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# Welcome

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Jesus loves his church.

In fact, Jesus loves the church so much that he bought her with his own blood. And the New Testament repeatedly describes an inseparable and intimate connection between Jesus and his bride. The church belongs to Jesus and submits to his authority. The church is the spiritual family of God made up of brothers and sisters united under one Father. Jesus promises to bless the church and make her succeed, and to cleanse and purify her as she awaits the glorious day of consummation in heaven.<sup>1</sup>

For all these reasons we love the church too.

Our driving passion at CBC is to glorify Jesus Christ. We want to know him more deeply, trust him more completely, and obey him more fully. We are convinced that God's word is true and sufficient for all things pertaining to life and godliness. Our church's foundation is Jesus and his word and we are dependent upon our God's grace to establish our plans and efforts (Psalm 90:17).

If you are reading this letter, then you have some interest in learning more about the ministry at Cornerstone Bible Church and perhaps joining our fellowship. The goal of this booklet is to walk you through the ministry at CBC and what it means to join this church. As you read, you will understand what we hold dear, how we operate, and your responsibilities to the body if you join CBC.

Joining a church is a significant decision in your spiritual life, so I would encourage you to work through this material thoughtfully. Since it's centered upon God and his truth, I trust it will be edifying and sanctifying as you read it (John 17:17).

May Jesus Christ receive glory both now and to the day of eternity!

In his grip, by his grace,



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<sup>1</sup> Cf., Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18; Titus 2:14; 2 Peter 3:18; Matthew 25:40; Ephesians 4:5-6; Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 19:7.

# Understanding the Church, Biblically

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## God's Masterful Design for the Church

Jesus calls the church his body, and the people who make up his body, members. So, we'll stick with the physical body as a metaphor and use it as an outline to help us understand God's design for the church.

### What Makes a Healthy Church Body?

Physiology studies how the parts of a physical body work together. It tells us how things function in a healthy manner and the negative effects when a certain part of the body isn't working properly. Here's some critical parts that work together to make a healthy church body—each part must be understood and practiced according to Scripture.

- **The *spiritual composition of the church***—*who comprises the church?*
- **The *structural organization of the church***—*how is the church organized?*
- **The *standard operation of the church***—*how does the body of Christ operate?*

### The Spiritual Composition of the Church

Let's start by defining our terms.

What is the church? The church (ekklesia in Greek) is described various ways in Scripture. Here are a few statements that attempt to capture the essence of the church in a single sentence:

*The whole body of those who through Christ death have been lovingly reconciled to God and have received new life.<sup>2</sup>*

*The people of God who have been saved through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and have been incorporated into his body through baptism with the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup>*

*The assembly of the redeemed—those who have been called by God the Father to salvation as a gift to his Son.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Millard Erickson

<sup>3</sup> Greg Allison

<sup>4</sup> John MacArthur & Richard Mayhue

Basically, the church is God's people. We are united by a common salvation. We come together for the exaltation of God and the edification of the saints. We do specific things when we're together like preaching, singing, serving, giving, praying, equipping, baptizing and partaking of the Lord's Supper. Other things we do once we scatter like working jobs, caring for family members, evangelizing the lost, and many other responsibilities God has called us to.

The Bible uses the word *church* in different ways: from a broad all-encompassing perspective, to an individual congregation perspective. It's like saying, "Walmart"—you could be speaking of a Walmart located on the edge of town, or Walmart, the global corporation.

Matt Waymeyer explains:

*The New Testament uses ekklesia in reference to a particular group of Christians who indeed gather together in some locality, engage in worship, are led by pastors, baptize and administer the Lord's Supper, and so forth. At the same time, the New Testament also uses ekklesia when referring to another entity: the church for which Christ died, which is his body, which he is building, which he is expanding throughout the world.<sup>5</sup>*

One way to distinguish between these two uses of the single-word *church* is by using modifiers to differentiate them. These are commonly referred to as the *universal* church and *local* church. Although the modifiers don't appear in Scripture, it's a way of helping us categorize the biblical concepts.

