

Redemption Church Membership Covenant

WHAT IS MEMBERSHIP?

Church membership is covenanting together to formalize God's intention for every Christian to live in biblical community.

The weight of entering into a covenant may be diminished in our culture where promises are made casually and broken vows are the norm. But we use the language intentionally to communicate that membership is to be entered into with sobriety and commitment. This commitment goes two ways. Should you become a member you are acknowledging that you desire to be held to a higher degree of responsibility by church leadership. In choosing to become a member, you are also receiving the promise of counsel, service, aid, prayer, teaching, and guidance from the leadership.

Membership is not a status symbol or a social club that you get to join. You don't get a t-shirt or a parking space. You should not enter into the membership covenant because you've been around a while and figure it's the next step or "something you should do." Nor should you enter into the membership covenant simply to say, "Redemption is where I go to church." That's part of it, but membership is more than that. It is an informed commitment to the doctrine and vision of Redemption Church, a willing submission to the leadership of the church, and an intentional embrace of your role in the body of Christ and the mission of the church.

WHY IS COMMITTING (OR COVENANTING) IMPORTANT?

No one will ever grow in the church if they leave as soon as things get hard.

Redemption Church is committed to making disciples of Jesus Christ who live out the implications of the gospel rather than just giving it lip service. This means that as a community we strive to help one another grow in maturity and holiness. This means that sometimes you will be challenged by things you hear from the pulpit or from across a table. Sometimes you will be called to step outside of your comfort zone. Sometimes decisions will be made that don't align with your preferences. You will, inevitably, experience conflict.

Your first inclination may be to bail as soon as you get uncomfortable. Past experience may tell you that the slightest conflict equals the end of relationship. If all you are doing is dating the church, without investment or commitment, you may be tempted to simply move on as soon as the initial fondness starts to fade. After all, there's another church down the road. But just like in the covenant of marriage, growth happens when we stay true to our commitment, address sin and conflict, and allow ourselves to be challenged and stretched. That's where sanctification happens. That's where disciples are made. That's also where real joy is found.

Pastor Matt Chandler puts it well:

If you view church as some sort of...buffet, then you severely limit the likelihood of your growing into maturity. Growth into godliness can hurt. For instance, as I interact with others in my own local body, my own slothfulness in zeal is exposed, as is my lack of patience, my prayerlessness, and my hesitancy to associate with the lowly (Rom. 12:11-16). Yet this interaction also gives me the opportunity to be lovingly confronted by brothers and sisters who are in the trenches with me, as well as a safe place to confess and repent. But when church is just a place you attend

without ever joining, like an ecclesiological buffet, you just might consider whether you're always leaving whenever your heart begins to be exposed by the Spirit, and the real work is beginning to happen.

HOW DOES MEMBERSHIP IMPACT A CHURCH?

The church is called to participate in God's redemptive mission, rooted in worship of our Lord, displaying his restorative power. The local church is called to be a gospel-centered, intentional community with a mission and purpose.

This call to be on mission is not limited to pastors, church staff, and small group leaders. All believers have a part to play. In fact, scripture tells us that leaders within the church are called to "equip the saints – believers - for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God..." (Ephesians 4:12-13) Essentially, we are called to function as one body, made up of many members, with Jesus Christ as our head, working together to grow into maturity (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). When all believers – not just church staff – embrace the importance of their role in the church community the body of Christ is able to function with all of the faculties it is supplied with. And when each part is working properly, the body grows into health and strength. (Ephesians 4:16)

This means that while we affirm people's freedom to engage in the local church at their own pace, we feel compelled to challenge believers to become active, committed participants rather than remaining passive observers and consumers. Their intentional participation in the local body of Christ is simply too important for their own health and the health of the body.

Here's how this relates to membership: if we are going to function as one body on mission together, it is critical to know who belongs to and is committed to the body. This is why John Piper states, "It's very hard to do what the Bible calls a church to do unless it knows who are the members and who aren't."

