



GRACE CHURCH
B E N B R O O K

Membership Class — Week 2

WHAT ARE THE MARKS OF A LOCAL CHURCH?

“Church [should be] a group of messy people led by messy people. Life in our congregation is messy...what is the alternative? The alternative is to be a church in which there is a lot of pretending; in which people have problems, but in which the culture does not allow people to be open about them. [But] mess reflects a culture of grace. We pretend because either we do not trust God’s grace for ourselves or we do not trust other people to show us grace.” – Tim Chester

“We want to be a place where it's ok not to be ok” – Matt Chandler

In addition, a church is to regularly practice the “one-anothers“ of Scripture:

- Speak the truth (Gospel) in love to one another (Eph 4:17)
- Greet one another (Rom 16:16, 1 Cor 16:20, 2 Cor 13:12, 1 Pet 5:14)
- Comfort one another (1 Thess. 4:18)
- Forgive one another (Col. 3:13)
- Build one another up (Rom. 15:2; 1 Thess. 5:11)
- Serve one another (Gal. 5:13)
- Bear one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2)
- Encourage one another (Heb. 10:25)
- Meet with one another (Heb. 10:25)
- Be kind & forgiving towards one another (Eph. 4:32, Rom. 12:10)
- Receive (welcome) one another as Christ received us (Rom. 15:7)
- Care for one another (1 Cor. 12:25)
- Minister one to another (1 Pet. 4:10)
- Show hospitality to one another (1 Pet. 4:9)
- Pray for one another (James 5:16)

For a church to be a biblical church there must be these essential marks:

1. The Word Rightly Preached

"The Word of God gives life to the church of God (Eph. 2:18–20). A church can exist and thrive spiritually only where the Scripture is rightly preached. Organization, programs, and ministers do not make a church. There must be preaching.

Unfortunately, preaching is misunderstood by many churches today. Inspiring messages, practical and down-to-earth “talks,” and motivational speeches do not qualify as preaching. Good preaching will always be practical, in the sense that sermons make the connection between the truth of Scripture and the real-life experience of the believer. Preaching that is strong indeed motivates and inspires, but not by virtue of eloquence or emotive stories. Something deep happens when the Word is rightly preached.

To rightly preach the Word is to make known the truth of God from Scripture by exposing men, women, and children to the curse of sin and the hope of the gospel. Scripture is not rightly preached unless the law of God exposes our corruption and condemnation, the grace of God shows us the offer of forgiveness and eternal life, and the ways of God are encouraged in faith and repentance.

To preach the Word rightly requires pastors to preach the Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*), not their own ideas and agendas, and to present the gospel for all to believe. True preaching is not mere commentary on passages of Scripture, but a warning of judgment and a heralding of good news. It convicts and encourages. It not only informs, but also transforms.

Implicit in preaching the Word rightly is the task of understanding and presenting sound doctrine. We cannot preach the Word rightly unless we understand it rightly. And good theology helps us to understand God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture.

Theology consists of particular truths known as “doctrines.” At the heart of a church, and of Christian theology, is the gospel of Jesus Christ—the good news that the Son of God fulfilled all righteousness, died for sinners, and rose from the dead, bringing salvation to all who believe in Him. Such truths are essential not only to know the Lord, but to know ourselves—a double knowledge that makes for healthy Christians and vibrant churches. A church is not a church if it does not confess “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). A healthy local church is built upon and governed by Scripture. This means we must embrace the Bible’s authority, sufficiency, and usefulness.”¹

2. The Ordinances Rightly Administered

[Communion] was ordained to be frequently used in order that [Christians] might frequently return in memory to Christ’s Passion, by such remembrance to sustain and strengthen their faith, and urge themselves to sing thanksgiving to God and to proclaim his goodness.... [It should be] spread at least once a week for the assembly of Christians, and the promises declared in it should feed us spiritually...All, like hungry men, should flock to such a bounteous repast. – John Calvin

Communion is taken weekly on Sundays in the middle of the gathering to represent the centrality of the Gospel as a church. Communion is a tangible time for us as a body of believers to receive from Christ the spiritual nourishment, strength, hope, and joy that come from feasting our souls on all that he purchased on the cross.

Communion was instituted by Jesus at the Last Supper as a means by which God’s people could continually remember and celebrate His body (shown in the bread) broken and His blood (shown in the wine) shed for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:26–29).