### ***The Universal Church***

The universal church is everyone who believes in Jesus Christ for salvation. At the moment you are saved, you are immediately brought into spiritual union with Christ and his people: one faith, one baptism, one Lord who is over all and in all.<sup>6</sup> This includes Jews and Gentiles who are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Matt Waymeyer, TH701 Syllabus, 7.

<sup>6</sup> It is less common to refer to the universal church compared to references to individual churches, with the universal church occurring only 13 or so times out of almost 110 references to "church" in the New Testament. These would include statements made about all Christians for all time. Passages that are familiar to you such as: Matthew 16:18—I will build my church. Ephesians 5:25—Christ... loved the church and gave himself up for her. Colossians 1:18—he is also head of the body, the church. These are transcendent references that span the boundaries of space and time and includes the redeemed from Pentecost to the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ when he gathers his people unto himself.

<sup>7</sup> Cf., Ephesians 2:8; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; Romans 10:9.

## *The Local Church*

Salvation is not merely a personal experience where someone encounters Christ in repentance and faith and then lives out the rest of their days by themselves with Jesus. Rather, being saved means that you become one of God's sheep and are brought into his flock.

When we read the New Testament, what we find is that the vast majority of references to the church refer to specific, identifiable congregations.<sup>8</sup> Thus, we could say that the universal body of Christ is *manifest* in local churches.

Since the Bible places such an emphasis on *local* churches, we must understand how each congregation is to be structured or organized.

## **The Structural Organization of the Church**

Churches are organized as independent, elder-led congregations of serving members. This is a simple concept. And it is the consistent pattern described in the New Testament. Churches are structured with a plurality of qualified men who lead the body, with members who are actively involved in doing the work of ministry (a.k.a. "service").

Let's break down the statement *independent, elder-led congregations of serving members*.

### ***Independent Congregations***

Independent means no ecclesiastical hierarchy. No governing board outside the local church. No outside structure of accountability. No pope. No bishop. No presbytery. No council. This form of church government is known as *congregationalism*.

Congregationalism believes that Jesus Christ serves as the head of the universal church, as well as the head of each individual congregation. Therefore, each congregation functions as a unit under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ without any human authority outside of itself. Independent does not mean unaccountable. It just means that the accountability of the church is *within* the local church not *outside* of it.

Throughout the book of Acts and the New Testament epistles, church matters are dealt with at the congregational level. There was no governing board in Asia Minor. We don't see the church in

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<sup>8</sup> ἐκκλησία (church) appears in cities: (1 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1); in homes: the church that is in her house, the church that is in their house, the church in your house... (Colossians 4:15; Romans 16:5; Philemon 2); in regions: the churches of Asia, the churches of Galatia, the churches... that are in Judea. (1 Corinthians 16:19; Galatians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:14). In addition to these we find phrases such as "the whole congregation" (Acts 6:5), "the church in Jerusalem" (Acts 8:1), "the disciples" in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26), "in every church" (Acts 14:23), "the whole church" (Acts 15:17), and "the elders of the church" in Ephesus (Acts 20:17), all suggest recognizable church bodies (cf., 1 Corinthians 5:4, 14:23, and Hebrews 10:25).

Jerusalem directing matters in other churches. Over and over, critical responsibilities such as: refuting error, conducting church discipline, identifying and appointing leaders, sending out missionaries, and dealing with church finances, handled within local congregations.<sup>9</sup>

Churches can still work together—perhaps gaining help and insight on clarifying doctrine, or difficult matters of church discipline, or in training and sending pastors and missionaries. We see examples of churches cooperating and strengthening one another in the New Testament with more established churches sending gifted servants and financial resources to less established ones. But there is no entity outside or above the local church to which she is accountable in a formal sense.