Membership provides a way to determine who is committed to the mission and doctrine of Redemption Church – our local expression of the body of Christ. Such delineation is not meant to be elitist or divisive. It is not meant to create different classes within the body. Rather, it simply recognizes that there are people within any expression of the body of Christ at varying levels of commitment – and that's OK. But as an intentional community with a mission and purpose, it is helpful to know who is committed and who is simply curious.

BUT IF ALL CHRISTIANS ARE ALREADY "MEMBERS" OF THE BODY OF CHRIST, ISN'T LOCAL CHURCH "MEMBERSHIP" UNNECESSARY AND UNBIBLICAL?

It is important to realize that the body analogy in Scripture has both a global and a local meaning. In Ephesians, Christians are described as global members of the body of Christ, where Jesus is the "head." But 1 Corinthians 12 talks about Christians as local members of the body of Christ, where the body is made up of eyes, ears, hands, and feet.

HOW IS FORMAL CHURCH MEMBERSHIP BIBLICAL?

The Bible does not explicitly command formal local church membership, though the principle of church membership is clearly found in a number of ways in the Scriptures:

- Throughout Old Testament history, God made a clear distinction between his people and the world (Leviticus 13:46, Numbers 5:3, Deuteronomy 7:3).
- The Israelites repeatedly entered into formal covenant with each other and with God, sometimes putting it in writing, though they already had the assurance that they were God's chosen people (Nehemiah 9:38-10:39, 2 Kings 11:17; 23:1-3, 2 Chronicles 34:29-32).
- Christ says that entering the kingdom of God means being bound to the church "on earth" (Matthew 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 local church and some people being outside (1 Corinthians 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 Corinthians 2:6).
- The author in Hebrews commands that the church body "obey" and "submit" to their leaders who must "watch over" and "give an account" for them (Hebrews 13:17). Without formal membership, who submits to what leadership? Without membership, who do leaders give an account for?
- 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.

WHAT ARE REDEMPTION'S LEADERS COVENANTING TO?

- 1. We commit ourselves to lovingly caring for you and seeking your growth in Christ (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12).**
- 2. We covenant to provide teaching and counsel from the Scriptures (Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 5:17-18) and that this teaching will span the whole counsel of God's Word (Acts 20: 27-28).**
- 3. We covenant to helping you in times of need as your needs are made known. (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35; James 2:14-17).**
- 4. We covenant to faithful and wise stewardship of the financial resources entrusted to us by the congregation, providing annual and quarterly reports of Redemption's financial status upon request (2 Corinthians 8:16-21).**
- 5. We covenant that your elders and deacons will meet the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-13 & 5:17-22, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4).**
- 6. We covenant to pray for you regularly, particularly when you are sick (James 5:14).**
- 7. We covenant to exercise church discipline when necessary (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5, Galatians 6:1).**
- 8. We covenant to seek God's will for our church community to the best of our ability as we study the Scriptures and follow the Spirit (Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:1-5).**
- 9. We covenant to set an example and join you in fulfilling the duties of church member (1 Corinthians 11, Philippians 3:17, 1 Timothy 4:12).**

WHAT AM I COVENANTING TO?

