the existence of second-order disagreements prevents the closeness of fellowship we would otherwise enjoy.

In recent years, the issue of women serving as pastors has emerged as another second-order issue. A church or denomination either will ordain women to the pastorate, or it will not. Second-order issues resist easy settlement by those who would prefer an either/or approach. Many of the most heated disagreements among serious believers take place at the second-order level, for these issues frame our understanding of the church and its ordering by the Word of God.

Third-order issues are doctrines over which Christians may disagree and remain in close fellowship, even within local congregations. I would put most of the debates over eschatology, for example, in this category. Christians who



affirm the bodily, historical, and victorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ may differ over timetable and sequence without rupturing the fellowship of the church. Nevertheless, standing together on issues of more urgent importance, believers are able to accept one another without compromise when third-order issues are in question.

A structure of theological triage does not imply that Christians may take any biblical truth with less than full seriousness. We are charged to embrace and to teach the comprehensive truthfulness of the Christian faith as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. There are no insignificant doctrines revealed in the Bible, but there is an essential foundation of truth that undergirds the entire system of biblical truth.

If the relative urgency of these truths is not taken into account, the debate can quickly become unhelpful.

The error of theological liberalism is evident in a basic disrespect for biblical authority and the church's treasury of truth. The mark of true liberalism is the refusal to admit that first-order theological issues even exist. Liberals treat first-order doctrines as if they were merely third-order in importance, and doctrinal ambiguity is the inevitable result.

Fundamentalism, on the other hand, tends toward the opposite error. The misjudgment of true fundamentalism is the belief that all disagreements concern first-order doctrines. Thus, third-order issues are raised to a first-order importance, and Christians are wrongly and harmfully divided.

Living in an age of widespread doctrinal denial and intense theological confusion, thinking Christians must rise to the challenge of Christian maturity, even in the midst of a theological emergency. We must sort the issues with a trained mind and a humble heart, in order to protect what the Apostle Paul called the "treasure" that has been entrusted to us. Given the urgency of this challenge, a lesson from the Emergency Room just might help.

## WAKE CHAPEL CHRISTIAN CHURCH DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

**BIBLE** - The Bible is the inspired Word of God. As such it is God-breathed and authoritative. (I Cor. 2:13; II Tim. 3:16; II Peter 1:21)

**GOD** - The Godhead exists eternally in three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—and these three are one God. (Deut. 6:4; Psalm 90:2; Matt. 28:19; John 1:1-3; John 8:58; John 10:30; II Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:4-6)

**MAN** - Man was created in the image and likeness of God, but in Adam all mankind fell into sin with the result that all men are sinners, hopelessly sinful in themselves, apart from the grace of God. (Gen. 1:27, 9:6; Rom. 3:23, 5:12, 8:6-7)

**JESUS CHRIST** - The eternal Son of God became incarnate in the Lord Jesus Christ, being born of the virgin Mary, and is true God and true man. (John 1:1, 14, 18, 5:18; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:19, 2:9; I Tim. 2:5; Heb. 1:1-9; I John 5:20)

**SALVATION** - Salvation is received by faith alone in Christ, who died for our sins and rose again. (Acts 4:12, 13:38-39, 16:31; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Eph. 2:8-9; John 3:16; Romans 5:1)

**SANCTIFICATION** - Every believer has positional sanctification and is promised progressive and ultimate sanctification. (John 17:17; I Cor. 6:11; II Cor. 3:18; Eph. 5:26-27; II Thess. 4:3-4, 5:23; Heb. 10:10, 14; I John 3:2)

**ASSURANCE** - All who are born of the Spirit through faith in Christ can have assurance of salvation and are eternally secure in Christ. (John 10:27-29; Rom. 8:1; Eph. 4:30; II Tim. 1:12; I John 5:13)

**HOLY SPIRIT** - The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Godhead, who regenerates, indwells, baptizes, and seals all believers in Christ, and fills those yielded to God. (Matt. 28:19; John 3:3-7; Rom. 8:9; I Cor. 2:12, 6:19, 12:13; Eph. 2:22, 4:30, 5:18)

**CHURCH** - The Church is composed of all believers, is the body and bride of Christ, is formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit and exists in two aspects, universal and local. The universal church is an elect company of believers, baptized by the Holy Spirit into one Body; its mission is to witness to its Head, Jesus Christ, preaching the gospel among all nations; it will be caught up to meet the Lord, after which He will return to set up His Kingdom. The local church is a group of believers voluntarily joined together to worship God with praise and thanksgiving, and to glorify Jesus Christ through an aggressive effort to disciple others by the preaching of the gospel and the exercise of spiritual gifts. (Acts 2:42; I Cor. 12:4, 17; Eph. 1:22-23, 5:24-30)