### ***Elder-led***

Elders are called to lead and serve the church as delegated under-shepherds of Jesus Christ. Their primary responsibilities include feeding, caring and leading the flock of God. Elders are referred to in the New Testament by three different titles: pastor or shepherd, elder, and overseer. It is one office, but each descriptive title highlights a specific dimension of this role.<sup>10</sup>

The language used to describe the function of elders includes: ruling, oversight, and accountability. What this means, is that although the congregation is *involved* in church matters (e.g., the affirmation of potential leaders, the process of church discipline, and the stewardship of God’s resources), the ultimate *responsibility* for these matters is with the elders. In this model, elders are servant-leaders who seek congregational input where appropriate and provide careful oversight to the church.

The foremost qualification for an elder is his *character*. Out of 16 qualifications listed by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:1ff for elders, 15 relate to a man’s character and one pertains to his gifting. This emphasis demonstrates what God values first in his under-shepherds—that they be men of integrity who are devoted to Christ and serve as examples to the flock.

So, how are these men identified? Men called by God to shepherd the church have a strong desire of the work itself, a supernatural enablement to expound God’s Word with clarity to the edification of his people, a proven fruitful ministry in the lives of sheep, and the affirmation of other elders and the body of Christ.<sup>11</sup> In this way, it’s best to view elders as being identified and affirmed (not so much appointed) since they are already fulfilling the role within the body before they have the title.

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<sup>9</sup> Acts 15 is not a prototype for church authority structures. Rather it demonstrates the importance of clarifying doctrine collectively for the good of the church. As a principle, there is benefit to working doctrinal matters through at a broader level than a single congregation. But the apostolic authority to prescribe church practices among a group of churches is unique and does not provide a model that we are to emulate.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Peter 5:1-5 and Acts 20:17-38 unmistakably use three Greek words interchangeably to refer to a single office: shepherd or pastor (poimen); elder (presbuteros); and bishop or overseer (episkopos).

<sup>11</sup> 1 Timothy 3:1 says that a man will desire the work (i.e., studying, preaching, teaching, shepherding).

Elders *share* responsibility for the care of the flock. We call this a plurality, where each man bears responsibility for the doctrine, direction and discipline of the church. Within this plurality, a lead elder serves as a first among equals based upon gifting in leadership and preaching.<sup>12</sup> But this distinction is in *role*, not *kind*, meaning that he is not above the other men, but differs in function and gifting.

In a biblical church, there is a wonderful relationship between the shepherds and the people.

The shepherds serve the flock, and the flock honors the shepherds. Scripture is clear that elders of a local body are accountable for specific souls allotted to their charge. Likewise, congregants are given the privilege and responsibility of obeying, submitting to, and honoring their elders. The relationship is one of mutual commitment where the shepherds humbly commit themselves to the sheep and the sheep humbly commit to their shepherds.<sup>13</sup>

The elders' authority is not a personal authority, but it is a delegated authority constrained by the Scripture:

*Because Jesus alone is Lord of His church, any authority given to specific individuals in the Body of Christ—e.g., apostles (to establish the church), elders (to lead and shepherd the church), and deacons (to serve the church)—must be understood as delegated authority and must always be exercised in submission to the One who alone is the Chief Shepherd of His flock.<sup>14</sup>*

## **Deacons**

The word deacon means servant. It is a broad term used many ways throughout the New Testament,<sup>15</sup> but "deacon" in the official sense is rare, showing up only twice—both times in Pauline epistles.<sup>16</sup>

God gives us some general parameters for deacons, but he was lite on the specifics. We have no detailed list of specific responsibilities, no job description, no mention of term limits, no info on how deacons function (i.e., on a board or a committee). Instead we find an emphasis on a person's

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<sup>12</sup> 1 Timothy 5:17 indicates a distinction between elders and elders gifted and called to the ministry of preaching.

<sup>13</sup> Cf., Acts 14:23; 20:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5-9, Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5.

<sup>14</sup> Matt Waymeyer, TH701 Syllabus, "The Government of the Church," 21.