MEMBER COPY

1. I am a Christian who has been saved from my sins by the grace of Jesus Christ. I have been, or intend to be, baptized to give testimony of my identification with the body of Christ and obedience to the Scriptures.
2. I have read and understand the Redemption's doctrinal statement and biblical convictions (Church Discipline, Pastor/Elder Led church Government, Divorce and Remarriage, and Open-Handed Issues). I agree not to be divisive on these issues. I also understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace (Hebrews 13:7, Ephesians 4: 1-3).
3. I will endeavor to maintain a close relationship with the Lord through regular personal Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of the other spiritual disciplines. I commit to using the spiritual gift(s) God has given me for the building up of the church, both at Redemption Church and universally (1 Peter. 4:10-11, Romans 12:1-8, 1 Corinthians 12: 7-13).
4. My commitment to Christ will be evident through my regular participation in the corporate worship services, and have consistent involvement in a biblical community (Psalms 119:97, 105, Acts 2:42-47, Hebrews 10:23-25).
5. I will strive to properly manage the resources God has given me, including my time, gifts and talents, attitudes, finances and possessions (Ephesians 5:15-18, Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 4:1-16, Galatians 5:22- 26. Proverbs 3:9-10). This includes regular giving to Redemption Church that is both sacrificial and cheerful (2 Corinthians 8 and 9).
6. I covenant to have friendly Christian relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ from other churches, but I will not hold membership with another church or consistently serve, regularly attend, tithe, or function in leadership position in another church family (Hebrews 13:17).
7. I covenant to follow the biblical procedures of church discipline and submit myself to discipline if the need should ever arise (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1-5).
8. I covenant to pursue unity with every brother and sister at Redemption Church through the bond of peace, that is Christ, with humility, godliness and biblical confrontation when necessary (Ephesians 4:3, Matthew 18:15-20).
9. I covenant to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues (Psalm 119, 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

I understand that this covenant expresses my desire to be in covenant relationships with the other believers and leadership of Redemption Church. My responsibility will be to notify the Redemption Church leadership if at any time I can no longer commit to this covenant, or if I have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding Redemption Church.

PRINTED NAME: _____ SIGNATURE: _____

WHAT AM I COVENANTING TO?

CHURCH COPY

- 1. I am a Christian who has been saved from my sins by the grace of Jesus Christ. I have been, or intend to be, baptized to give testimony of my identification with the body of Christ and obedience to the Scriptures.**
- 2. I have read and understand the Redemption’s doctrinal statement and biblical convictions (Church Discipline, Pastor/Elder Led church Government, Divorce and Remarriage, and Open-Handed Issues). I agree not to be divisive on these issues. I also understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace (Hebrews 13:7, Ephesians 4: 1-3).**
- 3. I will endeavor to maintain a close relationship with the Lord through regular personal Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of the other spiritual disciplines. I commit to using the spiritual gift(s) God has given me for the building up of the church, both at Redemption Church and universally (1 Peter. 4:10-11, Romans 12:1-8, 1 Corinthians 12: 7-13).**
- 4. My commitment to Christ will be evident through my regular participation in the corporate worship services, and have consistent involvement in a biblical community (Psalms 119:97, 105, Acts 2:42-47, Hebrews 10:23-25).**
- 5. I will strive to properly manage the resources God has given me, including my time, gifts and talents, attitudes, finances and possessions (Ephesians 5:15-18, Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 4:1-16, Galatians 5:22- 26. Proverbs 3:9-10). This includes regular giving to Redemption Church that is both sacrificial and cheerful (2 Corinthians 8 and 9).**
- 6. I covenant to have friendly Christian relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ from other churches, but I will not hold membership with another church or consistently serve, regularly attend, tithe, or function in leadership position in another church family (Hebrews 13:17).**
- 7. I covenant to follow the biblical procedures of church discipline and submit myself to discipline if the need should ever arise (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1-5).**
- 8. I covenant to pursue unity with every brother and sister at Redemption Church through the bond of peace, that is Christ, with humility, godliness and biblical confrontation when necessary (Ephesians 4:3, Matthew 18:15-20).**
- 9. I covenant to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues (Psalm 119, 2 Timothy 3:16-17).**

I understand that this covenant expresses my desire to be in covenant relationships with the other believers and leadership of Redemption Church. My responsibility will be to notify the Redemption Church leadership if at any time I can no longer commit to this covenant, or if I have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding Redemption Church.