**CHRISTIAN LIFE** - Christians are called to a holy life of service and testimony in the power of the Holy Spirit, which service includes the propagation of the Gospel message to the whole world. There is promised reward in heaven for faithfulness in such service. (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; I Cor. 3:12-17; II Cor. 5:9-10; I Peter 1:15-16)

**ORDINANCES** - The Scriptural ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are for all believers in Christ. (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 8:12, 36-38, 9:18, 10:47; I Cor. 11:23-26)

**SECOND COMING** - The blessed hope of the imminent return of the Lord for His Church is to be followed in order by: the tribulation; the second coming of Christ to the earth after the tribulation; the establishment of the reign of Christ on earth for one thousand years; the eternal state of punishment for the unsaved and the eternal state of blessing for the saved. (Titus 2:13; I Thess. 1:10, 4:13-18, 5:4-10; John 14:1-3; Rev. 3:10, 20:1-6, 11-15; Matt. 24:21, 29-30, 25:31-46).

# Worship

## What we *hope* for every new member of our church:

- That they regularly worship together with the gathered body on the first day of the week (Hebrews 10:25).
- That they serve the church body by using their God-given gifts and talents (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).
- That they cheerfully and consistently give in support of the ministry of the church (2 Corinthians 9:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2)

One of the three things that a church should expect of its members is their participation in corporate worship. In large part, this takes place on the first day of the week.

## Why do Christians worship on Sunday?

From creation onward the people of God worshiped on the seventh day of the week—because that’s the way God designed it. It is said in Genesis 2:2-3 that God rested on the seventh day, and set it apart as holy. When the Law was given after God brought his people out of Egypt, the fourth commandment was a reminder to keep the seventh day holy. Under the Law the “Sabbath” day was strictly enforced—no work was allowed.

But when Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, things changed. The purpose of the Law was to lead God’s people by the hand to Jesus—who would fulfill all aspects of the law. Because of this pivotal event, the church determined that for Christians under the new covenant, the day of worship and celebration of the Lord’s grace in Jesus Christ was to be the first day of the week.

So what do Christians do when they meet together on the Lord’s Day?

We find a basic pattern for corporate worship by interpreting scripture with scripture. As early as Cain’s sacrifice being rejected by God, to the first and second commandment, to the incident of the golden calf, to Nadab and Abihu’s “strange fire”, to king Saul’s learning that to obey was better than sacrifice, to Jesus rejecting the Pharisees worship according to the “tradition of the elders”—the point is God gets to say how His people worship him.

A careful study of the New Testament will highlight particular elements of worship.

**Reading the Bible** (1 Tim. 4:13); **preaching the Bible** (2 Tim. 4:2); **singing the Bible** (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16); **praying the Bible** (Matt. 21:13); and **seeing the Bible** in the two sacraments of the church, baptism and the Lord's Supper (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38–39; 1 Cor. 11:23–26; Col. 2:11–12).

The reformers traditionally argued that Scripture requires these limited number of elements. However, they allowed considerable freedom respecting the *form* a given element might take, written vs. extemporaneous prayers, for example. This is historically known as the *regulative principle*, and it addresses what the church may do when it assembles. Churches are not free to do whatever *they* want to do; they must do what Scripture instructs and requires them to do. When the church gathers to worship, its worship is to be “according to Scripture.”

It then follows that if scripture centers on Jesus (it does), you could say for the scripturally regulated church service that each sermon, song, prayer... is brought to you by the redemptive work of Christ.

### **What can a church require of its members in worship?**

Only what scripture requires. Since members in a sense have to be present, the church may not require the assembled members to do anything not authorized by Scripture. Nothing novel may be imposed upon them. The church's power is limited. It may not command what Scripture does not command.

Let's focus our time on the two of those five elements that usually get all the attention—music and preaching.

First let's define terms: music is not synonymous with worship. Music and singing is not the definition of worship. The word *worship* has been co-opted by our culture to mean much less than it is. Music is part of the service; worship is all of the service!

With the spirit of the regulative principle in play, what do we sing and why do we sing it? We sing the Bible to praise and proclaim Christ.