The final communion for God’s people will be at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb with Jesus at the end of history in His Kingdom (Rev.19:9). The church is to celebrate communion with a sober confession of sin and recognition of why Jesus died and rose (1 Cor. 11:17–34) and partake together to show that they are unified by Jesus (1 Cor. 10:17). Therefore, communion is only intended for Christians (1 Cor. 11:29–30).

Preparing for communion should include:

- Self examination (1 Corinthians 11:27)
- Confessing my sins (1 John 1:9)
- Restoring relationships (Matthew 5:23-24)

Baptism occurs through the immersion of a person completely under water and then raising him up (Mark 1:5; 1:10; John 3:23) to show that he was united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:1–7; Col. 2:11–12). Baptism is to be done in the name of the Trinity (Matt. 28:19). Baptism is to be done for Christians who demonstrate saving faith (Acts 2:41; 8:12; 10:47–48; Gal. 3:27). Baptism does not save anyone, but instead shows that God has saved him or her solely by His free grace (Gal. 1:10; 5:4; Eph. 2:8–9). Baptism is commanded for God’s people (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38).

In our bible belt church culture, many were baptized without really knowing what it represents, and, often, without truly having a heart that was regenerated (saved) or transformed to love and follow Jesus. This is nothing to be ashamed of. Almost always this is because of bad teaching, peer pressure, or pressure from a church leader. If you believe you were truly saved *after* you were baptized or if you have never been baptized at all, please talk with your Community Group leader or a pastor about being baptized.

¹ The Character Of The Church by Joe Thorn

3. Church Discipline and Reconciliation

“When churches ignore sin, the world despises them and the reputation of Jesus Christ himself is dragged through the mud” – John Frame

Jesus instituted church discipline (Matthew 18) for the purpose of preserving the church’s witness to the lost world by preserving its holiness. Churches that allow professing believers to live in unrepentant sin without warning, correction, rebuke, and finally removing from membership and excluding from The Lord’s Supper are not acting in love and are rendering impotent their gospel witness.

Church discipline is loving. Its purpose is *always* restoration. The hope is that it rarely gets to the elders of the church but is lovingly dealt with at the one-on-one and Community Group level. Church discipline should be happening daily over coffee and lunch; on Sundays and Community Groups; between spouses and friends. It can be a gentle rebuke of someone’s bitterness, gossip, or selfishness; or it can be a passionate pleading for repentance over someone’s habitual sin. Occasionally it can include being removed from membership and excluded from The Lord’s Supper; again, in hopes of restoration.

As well, reconciliation between relationships within a church will be necessary as sinners live among sinners and sin. A Gospel-formed church, however, will always see this as an opportunity for Jesus to be glorified and a way for us to love one another. Tim Keller says:

“In its most basic and simple form, this teaching [on forgiveness and reconciliation] is that Christians in community are to never give up on one another, never give up on a relationship, and never write off another believer. We must never tire of forgiving (and repenting!) and seeking to repair our relationships. Matthew 5:23–26 tells us we should go to someone if we know they have something against us. Matthew 18:15–20 says we should approach someone if we have something against them. In short, if any relationship has cooled off or has weakened in any way, it is always your move. It doesn’t matter who started it: God always holds you responsible to reach out to repair a tattered relationship. *A Christian is responsible to begin the process of reconciliation, regardless of how the distance or the alienation began.*”

4. Qualified Leadership and Covenanted Membership

“So I exhort the elders among you...shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.” – Peter

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

Elders are the male leaders of the church who are also called pastors, bishops, and overseers (Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11; 1 Peter 5:2). The elders are men chosen for their ministry according to clear biblical requirements (1 Tim. 2:11–3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9). The elders are always spoken of in plurality because God intends for more than one man to lead and rule over the church as a safeguard for both the church and the man. The elders’ duties include ruling (1 Tim. 5:17) managing (1 Tim. 3:4–5), tending (1 Peter 5:2–5), giving account (Heb. 13:17), living exemplary lives (Heb. 13:7), using authority (Acts 20:28), teaching (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim 3:2), preaching (1 Tim. 5:17), doctrinal instruction (Titus 1:9), and discipline (Matt. 18:15–17).

Deacons are the servants of the church who are also qualified for their ministry of caring for God’s people by qualifications that are nearly identical to the elders minus the teaching and preaching abilities (1 Tim. 3:8–13). Unlike elders, deacons can be either male or female (1 Tim. 3:8–13 especially 3:11), as with the

example of the woman Phoebe (Rom. 16:1–2). The deacon ministry may have officially begun in the early church in Acts 6:1–6.