PRINTED NAME: _____ SIGNATURE: _____

APPENDIX 1: REDEMPTION CHURCH DOCTRINAL STATEMENT & BIBLICAL CONVICTIONS

Doctrinal Statement

1. REVELATION

God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in the created order, and has supremely revealed himself to fallen human beings in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word. Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by his Spirit has graciously disclosed himself in human words: we believe that God has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are both record and means of his saving work in the world. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error in the original writings, complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. We confess that both our finitude and our sinfulness preclude the possibility of knowing God's truth exhaustively, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God's revealed truth truly. The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and do the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel.

Key Points

- a. God has revealed himself through his creation, through Jesus, and through the Scriptures.
- b. To disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.
- c. The Bible is inerrant and the ultimate authority in all things.
- d. We should joyfully read, study and apply God's word to our lives.

Scripture

- a. 2 Timothy 3:16–17 / 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. -
- b. 2 Peter 1:20–21 / ...knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. -
- c. John 8:31–32 / So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

2. THE TRI-UNE GOD

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love and in his holiness. He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration. Immortal and eternal, he perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning, sustains and sovereignly rules over all things, and providentially brings about his eternal good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation, to the praise of his glorious grace.

Key Points

- a. God eternally exists as three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- b. Each person is fully God.
- c. There is one God.
- d. God sovereignly rules and reigns over all things.
- e. We should submit to, adore, and glorify God.

Scripture

- a. Deuteronomy 6:4 / Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.
- b. Matthew 3:16–17 / And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."
- c. Matthew 28:19 / "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..."

3. CREATION OF HUMANITY

We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in his own image. Adam and Eve belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and devoted fellowship with their Maker. Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church, and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. The distinctive leadership role within the church given to qualified men is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments.

Key Points

- a. Men and women are created / dependent beings.
- b. Men and women are made in God's image to be God's agents.
- c. God's image remains present, yet marred by sin, in all humankind.
- d. Men and women are equal as image-bearers of God and accessibility to God.
- e. Men and women are created to complement one another by assuming distinctive roles in the family and church.
- f. God has called men to function as leaders, accountable to God, in the home and church.

Scripture

- a. Genesis 1:27–31 / So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.
- b. Genesis 2:18–25 / Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken

from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

c. Ephesians 5:22–33 / Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

d. 1 Corinthians 11:3 / But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

e. Romans 16:1–4 / I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.

f. 1 Timothy 2:8–15 / I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

4. THE FALL

We need to be reconciled with God. We believe that Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original blessedness—for himself and all his progeny—by falling into sin through Satan’s temptation. As a result, all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (e.g., physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, spiritually) and condemned finally and irrevocably to death—apart from God’s own gracious intervention. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to himself.

Key Points

- a. We are sinners by nature and by choice.
- b. Sin corrupts every aspect of our lives.
- c. The just penalty for our sin is death.
- d. We should earnestly seek to rid our lives of sin.

Scripture

- a. Genesis 3:1–7 / Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.
- b. Romans 5:12, 19 / Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.
- c. Romans 3:10–12 / ...as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

5. THE PLAN OF GOD

We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation, and to this end foreknew them and chose them. We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace have faith in Jesus, and that he will one day glorify them—all to the praise of his glorious grace. In love God commands and implores all people to repent and believe, having set his saving love on those he has chosen and having ordained Christ to be their Redeemer.

Key Points

- a. God's people were chosen to experience his grace before the foundation of the world.
- b. God does the work of saving and cleansing those who put their hope in Jesus.
- c. All people are called to repent and believe.

Scripture

- a. Ephesians 1:3–10 / Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.
- b. Revelation 5:9–10 / And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."
- c. Romans 8:29–30 / For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.
- d. Acts 17:30–31 / The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

6. THE GOSPEL

We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ—God’s very wisdom. Utter folly to the world, even though it is the power of God to those who are being saved, this good news is Christological, centering on the cross and resurrection: the gospel is not proclaimed if Christ is not proclaimed, and the authentic Christ has not been proclaimed if his death and resurrection are not central (the message is “Christ died for our sins . . . [and] was raised”). This good news is biblical (his death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), theological and salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), historical (if the saving events did not happen, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and we are to be pitied more than all others), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual persons are saved).