So in the congregational aspects of musical worship we're looking for a *shared maximum intelligibility*. An undistracted excellence that is meaningful and edifying (1 Corinthians 14:6–19).

As far as the preaching and teaching goes, it's much the same. What do we preach and teach, and why do we preach and teach it? We preach the Bible, to understand and obey Christ.

As to the scriptures preached in our worship service, we're looking for an understandable and actionable explanation of the word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This is achieved through expositional preaching, that is taking the main point of a sermon from the main point of the text.

# Serving and Giving

## What we *hope* for every new member of our church:

- That they regularly **worship** together with the gathered body on the first day of the week (Hebrews 10:25).
- **That they serve the church body by using their God-given gifts and talents (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).**
- **That they cheerfully and consistently give in support of the ministry of the church (2 Corinthians 9:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2).**

## How should a member serve the church body using their God-given gifts and talents?

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 is a more familiar passage that list a Christian's spiritual gifts. Romans 12:6-8 and Ephesians 4:11-16 are two others.

Paul ends his 1 Corinthians 12 passage by saying, "*And I will show you a still more excellent way.*" Then he begins chapter 13 by explaining the superiority of Christian love.

Edward Welch has written a very helpful book, *Side by Side: Waking With others in Wisdom and Love*. It's arranged in two sections: (1) We are all needy. (2) We are all needed. The second section has 11 chapters that are summarized as follows:

**1. Ordinary people, ordinary ways.** Loving people can require extraordinary effort, but it doesn't require extraordinary gifting. Talk to people. Get to know them. Be a good listener. God has given you wisdom. He's given you his Spirit. Don't be afraid.

**2. Start small and push through the awkwardness.** Most people have to wade in the shallow end before they'll try swimming in the deep. Except for the most extroverted among us, getting to know people is challenging. But Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither are friendships. Keep your hand to the relational plow.

**3. Follow the affections.** Facts are important too. But don't just ask about the test results and the medication and the next doctor's visit. We must be willing to talk about fears and worries and doubts and joys and hopes and disappointments.

**4. See, and let them know you see.** “See something, say something” is not just good advice for stopping the bad guys. It’s good advice for pointing out the good in other people. Have you noticed the Spirit’s gifts, or better yet the Spirit’s fruit, in someone else? Write him a note. Tell her what you’re thankful for.

**5. Draw out and ask for stories.** How did you become a Christian? What drew you to your line of work? Tell me about your kids. How did you two meet? What were your traditions around the holidays? One of the greatest gifts you can give to others is the gift of your curiosity.

**6. Speak from the heart and remember.** Don’t let suffering scare you away. That’s when others need you the most. Don’t lecture. Don’t push them away with pious platitudes. Tell them you’re sorry. Take the initiative to help. Don’t forget.

**7. Pray and follow up.** I always find it amazing (and encouraging) that so many people will pray for me in a time of crisis or pain. I find it doubly amazing when those people circle back a week later, or a month later, or a year later, and tell me they are still praying and ask how I am doing.

**8. Keep in mind, suffering is a battleground.** We don’t just experience life. We all interpret what we experience. When suffering comes—and it comes to all of us—we will be tempted to interpret our pain incorrectly (e.g., God is out to get me, I’m unlucky, nothing really matters). We need each other to suffer well.

**9. Exercise patience and humility.** Real love means getting into real problems. Most people, however, prefer to talk about their circumstantial problems, not their real problems. So if we are going to love one another, we must deal humbly with other people’s anger and other people’s failures.

**10. Have the courage to confront.** Love may cover a multitude of sins, but it does not overlook every sin for all time. Sin is one of the main things we all have in common. Let’s not be afraid to talk about it.

**11. Deal with past, present, and future.** It’s easy for us to relate to people only in the present. What’s going on today? How are you feeling right now? But wise counselors will also look into the past (to see how history has affected our interpretation of reality) and bring the future to bear on the present. Christians of all people must live in light of the end of the story.

## How should a member give to the church body?

<sup>1</sup> *The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,  
the world and those who dwell therein,  
<sup>2</sup> for he has founded it upon the seas  
and established it upon the rivers. (Psalm 24:1-2)*

To summarize psalm 24, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof", **when you've given God all that you have and all that you are, you've only given Him what is already His own!**

<sup>34</sup> *"For who has known the mind of the Lord,  
or who has been his counselor?"  
<sup>35</sup> "Or who has given a gift to him  
that he might be repaid?" - Romans 11:34-35*

When giving is mentioned in a church setting the idea of tithing most often is what comes to mind. And when the Bible uses the word tithes it means a tenth—10%.