Members are the Christians who are actively participating in the life of the local church so that it is built up for God’s purposes (1 Cor 12:1–31 especially 12:24). The early church had a notion of being a member that included numerical record (Acts 2:37–47), records of widows (1 Tim 5:3–16), elections (Acts 6:1–6), discipline (Matt 18:15–20; 1 Cor 5; Gal. 6:1), accountability (Heb 13:17), and an awareness of who was a church member (Rom 16:1–16).

5. Great Commandment and Great Commission

And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

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

The church is called to fulfill the Great Commandment to love God and love others. Instead of getting caught up in morality or religion the church should ask, “Is this loving?” “Will this glorify God?” Further, biblical love is marked, not by emotions or feelings, but by sacrifice, steadfastness, and servanthood. God *demonstrated* His love for us by dying for us (Romans 5:21), and we are to demonstrate our love for each other and for our neighbors (including enemies) by laying down our rights, preferences, and comforts to give of our time, energy, and money for the good of others and the glory of God.

The church is also called to fulfill the Great Commission. We are to display and proclaim the goodness and glory of the gracious Gospel of Jesus to those God has sent us to. This is why we want to plant churches and see the nations reached—these are our marching orders.

REFLECTION

Of these five essential marks of a church which one was most foreign to you?

Any questions?

Do you feel like something is missing from this list?

GRACE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

What is a Covenant?

A covenant is a promise; an agreement by which two or more parties obligate themselves to each other to perform certain duties or to live a certain way. Within the Scriptures we find a number of examples of covenants, some between God and man (Gen 6, 9, 15; Ezk 20; Hos 2; Jer 31; Matt 26), others solely between people (I Sam 18; II Sam 5). Some covenants are unconditional, meaning there is a pledge to be faithful to the covenant regardless of the other person's faithfulness. Other covenants are conditional, meaning that the obligation of one party is at least in part dependent upon the faithfulness of the other. Though the membership covenant of Grace Church does define the relationship between partners and the local church, it is first and foremost a promise made to God as a commitment to His glory and His bride, the Church.

Therefore, the heart of this membership covenant simply reiterates the biblical obligations of all Christians, whether partnered with a local church or not. For example, all Christians are required to submit to the Scriptures, pursue holiness, steward resources, etc. It is assumed that Christians will follow these universal obligations even if the local church fails in its covenant obligations. In other words, these Christian duties are unconditional.

Certain aspects of this covenant, however, are conditioned upon the faithfulness of both parties. For example, if an individual partner feels as though the leadership of Grace Church is not remaining faithful to the requirements of the covenant, it is the responsibility of the individual partner to lovingly and humbly express concerns to the leadership of the church. If the church elders have clearly broken covenant faithfulness and are unwilling to change, then the member is freed from his or her obligations to this particular church and is encouraged to seek membership elsewhere given the church's disobedience. In addition, certain circumstances may provide sufficient and righteous grounds to transfer partnership elsewhere.

Statement of Biblical Doctrine

(Closed-Handed Issues)

The following beliefs represent the core of central orthodox belief from a biblical and historical perspective and should be universal to all followers of Christ. The explicit rejection of any one of these particular beliefs disqualifies one from membership with Grace Church.

I believe:

- that the Scriptures are completely true, authoritative and sufficient (*Psalms 19:7-11; II Timothy 3:16; I Peter 1:20-21*).
- that there is only one God (*Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-6; 46:9-10; John 17:3; I Corinthians 8:4-6; I Timothy 2:5*).
- that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God; that the members of the Trinity are equal in nature yet distinct in their roles (*Genesis 1:26; Psalm 45:6-7; 110:1; Matthew 3:13-17; 28:17-20; I Corinthians 12:4-6*).
- that I am, along with all humanity (Christ excluded), by birth and action, a sinner (*Genesis 6:5; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23; 5:8, 12-21; 7:18; Ephesians 2:1-3*).
- that the deserved penalty for sin is death, both physical and spiritual (*Genesis 2:15-17; 3:19; Romans 5:12; 6:23; James 1:14-15*).
- that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, was born of a virgin, is both fully God and fully human, and is without sin (*Matthew 1:20; Luke 2:52; John 1:1-4, 14; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:1-3*).
- that Jesus Christ died as my substitute to pay the penalty for my sin (*John 1:29; 10:1-18; Romans 5:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; II Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:4; I Peter 3:18*).
- that Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead (*Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-53; John 20:21; I Corinthians 15:12-34*).