Key Points

- a. The gospel is news, not advice.
- b. The gospel is the historically true story of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.
- c. God uses the gospel to transform us.

Scripture

- a. 1 Corinthians 2:1–5 / And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.
- b. 1 Corinthians 15:1–8 / Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.
- c. 1 John 1:1–4 / That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.
- d. Romans 10:9–13 / ...because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

7. THE REDEMPTION OF CHRIST

We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to his Father, the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh, fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures. The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. As the mediatorial King, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God's sovereignty, and is our High Priest and righteous Advocate. We believe that by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in him we might become the righteousness of God: on the cross he canceled sin, propitiated God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. By his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death and defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all his people; by his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. Because God chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, no human being can ever boast before him—Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

Key Points

- a. Jesus is the promised Messiah of the Scriptures.
- b. Jesus is fully God and fully man.
- c. Jesus lived a life of perfect, sinless obedience to God's will.
- d. Jesus died as a substitute for us and paid the penalty for our sin.
- e. Jesus physically rose from his grave, breaking the power of Satan, sin, and death.
- f. Jesus is the only way to salvation.
- g. Jesus is King over all creation.

Scripture

- a. John 1:14 / And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
- b. Matthew 1:18 / Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.
- c. 2 Corinthians 5:21 / For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
- d. 1 Timothy 2:5 / For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,
- e. Matthew 28:18 / And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
- f. Romans 3:21–27 / But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.

g. John 14:1-3 / "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

h. 1 Corinthians 1:20-31 / Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

8. THE JUSTIFICATION OF SINNERS

We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf. By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. Inasmuch as Christ was given by the Father for us, and his obedience and punishment were accepted in place of our own, freely and not for anything in us, this justification is solely of free grace, in order that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. We believe that a zeal for personal and public obedience flows from this free justification.

Key Points

- a. Jesus' death on the cross is credited to all who trust in him as full payment for their sins.
- b. Jesus' obedience in his sinless life is credited to all who trust in him as their righteousness and acceptance with God.
- c. Justification is a free gift.
- d. The gift of justification rightly motivates us toward obedience.

Scripture

- a. Romans 3:21–31 / But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.
- b. Titus 2:11–14 / For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.
- c. Titus 3:3–8 / For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.

9. THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that this salvation, attested in all Scripture and secured by Jesus Christ, is applied to his people by the Holy Spirit. Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and, as the "other" Paraclete, is present with and in believers. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith, and in him they are baptized into union with the Lord Jesus, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God's family; they participate in the divine nature and receive his sovereignly distributed gifts. The Holy Spirit is himself the down payment of the promised inheritance, and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

Key Points

- a. The Holy Spirit is actively working before, during and after salvation.
- b. The Holy Spirit is with and in all followers of Jesus Christ, serving as a 'down payment' of our inheritance and guiding us in sanctification.
- c. The Holy Spirit often works through the gifts of his people.

Scripture

- a. Ezekiel 36:25–27 / I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.
- b. Ephesians 1:13–14 / In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.
- c. John 14:16–17 / And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.
- d. John 14:26 / But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.
- e. John 15:26 / "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.
- f. John 16:8–14 / And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.
- g. Romans 8:9 / You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.
- h. 1 Corinthians 3:16 / Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

i. Ephesians 4:30 / And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

j. 1 Corinthians 12:1–11 / Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

10. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God through union with Christ by faith and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit enter the kingdom of God and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins, the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God, and the prospect of the glory yet to be revealed. Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace. Living as salt in a world that is decaying and light in a world that is dark, believers should neither withdraw into seclusion from the world, nor become indistinguishable from it: rather, we are to do good to the city, for all the glory and honor of the nations is to be offered up to the living God. Recognizing who's created order this is, and because we are citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God. The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation. The kingdom of God is an invasive power that plunders Satan's dark kingdom and regenerates and renovates through repentance and faith the lives of individuals rescued from that kingdom. It therefore inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.