<sup>15</sup> The Greek word δῆκονος (diakonos) essentially means "servant." 29 times in the New Testament we find δῆκονος. Here are a few examples of δῆκονος used of individuals. Paul and Apollos are "servants" in 1 Corinthians 3:5. Tychicus was a faithful "minister" in Colossians 4:7. Timothy was given the promise of being a good "servant" of Jesus Christ in 1 Timothy 4:6. Epaphras is a faithful "minister" in Colossians 1:7. Phoebe is commended as a "servant" of the church at Cenchreae in Romans 16:1. When the disciples are arguing about who will be the greatest in the kingdom in Matthew 20:26, our Lord tells them that whoever is wishing to be great must become a "servant."

<sup>16</sup> Deacons are listed next to elders in Philippians 1:1 indicating an official designation. Deacons appear right alongside elders with a list of qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Acts 6 serves as an example to a *degree* of a proto-deacon, but it doesn't represent the later technical usage of the role of deacon seen later in the church. The men called to "wait tables" in Acts 6 are not specifically called deacons, and Stephen (at least) appears to have profound teaching gifts.

trustworthy character and track record of exemplary service to the saints. The implication then is that *deacons* are recognized, faithful servants.

It is as simple as that.

Deacons are distinguished by their godly character, and by their commendable service. Their role in the church is to serve in key areas that the body and the elders need. On the one hand, deacons free-up the elders to focus on their specific ministry responsibilities, and on the other hand, deacons ensure various needs in the body are met.

The areas deacons serve in are unique to each local church context. They facilitate ministry by serving and being a model to others. Many areas of service in the church are delicate and deacons are perfectly suited to handle these matters. They are proven. They are dependable. They are trustworthy. They are models.

In Scripture, both men *and* women are designated as deacons.<sup>17</sup> Women deacons is entirely consistent with Paul's teaching that a woman is not to teach or exercise authority over a man because teaching and spiritual leadership over God's people are not functions of the deacon role.

### ***Serving Members***

Each believer is given a special enablement from God for meeting spiritual needs, known as a spiritual gift. This gifting is to be employed for the betterment of others within the body, so the church is built up and strengthened. Spiritual gifts are not for one's own personal benefit, but for the *common good*.<sup>18</sup>

God's amazing plan is for individuals to play a unique role in the edification of others. It is the role of the shepherds to equip the people of God for doing the *work* of ministry (service). Biblically, the work of service then, is not primarily done by the pastors, but by the people who have been equipped by their pastors. This enriches a ministry because it employs a broad range of gifts.

The word *member* is a biblical term that refers to believers as parts of a whole that belong together. The word *member* indicate interdependence and interconnectedness (i.e., *members* of one another).<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the concept of being a member indicates that you aren't called to simply associate with a church, but to be a deeply interconnected part of the body.

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<sup>17</sup> This view is not established on cultural pressure, but on exegesis of 1 Timothy 3. For further clarification on deacons refer to a sermon titled "The Church's Physiology, Part 2" preached on 06/06/2019 by Jake Liedkie. The message can be accessed at [cbcaltbany.com/sermons](https://cbcsermonaudio.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/1+Timothy+3%3B8-13+-+The+Church's+Physiology+-+Part+2+-+06%3B16%3B19.mp3?download=true) or at: <https://cbcsermonaudio.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/1+Timothy+3%3B8-13+-+The+Church's+Physiology+-+Part+2+-+06%3B16%3B19.mp3?download=true>

<sup>18</sup> Cf., Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Peter 4:10-11.

<sup>19</sup> Cf., Ephesians 4:1-16; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 12:5.

## *A Final Word on Church Structure*

We have an incredible portrait of the systems of a healthy body fitted together. Each individual congregation led is by elders, assisted by deacons, and fueled by members serving one another. All of this exists under the leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ and for his glory.

So, now that we've identified who comprises the church (the spiritual composition of the church) and how the church is structured (the structural organization of the church) we turn our attention to how the is designed to function (the standard operation of the church).

## **The Standard Operation of the Church**

Jesus gave the church two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper.

### ***Baptism***

Baptism is an external sign of an inward change. In the apostolic church, baptism was the public declaration of a believer being incorporated into the local church.