- that Jesus Christ physically ascended into heaven and will one day physically return (*John 14:3; Acts 1:11; I Thessalonians 4:16; Hebrews 9:28; I John 3:2; Revelation 1:7*).
- that only by trusting in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone can I be reconciled to God and experience true life and joy (*John 3:18; 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:21-26; I Timothy 2:5-6*).
- in a future, physical resurrection of the dead. Those who trust in Jesus Christ alone will be raised to eternal reward. Those who have not trusted in Jesus Christ will be raised to eternal punishment (*Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15*).

(Open-Handed Issues)

The member also understands that the leadership of Grace Church holds particular positions in the following areas (there are additional doctrinal requirements for leadership within Grace Church), but allows for differing positions to be held by members. We ask those in disagreement to study these issues thoughtfully, to agree to not be divisive, and to actively pursue unity and peace.

- The extent of God's sovereignty
- Predestination and election
- The timeline of creation (literal days vs. periods of time)
- God's active work in creation (i.e., gap theory, literal days, day age theory)
- The gifts of the Holy Spirit (continuationism or cessationism)
- Women and the role of pastor/elder
- Divorce and remarriage
- The relationship of God's glory to man's joy (they are not at odds)
- Views on eschatology (end times)

Biblical Obligations of Grace Church Elders to Grace Church Body

As shepherds and overseers of a local church, elders are entrusted with humbly protecting, leading, equipping, and caring for the church body and her individual members. The following is a rather comprehensive overview of the requirements for elders as spelled out within the Scriptures.

The elders covenant:

- to appoint elders and deacons according to the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (*I Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-4*).
- to prayerfully seek God's will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability based on our study of the Scriptures and following the Spirit (*Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-4*).
- to care for the church, in part by praying for you regularly, and to seek her growth in grace, truth, and love (*Matthew 28:16-20; Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 1:28; James 5:14; I Peter 5:1-4*).
- to provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture (*Acts 20:27-28; I Timothy 4:16; II Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 2:1*).
- to equip the members of the church for the work of ministry (*Ephesians 4:11-16*).
- to be on guard against false teachers and teachings (*Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; I Timothy 1:3-7; I John 4:1*).
- to lovingly exercise biblical discipline when necessary for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined, and the health of the church as a whole (*Matthew 18:15-20; I Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20*).
- to set an example for and join members in fulfilling the obligations of church membership stated below (*Philippians 3:17; I Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; I Peter 5:3*).

Biblical Obligations of Grace Member to Grace Church Body

As those who have experienced the grace of a life changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to reflect the character of Jesus through the pursuit of certain attitudes and actions and the rejection of others. The Scriptures refer to this reality as "living by the Spirit" (*Romans 8*). The requirements of this membership covenant are in no way intended as an addition to the biblical

obligations of a believer. Rather, this document functions primarily as an accessible, yet non-exhaustive, explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the obedience that faith produces.

I covenant:

- to understand and adhere to the beliefs contained in the Grace Church Confessional Statement as well as in this document and will not be divisive to the church's teaching. I also understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will diligently pursue and preserve unity and peace (*Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:7,17*).
- to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues (*Psalm 119; II Timothy 3:14-17; II Peter 1:19-21*).
- to pursue and maintain a close relationship with the Lord Jesus through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, and practice of spiritual disciplines (*Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; I Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 5:1-21; I Thessalonians 5:12-22*).
- to follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances prescribed to His Church:
 - by being baptized after my conversion (*Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Corinthians 12:13*)
 - by regularly remembering and celebrating the person and work of Christ through communion (*Mark 14:22-25; I Corinthians 11:17-34*).
- to regularly participate in the life of Grace Church by attending weekly gatherings, engaging in biblical community, serving those inside and outside of this church, living intentionally as a missionary to the people God has placed in my life, and living a life that glorifies Jesus (*Acts 2:42-47; I Corinthians 10:31; II Corinthians 5:11-21; Hebrews 10:23-25; Titus 3:14 I Peter 2:9-12*).
- to steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, spiritual gifts, and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service, and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary (*Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; II Corinthians 8-9; I Peter 4:10-11*).
- to not function in leadership or as a member of another church family (*Hebrews 13:17*).
- by God's grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, to pursue holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ, who has saved me from my sin that I might live a new life (*II Corinthians 5:17; I Peter 1:13-16; 4:1-3*). Believers must strive to put certain attitudes and actions to death, while stirring and stimulating love and good deeds through the Spirit. Below are a few examples addressed in the Scriptures:
 - I will practice complete chastity unless married and, if married, complete fidelity within heterosexual and monogamous marriage. Complete chastity and fidelity mean, among other things, that regardless of my marital status, I will pursue purity and abstain from sexually immoral practices such as adultery, premarital sex, and pornography (*Romans 13:11-14; I Corinthians 6:15-20; 10:8; Ephesians 5:3; I Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4*).
 - I will seek to preserve the gift of marriage and agree to walk through the steps of marriage reconciliation at Grace Church before pursuing divorce from my spouse (*Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; I Corinthians 6; 7:10-11*).
 - I will refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, gossip, and other sinful behavior as the Bible dictates (*Romans 1:28-32; 13:13; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18; James 3:3-18*).
- to take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, not condemning fellow believers in areas where the Bible allows differing views and practices, and being careful not to create stumbling blocks for others in my own use of such freedom (*1 Corinthians 8:1-13*).
- to submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit by:
 - humbly following the biblical procedures for church discipline in my relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ, the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration
 - receiving righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers

- to submit to discipline by church leadership if the need should ever arise (*Psalm 141:5; Matthew 18:15-20; I Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11*).
- to do the following when I sin:
 - confess my sin to God and to fellow believers
 - repent and seek help to put my sin to death (*Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5; James 5:16; I John 1:6-10*)
 - to submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church, being diligent to strive for unity and peace (*Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; I Peter 5:5*).

My Commitment to Grace Church

I have completed the Membership Class in its entirety, have been baptized as a Christian, and commit to live as a diligent, faithful disciple of Jesus; that my identity would be in him, my worship would be for him, my fellowship would be through him, and my interaction with people and culture would be for his glory.

I understand that this covenant obligates me to the members of Grace Church and is an acknowledgement of my submission to the elders of the church. I accept the responsibility to notify the leadership if at any time I can no longer commit to this covenant, if I need to find another church home, or if I have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding Grace Church.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

9 MARKS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH

What is a local church? What is it to distinguish and mark the church?

“The local church is a covenanted community of regenerated believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord.”

“Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted a church of God exists.”

Below are *nine marks of a healthy church*. This is not an exhaustive or authoritative list. There are other significant marks like prayer and fellowship. But these nine are marks that we believe have tremendous impact on the health of our church and feed into other marks.

1. Expository Preaching

What is it?

An expository sermon takes the main point of a passage of Scripture, makes it the main point of the sermon, and applies it to life today.

Where is it in the Bible?

- According to Scripture, God accomplishes what he wants to accomplish through speaking (see Gen. 1:3, Isa. 55:10-11, Acts 12:24). This means that if preachers want their sermons to be filled with God's power, they must preach what God says.
- The Bible has many examples of this kind of preaching and teaching: Levitical priests taught the law (Deut. 33:10), Ezra and the Levites read from the law and gave the sense of it (Neh. 8:8), and Peter and the apostles expounded Scripture and urged their hearers to respond with repentance and faith (Acts 2:14-41, 13:16-47).
- On the other hand, God condemns those who “speak of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the Lord” (Jer. 23:16, 18, 21-22).

Why is it important?

Expository preaching is important because God's Word is what convicts, converts, builds up, and sanctifies God's people (Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:23; 1 Thess. 2:13; Jn. 17:17). Preaching that makes the main point of the text the main point of the sermon makes God's agenda rule the church, not the preacher's.

2. Biblical Theology

What is it?

Biblical theology is sound doctrine; it is right thoughts about God; it is belief that accords with Scripture.

Where is it in the Bible?

- The entire Bible teaches sound doctrine.
- Many New Testament books, such as Paul's epistles to the Romans and Ephesians, are stuffed to the brim with rich doctrinal teaching (see Rom. 1-11 and Eph. 1-3).
- The authors of the New Testament frequently argue that sound doctrine is essential for healthy Christians and healthy churches (see 1 Tim. 1:5, 2 John 1-6, and Titus 2:1-10).

Why is it important?

Biblical theology is essential for:

- Evangelism. The gospel is doctrine. Therefore, sound doctrine is necessary for evangelism.
- Discipleship. Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth” (Jn. 17:17). Christians grow by learning and living in light of the truth—in other words, by sound doctrine.