Key Points

- a. The Kingdom of God is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world.
- b. The Kingdom of God is already present but not fully realized.
- c. The Kingdom of God was initiated by Jesus and will be completed in the new heaven and new earth.
- d. The Kingdom of God continues through Jesus' people actively demonstrating and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom.

Scripture

- a. Mark 1:14–15 / Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."
- b. Matthew 5:13–16 / "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.
- c. Matthew 22:36–40 / "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."
- d. Galatians 6:10 / So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.
- e. Colossians 1:15–19 / He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning,

the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

f. Revelation 21:1–5 / Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

11. GOD'S NEW PEOPLE

We believe that God's new covenant people have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem; they are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies. This universal church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only Head; thus each "local church" is, in fact, the church, the household of God, the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth. The church is the body of Christ, the apple of his eye, graven on his hands, and he has pledged himself to her forever. The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, and, above all, by her love for God, and by her members' love for one another and for the world. Crucially, this gospel we cherish has both personal and corporate dimensions, neither of which may properly be overlooked. Christ Jesus is our peace: he has not only brought about peace with God, but also peace between alienated peoples. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. The church serves as a sign of God's future new world when its members live for the service of one another and their neighbors, rather than for self-focus. The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world.

Key Points

- a. God has chosen to continue his work on earth through the church.
- b. Each local church is to be a sign and an agent of God's kingdom.
- c. Jesus died not just to reconcile us to God, but to reconcile us with each other.

Scripture

- a. Ephesians 1:16–23 / I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.
- b. Ephesians 5:25 / Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,
- c. Matthew 28:18–20 / 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."
- d. John 13:34 / 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.
- e. Ephesians 2:14-16, 19-22 / For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility... So then

you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

12. THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all and his people will be enthralled by the immediacy of his ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of his glorious grace.

Key Points

- a. There will be a physical resurrection of both the saved and the condemned.
- b. Those who die in their sins will experience eternal punishment in hell.
- c. God will renew creation and his people will joyfully live forever in the new heaven and new earth.

Scripture

- a. Revelation 19:11–16 / Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.
- b. 1 Corinthians 15:20–26 / But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.
- c. Revelation 21:1–5 / Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Biblical Convictions

The following are practical issues that we have chosen to take positions on out of our conviction that Scripture gives clear guidance to each. All theology is practical, but because these issues deal more specifically with the nature, organization, and functioning of the church, we have chosen to place them in their own section, distinct from the broad theology outlined in the doctrinal statement.

1. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Church discipline is the process of confronting sin to achieve repentance and restoration. It is also intended to prevent unrestrained sin from spreading to others and protect the honor of Jesus Christ. The informal process of church discipline happens any time a believer confronts another believer about his or her sin and encourages repentance. The formal process of church discipline typically begins when the individual in sin is unwilling to repent over an extended period of time. Therefore, most formal church discipline is not as much about the sin as it is about the hard-hearted unwillingness to repent for sin. The process of church discipline concludes when the believer either repents or is formally removed by the elders from participating in the church. Additionally, those who intentionally stir up divisions in the church should be disciplined with greater swiftness.

Key Points

- a. The Bible does not allow the church to tolerate willful, unrepentant sin.
- b. God gives church leadership authority to carry out public discipline if necessary.