Water baptism signifies that an individual has received forgiveness of their sins and been raised to new life in Christ by the power of the Spirit. When Jesus gives instructions to the apostles about the mission of the church, he tells them to *baptize* new converts.<sup>20</sup> It's the public identification with Jesus and his people. Baptism is an act of obedience, not a means or requirement for salvation. Baptism is administered upon an individual's profession of faith in Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, Christian baptism is practiced by immersion in water,<sup>21</sup> in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout Acts, whenever sinners believe the Gospel and are converted, they are baptized and then *added to the number*. In other words, the apostles weren't counting salvation of individuals, but rather new members of the church. It was automatic that when someone believed in Christ he or she would immediately become part of the identifiable church of Jesus Christ.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Cf., Matthew 28:18-20.

<sup>21</sup> The word for baptism (βαπτίζω) itself contains the concept of immersion. But also, the biblical examples of baptism clearly indicate immersion: John locates his ministry of baptism near plenty of water (John 3:23); and when Phillip baptizes the eunuch, they go *down into*, and come *up out of* the water (Acts 8:26-40).

<sup>22</sup> This is a topic that requires more space to address, but here's a brief explanation regarding infant baptism. Infant baptism is an error based upon a misinterpretation of Scripture. There is no mention of the covenant family in the New Testament. Acts 2:39 is clear that the promise is made to *everyone who believes*. Household baptisms in the NT are inconclusive (it's not possible to demonstrate that there were infants in those homes). There are no instructions for or examples of infant baptism in the New Testament. Lastly, the correlation in Colossians 2 is between baptism and regeneration, not baptism and circumcision.

<sup>23</sup> Cf., Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14.

## *The Lord's Supper*

The Lord's Supper (a.k.a. communion, the Lord's Table, the fellowship meal, the eucharist) is a practice instituted by our Lord on the very night in which he was betrayed. During that final Passover meal, Jesus took elements from the supper and commandeered them to give them new significance as he became the ultimate Passover Lamb—fulfilling the Old Covenant and inaugurating the New Covenant with his own blood.

Communion involves partaking of the bread and the cup together as a congregation in remembrance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in our behalf. In communion, Jesus isn't mystically entering the elements,<sup>24</sup> but in this act of worship, Jesus is present uniquely in a distinct way through faith to bless us as we participate in his body and blood together.<sup>25</sup> The Lord's Supper is to be an encouraging time of celebration and thanksgiving. It is a time to remember the cross with tangible elements that we can see and taste and feel.<sup>26</sup>

Although communion includes self-examination, even so, it isn't to be a time of self-focus. The point is to focus on Jesus.

Self-examination doesn't mean waiting to partake of communion until you feel worthy (no one is personally worthy of coming to the table). Thankfully, Jesus doesn't require worthy *participants* but worthy *participation*. This means that we consider *him* when we partake. It means that we don't pretend to have fellowship with Jesus and one another if we have unresolved sin between us and another person in the body, or pretend we are in right relationship with Christ while harboring sin and unwilling to repent of it. In short, how you regard communion is how you regard Christ.<sup>27</sup>

The Lord's Supper is a wonderful blessing to us as God's people. Not only does it look back to the cross, but it looks forward to his glorious return and the day that we drink the cup with our savior, face-to-face.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The bread and the cup are symbolic, a representation. Jesus is no more a piece of flatbread than he is a literal vine (John 15:1, 5) or a literal door (John 10:9) or a literal shepherd who sleeps outside at night while taking care of animals (John 10:11). He doesn't want us to drink his physical blood anymore than he wanted us to eat his physical flesh in John 6, where the metaphor is connected to believing.

<sup>25</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:16 indicates this participation language that "ups the ante" in the connection with Christ and one another. Although the spirit of Christ is omni-present, there is biblical precedent for a special nearness of Christ to bless his people in specific situations: Matthew 18:19-20; 28:18-20.

<sup>26</sup> Cf., Luke 22:19.

<sup>27</sup> Cf., 1 Corinthians 11:23-34.