**So what does the Bible say about tithing?** At least two things:

(1) Tithing was the basic pattern of giving to the Lord's work in the O.T. All the Hebrew's were to set aside a tenth of their gain for the Lord. (Leviticus 27 and Numbers 18).

(2) Tithing is NOT held up as pattern of giving in the N.T. The closest thing you'll see is a reference in Matthew 23 where the Pharisees had set their acts of tithing above acts of kindness and mercy, and Jesus takes them to task for it.

<sup>23</sup> *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. **These you ought to have done**, without neglecting the others. - Matthew 23:23*

If you do some reading on this subject you won't have much trouble finding those who will tell you that tithing is taught in the N.T. What do you do with that?

What DOES the N.T. say about **giving**? Tithing was a **pattern** for giving—that pattern is not mentioned—but what about giving? Let's not mix up the pattern with the principle. What does the N.T. say about giving? Quite a lot actually!

Giving is all over the N.T. We're even taught what kind of attitude we're to have when we give. We're to give generously, cheerfully, sacrificially... and so on.

So we can say thus far, the N.T. does not teach the tithes as a pattern of giving, but neither does it set it aside.

That being said, it is then not unreasonable to assume that the N.T. presupposes that our giving under grace would be equal to or even more than God's people's giving under the law in the O.T. But that's all we could say. Because scripture hasn't, neither can we.

*Now concerning the **collection** for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do.*

The word *collection* is in reference to a mechanism by which they received the offering. Put another way, the offering is *what* was received; the collection is *how* they received it.

*<sup>2</sup> On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up*

The **FIRST** of three principles for biblical giving is **regularity**. What is the opposite of regularity? Irregularity. That works for both the giver and the recipient. Can a ministry plan around irregular giving? Can a missionary plan around irregular giving?

It also works for the giver to have a pattern of regularity—it's harder to forget if there is a plan. Not planning to do something is planning to not do it.

*...each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper*

The **SECOND** principle is that your giving be **proportionate**. That means in keeping with your income. It sounds like Paul is leaving it up to you before the Lord. That's because Paul knows God searches the heart. God knows if we are giving according to our prosperity—and we should know where that prosperity comes from.

Put another way, God has provided for you; it'll be God who requires of you; it'll be up to you to obediently respond.

Again, it's up to you. You've heard it said, "between me and the Lord", exactly. But know you will be held accountable for that. Think about it, **if we are going to be held accountable for every idle word that we speak, we'll give an account for every red cent!**

I can understand why some ministries would rather minimize this type of conversation—it's not easy to talk about. But in truth, what favors are they doing their membership by neglecting to prepare them to face their own judgment by not teaching them at least what the Bible has to say on the matter?

The **THIRD** principle for biblical giving is that it would be administrated **properly**.

*<sup>3</sup> And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.*



This language of course is to demonstrate the presence of *integrity*. In Acts 4 the gifts of the congregation were placed at the feet of the apostles. The apostles are all gone now, but in their place we have elders for oversight, and deacons for serving.

A few more thoughts...

What about someone who says, “my heart isn’t in it, and I don’t want to be a hypocrite by giving against my attitude, God said He likes a cheerful giver?” This is likely an excuse, not a reason. There are a lot of things that are important to us that at times our hearts are just not in. If it’s true that where our treasure is that’s where our heart will be, then consider putting your treasure where you want your heart to be.

What about the person who says, “I used to give to Wake Chapel, but not any more, because after the last business meeting I saw that they have enough. We can understand that thinking—but it’s incorrect.

*<sup>6</sup> Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. (Galatians 6:6)*

The principle here isn’t only descriptive of one person to another but a family under the entire teaching ministry of the church they attend. It says you are to contribute first where you are fed. If you are fed here, taught the Word of God here, if your family is growing in grace and maturity here, then by all means support the work of this ministry.

Saying the church has enough, presupposes a status quo going forward. What if God should have bigger plans for this body?

### **Conclusion:**

So, ultimately this is a personal thing—a private thing. That’s why it’s difficult to talk about.

More specifically giving is a spiritual thing:

*<sup>16</sup> Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. (Hebrews 13:16)*

Two things are true of the Bible as far as giving, no matter what testament your reading.

1. It’s always a portion
2. It’s sometimes a sacrifice.