Scripture

- a. Galatians 6:1 / Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.
- b. James 5:19–20 / My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.
- c. Matthew 18:15–17 / "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.
- d. 1 Corinthians 5:1–7 / It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.
- e. Romans 16:17 / I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.
- f. Titus 3:10 / As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him,

2. PASTOR/ELDER LED CHURCH GOVERNMENT

The consistent pattern throughout the New Testament is that each local body of believers is shepherded by a plurality of qualified, male pastors/elders. Simply stated, this is the only pattern for church leadership given in the New Testament. Pastors/elders are called to number of specific duties, including: prayer and Scripture study, caring for the people in the church, equipping the church to do ministry, giving an account to God for the church, living exemplary lives, preaching and teaching, praying for the sick, and teaching sound doctrine and refuting error.

Key Points

- a. Redemption Church is led and governed by a plurality of qualified male elders.
- b. Redemption Church is not a congregational-led church with member voting. Decisions are made by the elders with counsel from the congregation.

Scripture

- a. 1 Timothy 3:1–7 / The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.
- b. Titus 1:6–9 / if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.
- c. Acts 20:28 / 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.
- d. 1 Peter 5:2–4 / 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. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
- e. Hebrews 13:17 / 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.
- f. 1 Timothy 5:17 / Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

3. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself. The former is connected with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal. Together they are simultaneously God's pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of his return and of the consummation of all things. At Redemption Church we practice weekly communion in keeping with

At Redemption Church, we practice "believer's baptism," believing that baptism is appropriately administered only to those who give a thoughtful profession of faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, we believe that baptism should come after faith in Jesus, rather than before. For this reason, we will not baptize infants or small children that are unable to make a thoughtful profession of faith. We understand that some within our church family may have different convictions about the value of infant baptism. Therefore, we will not necessarily exclude from membership those who do not agree with our position on baptism and refuse to be baptized as believers, though we do expect that they have a theologically defensible reason for holding to infant baptism and that they will not allow this non-essential issue to cause division in the church.

Key Points

- a. Baptism is the sign of initiation into God's family.
- b. The Lord's Supper (Communion) is the sign of covenant remembrance for followers of Jesus Christ.
- c. At Redemption Church we practice "believer's baptism" by full immersion.

Scripture

- a. Matthew 28:18–20 / 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."
- b. Romans 6:3–5 / Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.
- c. Matthew 26:26–28 / Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."
- d. 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 / For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

4. DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

The Bible gives two legitimate grounds for divorce and/or remarriage: adultery and desertion by an unbelieving spouse. It is important to note that although God allows for divorce in these two situations, he never commands us to divorce and he never communicates that divorce is best. What about those who have already been divorced? Does the Bible allow for remarriage following a divorce? Paul answers this question in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, saying that in cases of unbiblical divorce the individual should either remain unmarried or pursue reconciliation.

Every person is different and every situation is unique. This reality does not in any way negate the prohibitions and principles given in the Bible, but it does require wisdom and discernment to appropriately apply the principles to a given situation. Therefore, we would recommend that those who are concerned about their situation meet with a pastor, elder or leader to receive personal care and biblical direction.

Finally, our convictions about divorce and remarriage lead us to a few important applications as a church. In order to preserve healthy marriages, we will require pre-marital counseling as a prerequisite to being married by a Redemption Church pastor, we will offer counseling and equipping to help strengthen marriages, and we will initiate church discipline on individuals or couples who are pursuing an unbiblical divorce. As a result of these convictions, we may also refuse to conduct remarriages for those who were unbiblically divorced as believers unless we have determined that significant steps of repentance and reconciliation have taken place.

Key Points

- a. There are three Biblical reasons for divorce: adultery, abuse, and desertion.
- b. Divorce is never the best option; reconciliation is always preferred.
- c. Redemption Church requires pre-marital counseling in order to be married by a Redemption pastor. Redemption Church offers counseling for couples and will initiate church discipline on individuals or couples who are pursuing an unbiblical divorce.
- d. Redemption Church may refuse to conduct remarriages for those who were unbiblically divorced.