- Unity. According to the New Testament, the only true unity is unity in the truth (1 Jn. 1:1-4; 2 Jn. 10-11).
- Worship. To worship God is to declare his excellencies (1 Pet. 2:9-10) and to exalt him because of who he is (Ps. 29:2). True worship is a response to sound doctrine.

3. Biblical Understanding of The Gospel

What is it?

The good news is that:

- The one and only God who is holy made us in his image to know him (Gen. 1:26-28).
- But we sinned and cut ourselves off from him (Gen. 3; Rom. 3:23).
- In his great love, God became a man in Jesus, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross, thus fulfilling the law himself and taking on himself the punishment for the sins of all those who would ever turn from their sin and trust in him (John 1:14; Heb. 7:26; Rom. 3:21-26, 5:12-21).
- He rose again from the dead, showing that God accepted Christ's sacrifice and that God's wrath against us had been exhausted (Acts 2:24, Rom. 4:25).
- He now calls us to repent of our sins and trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness (Acts 17:30, John 1:12). If we repent of our sins and trust in Christ, we are born again into a new life, an eternal life with God (John 3:16).
- He is gathering one new people to himself among all those who submit to Christ as Lord (Matt. 16:15-19; Eph. 2:11-19).

Where is it in the Bible?

Romans 1-4 contains one of the fullest expositions of the gospel in all of Scripture, and 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 contains a succinct summary of the gospel.

Why is it important?

- A biblical understanding of the gospel is important because the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, and it is the only way for sinful people to be reconciled to a holy God.
- Not only that, but everything in a church flows from its understanding of the gospel, whether preaching, counseling, discipleship, music, evangelism, missions, and on.

4. Biblical Understanding of Conversion

What is it?

A biblical understanding of conversion recognizes both what God does and what people do in salvation.

In conversion, God:

- gives life to the dead (Eph. 2:5)
- gives sight to the blind (2 Cor. 4:3-6)
- and gives the gifts of faith and repentance (Phil. 1:29; Acts 11:18).

And in conversion, people:

- repent of sin (Mk. 1:15; Acts 3:19)
- and believe in Jesus (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 3:21-26).

A biblical understanding of conversion recognizes that only God can save, and that he saves individuals by enabling them to respond to the gospel message through repenting of sin and trusting in Christ.

Where is it in the Bible?

- Jesus called people to repent and believe in him (Mk. 1:15). He said that unless someone is born again he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven (Jn. 3:1-8).
- Throughout the book of Acts, the apostles call people to turn from their sin and trust in Christ (Acts 2:38, 3:19-20, 10:43, 13:38-39, 16:31, 17:30).

- Many of the epistles describe both our need to repent and believe in Christ and God’s supernatural work to accomplish this (Rom. 6:1-23; 1 Cor. 2:14-15; 2 Cor. 4:3-6; Eph. 2:1-10; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; 2 Tim. 2:25-26).

Why is it important?

A biblical understanding of conversion is important for churches because

- It clarifies how churches should exhort non-Christians—they should call non-Christians to repent of sin and trust in Christ.
- It reminds churches that they must rely upon God in all of their evangelistic efforts; only he can give new spiritual life.
- It teaches churches to maintain a sharp distinction between themselves and the world.
 - Church members’ lives should be marked by the fruit of conversion,
 - Churches should admit to baptism and the Lord’s Supper only those who show evidence of conversion.

Churches should evangelize and teach about the Christian life in such a way that the radical nature of conversion is continually emphasized.

5. Biblical Understanding of Evangelism

What is it?

Evangelism is simply telling non-Christians the good news about what Jesus Christ has done to save sinners and urging them to repent and believe. In order to biblically evangelize you must:

- Preach the whole gospel, even the hard news about God’s wrath against our sin.
- Call people to repent of their sins and trust in Christ.
- Make it clear that believing in Christ is costly, but worth it.

Where is it in the Bible?

Scripture contains both teaching on evangelism (Matt. 28:19-20; Rom. 10:14-17; 1 Pet. 3:15-16) and examples of evangelistic preaching (see Acts 2:14-41, 3:12-26, 13:16-49, 17:22-31). Moreover, any time Scripture speaks of the gospel, it is teaching us what we are to share in evangelism (see, for example, Romans 1-4 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Why is it important?