<sup>28</sup> Cf., Luke 22:17-18; 1 Corinthians 11:26.

## Church Discipline

Church discipline is a loving gift from God to protect the purity and integrity of his church. The goal is to *restore* wayward sheep and *remove* false ones. It is a corrective process. And it is called a process because there are successive steps that involve lovingly and appropriately addressing sin.

The process of church discipline begins with one believer going privately to another believer to expose sin with the goal of repentance. This is part of normal Christian relationships within the body. It happens frequently and privately. And usually there is a recognition of sin on the part of the offending party and the issue is resolved.<sup>29</sup>

But when the offending party doesn't repent or listen, then the one going is to involve another person (or two) and to go again. This time together. The inclusion of others is to help the offending party see their sin, and to provide additional eyes and ears to protect both parties during the conversation and afterwards. Again, the goal is repentance and restoration.

But if the sinning person refuses to listen after the second step, then God enlists the support of the entire church body to call the sinning person to repentance. If a person still refuses to listen, then the final step of church discipline is separation from the body.

Church discipline is predicated on believers belonging to a particular church. This is for two reasons. First, because it defines who is obligated to give and receive discipline from whom. And second, an identifiable body is needed for the unrepentant to be removed *from* the fellowship and put *outside*.<sup>30</sup>

## Conclusion

God has given us such a clear picture of the local church. Each church is an independent assembly of believers who are united by the Spirit of God and committed to one another in the Lord. Each congregation is led by elders who serve as examples among the people of God. The members of the body serve one another, modeled foremost by the deacons. The believers work together to encourage one another and advance the spread of the Gospel.

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<sup>29</sup> Although Matthew 18 by itself seems to indicate that any unrepentant sin could be a matter for church discipline, we have no examples of people being put out of the church because they had weak faith, or struggled with sinful fear, or did not remain steadfast and earnest in their prayer life. What we do see is the apostle Paul in particular moving swiftly and decisively to remove the sins which pose the greatest threat to the peace and purity of the church: divisiveness, sexual immorality, and doctrinal error.

<sup>29</sup> If you have an anxiety problem or you are covetous your sin impacts others. But the impact of sins like that on the health and the reputation of the church pale in comparison to stirring up strife, sexual immorality and false teaching.

<sup>30</sup> Cf., 1 Corinthians 5:12-13; Matthew 18:15-17.

## Your Relationship to a *Particular* Church

**If you are a believer, it is God's will for you to belong to a church.**

In the Gospel, God redeems people who were his enemies and makes them his children. Instantly they become part of the family of God. This is why we see sinners repent and immediately get baptized—thereby identifying with a group of Christians and assimilating among them.

Belonging to a church is normative for a believer.<sup>31</sup> But joining a church is oftentimes undervalued by believers who view their relationship to the body as a take-it-or-leave-it part of their lives. Al Mohler observes:

*No longer concerned with maintaining purity of confession or lifestyle, the contemporary church sees itself as a voluntary association of autonomous members, with minimal moral accountability to God, much less to each other.*<sup>32</sup>

Here are a few considerations on this topic.

***The term membership has baggage.***

Some people don't like the word *membership*.

For them membership might sound too much like belonging to a country club or Costco. Or they are concerned that the word *membership* doesn't appear in Scripture. Perhaps they've had bad experiences with a church that abused membership. For some, the problem is simply an independent spirit that doesn't like the idea of conformity or submission to anything outside of itself.

There are a variety of other personal reasons people resist the concept, but the real question is, "what does God say about this?"

***God says we are members.***

If we set aside personal experience and simply use biblical language, we discover that the people of the church are called *members*. And the word *member* indicates a part that belongs to other parts to make a whole.<sup>33</sup> One body, many members, each interdependent upon the others. When we say *membership*, we are describing this reality.

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<sup>31</sup> In Acts 17:4 everyone who was *persuaded* by the Gospel *joined* (i.e., became part of). What did they join? The church and the work of the ministry (cf., 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3). It was natural and instinctive upon conversion.