Scripture

- a. Malachi 2:15-16 / Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless."
- b. Matthew 5:32 / But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.
- c. Matthew 19:8-9 / "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."
- d. 1 Corinthians 7:10-16 / To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to

her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife. To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

OPEN-HANDED ISSUES

The following are issues that we consider “open-handed,” meaning that while individuals within our leadership and church may have convictions about them, they are secondary issues and freedom should be given within our church to hold different beliefs as long as the beliefs remain within the spectrum of biblical Christianity.

We have simply named the issues below and given a clarifying statement to ensure that we are clear about what we would not consider to be within the spectrum of biblical Christianity.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

While we believe “spiritual gifts” to be an open-handed issue, we do not believe that the gift of tongues (or any other individual spiritual gift) is required as an evidence of salvation.

END TIMES

While we believe “end times” to be an open-handed issue, we do not believe that Jesus has already returned. We anticipate his future coming.

CREATION

While we believe “creation” to be an open-handed issue, we do not believe in atheistic or naturalistic evolution.

APPENDIX 2: HOW TO LEAVE A CHURCH WELL

You may be joining Redemption from another church in which you were either a member or heavily involved. In addition, the time may come when it's necessary for you to leave Redemption Church to join a community elsewhere. Because we value commitment and investment in the church, we believe strongly that the transition from one church to another is a significant event. However, in our experience, few people really do this well, which often leads to hurt feelings, misunderstandings, unmet expectations, and a lack of unity in the overall body of Christ that dishonors Jesus.

We have compiled the five steps below in order to help you walk through the transition process well for the sake of your own health and the health of the body:

1. Have a good reason for leaving.

Before you go, evaluate whether your reasons are good, legitimate and God-honoring. The reasons that people leave churches are many. Some are good, some are bad, and many are hard to discern. Check your pride in the decision. Ask yourself whether you are running from conflict or reacting to unrealistic expectations. If your reasons are good, go. If not, stay. If you are unsure, it would be wise to seek good counsel from godly friends or church leaders who can help you think through the process.

2. Communicate your decision to leave with the appropriate leaders.

If you're an active part of the church, leaders will need to know you're leaving. If you are serving, communicate it to your ministry team leader. If you are in a small group / Redemption Community, communicate it to the leader. If you are connected to an elder or pastor, communicate your decision to them. Personal communication is preferable to written communication, but make sure you communicate.

3. Tell these leaders the truth about why you're leaving.

If you have legitimate reasons to leave then you have nothing to hide or worry about. If the reasons for leaving will sting church leadership, deliver it in the spirit of Proverbs 27:6, "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." Scripture commands us to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15), which means you don't couch the real, sometimes difficult reasons behind a bunch of spiritualized nonsense. God may use your reasons for leaving to help the church or its leaders. "Exit Interviews" can be immensely helpful to leadership, who are accountable to receive truth with humility. Whatever you do, don't just leave without telling your leaders.

4. Appropriately transition or conclude your ministry commitments.

If you've been an active part of ministry, your role will need to be transitioned. Hopefully you've been training and developing somebody to take your place anyway. But if you haven't, give your leaders an appropriate time to find others to serve in your capacity. This period shouldn't drag on, but you also should not just drop the ball on the people you've been committed to.

5. Leave graciously.

Ray Pritchard writes:

"[Leaving] graciously means you refuse to speak evil of those who remain in the church. Look forward, not backward. Focus on your new church, not your old one. Think carefully before you speak about your former congregation. Don't say anything that could be remotely construed as criticism. Even casual comments could stir up needless controversy. Let the Golden Rule guide all your comments public and private."

Conclusion

If you've read this material and realize that you didn't leave a church well in the past, it might be wise to circle back to seek forgiveness and reconciliation. If you have gossiped or stirred up division, you should make it right, apologizing not only to the leaders of that church but also to the people to whom you gossiped.

In the end, remember that Jesus loves the church you're leaving and the one you're going to — his blood was shed for both. Both churches are part of his bride. Do his bride the honor of leaving well.