- When a church has an unbiblical understanding of the gospel, they don’t evangelize, they evangelize in misleading or manipulative ways, or they share a message that’s not the gospel.
- On the other hand, a biblical understanding of evangelism clarifies our role in the mission God has given to the church: we are to preach the good news about what Christ has done and pray that God would bring people to believe it.

6. Biblical Understanding of Church Membership

What is it?

According to the Bible, church membership is a commitment every Christian should make to attend, love, serve, and submit to a local church.

Where is it in the Bible?

- Throughout Old Testament history, God made a clear distinction between his people and the world (see Lev. 13:46, Num. 5:3, Deut. 7:3).
- Christ says that entering the kingdom of God means being bound to the church “on earth” (Matt. 16:16-19; 18:17-19). Where do we see the church on earth? The local church.
- The New Testament explicitly refers to some people being *inside* the church and some people being *outside* (1 Cor. 5:12-13). This is much more than a casual association.
- The church in Corinth consisted of a definite number of believers, such that Paul could speak of a punishment inflicted by the majority (2 Cor. 2:6).

- Not only does the New Testament speak of the reality of church membership, but its dozens of “one anothers” are written to local churches, which fill out our understanding of what church membership should practically look like.

Why is it important?

Biblical church membership is important because the church presents God’s witness to himself in the world. It displays his glory. In the church’s membership, then, non-Christians should see in the lives of God’s changed people that God is holy and gracious and that his gospel is powerful for saving and transforming sinners.

7. Biblical Church Discipline

What is it?

- In the broadest sense, church 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 elders are all forms of discipline.
- In a narrower sense, church discipline is the act of correcting sin in the life of the body, including the possible final step of excluding a professing Christian from membership in the church and participation in the Lord’s Supper because of serious unrepentant sin (see Matt. 18:15-20, 1 Cor. 5:1-13).

Where is it in the Bible?

- The New Testament commands corrective discipline (excluding unrepentant sinners from the fellowship of the church) in passages like Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Corinthians 2:6, and 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15.
- The New Testament speaks about formative discipline (our efforts to grow in holiness together) in countless passages about pursuing holiness and building one another up in the faith, such as Ephesians 4:11-32 and Philippians 2:1-18.

Why is it important?

Think of discipline as the stake that helps the tree grow upright, the extra set of wheels on the bicycle, or the musician’s endless hours of practice. Without discipline, we won’t grow as God wants us to. With discipline, we will, by God’s grace, bear peaceful fruit of righteousness (Heb. 12:5-11).

8. Discipleship and Growth

What is it?

Scripture teaches that a live Christian is a growing Christian (2 Pet. 1:8-10). Scripture also teaches that we grow not only by instruction, but by imitation (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1). Therefore churches should exhort their members to both grow in holiness and help others do the same.

Where is it in the Bible?

- Peter exhorted his readers to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18)
- Paul exhorted the Ephesians to grow by speaking the truth in love to one another (Eph. 4:15).
- Many passages in Scripture instruct us to imitate godly leaders (Phil. 4:9; Heb. 13:7).

The point is that, according to Scripture, all Christians should grow in Christ, imitate other godly Christians, and encourage others in their growth in Christlikeness.

Why is it important?

- Promoting biblical discipleship and growth is important because none of us are finished products. Until we die, all Christians will struggle against sin, and we need all the help we can get in this fight.
- If a church neglects discipleship and growth, or teaches a skewed, unbiblical version of it, it will discourage genuine Christians and wrongly assure false Christians. On the other hand, if a church

fosters a culture of Christian discipleship and growth, it will multiply believers' efforts to grow in holiness.

- A church that is not growing in the faith will ultimately yield an unhealthy witness to the world.

9. BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF LEADERSHIP

What is it?

The Bible teaches that each local church should be led by a plurality of godly, qualified men called elders.

Where is it in the Bible?

Paul lays out the qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Passages that evidence a plurality of elders in one local church include Acts 14:23, Acts 20:17, 1 Timothy 4:14, 1 Timothy 5:17, and James 5:14.

Why is it important?

God gifts churches with elders to:

- feed God's sheep God's word (Jn. 21:15-17),
- guide the sheep (1 Tim. 4:16; 1 Pet. 5:3, Heb. 13:7),
- and protect the sheep from attackers (Acts 20:27-29; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; Tit. 1:9),
- while protecting both themselves and the church through the wisdom of their plurality (Prov. 11:14; 24:6).

The bottom line? Biblical church leadership is important because without it, God's people are like sheep without shepherds.

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