<sup>32</sup> Al Mohler

<sup>33</sup> Cf., Ephesians 4:1-16; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 12:5.

### *A simple definition of membership.*

Membership simply means defining who comprises a specific body. Who belongs to the church and who doesn't? To have a group there has to be some criteria for establishing who is in and who is out.

The question then is—how do you know who is and who is not part of a local church body? Is it based upon who attends for a given time period? Or by those who show up a specific percentage of Sundays? Is it those who join small groups? The best answer is that the church body is defined by believers who voluntarily commit to joining a flock, who are then received into fellowship by the body.

### **What does it mean to join a church?**

Joining a church involves several commitments. First, it means agreeing on the core doctrines concerning God, Scripture and salvation. Committing to a church also requires a willingness to love and submit to others, an earnestness to protect the peace and purity of the body, an eagerness to contribute the ministry with financial resources and to build others up by serving and using one's spiritual gifts.

Now that we have established what the Bible teaches about the church in general, the next section will give you an understanding of the ministry at Cornerstone so that you can evaluate if this is the right church for you to join.

### **What does it mean to have unity?**

Unity in the body is established around the truth and produced by the Spirit.<sup>34</sup> We don't produce unity. Instead we are called to preserve what God produces. The threat to unity is a lack of love and humility. So how does this work in the body? Within one church it is not uncommon to have a mix of first-generation Christians who are new to the faith, mature and immature saints, and people who have joined the church from other Christian traditions.

How then is unity achieved with so many different individuals?

The answer is not to legislate practices that go beyond Scripture to create uniformity. Rather, our aim is conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is how we maintain unity around the truth:

- Our church articulates our understanding of what the Scriptures teach concerning significant matters of doctrine and practice.

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<sup>34</sup> Cf., Ephesians 4:1ff

- Members of the body are not required to agree on secondary matters, so long as they agree to not promote their alternative views in a way that causes division in the church (e.g., differing views on eschatology, the miraculous sign gifts).
- Each member of the body is to distinguish between issues that are truly biblical, issues that are governed by wisdom, and issues that are matters of personal preference (e.g., style of music, Bible translations, schooling, alcohol consumption, birth control, adoption, foster care, evangelistic methods, parenting styles, clothing and modesty, involvement in political and social causes, etc.). Churches become weak when members hold matters of wisdom and preference as though they have biblical authority, promoting and encouraging others to adopt their practices and judging those who don't conform. For a more comprehensive treatment of the subject, please reference two messages from Romans 14.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> "Dealing with Differences in Gray Areas" Romans 14:1-12, preached by Jake Liedkie on 10/27/19 accessible at: <https://cbcsermonaudio.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/Romans+14%3B1-12+-+Dealing+with+Differences+with+the+Gray+Area+-+10%3B27%3B19.mp3?download=true>

"Love, Liberty, and What Matters Most" Romans 14:13-24, preached by Jake Liedkie on 11/03/19 accessible at: <https://cbcsermonaudio.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/Romans+14%3B13-23+-+Love%2C+Liberty%2C+and+What+Matters+Most+-+11%3B03%3B19.mp3?download=true>

# Understanding our Church, Specifically

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We want you to have a clear picture of what Cornerstone believes and how we operate. The following pages explain our ministry priorities, our doctrinal positions and philosophy of ministry in some key areas. By reading over this material you will understand how we view God, the Gospel, ourselves, and the local church. Every church has its defining characteristics. These are ours.

## Our Priorities

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### OUR FOUNDATION

“  
*We are driven by two great realities: the sovereignty of  
God and the sufficiency of Scripture.*

Every dimension of our lives begins and ends with God and our view of Him. We are relentlessly committed to a high view of God and of the Scripture, recognizing our tendency as humans is to diminish God's glory and to distrust his Word. We believe that we are utterly dependent upon God's grace and that he has given us all things pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Jesus Christ. This foundation cannot be taken for granted but must be continually set before our eyes as the source of ministry. The ministry of the Word is central to the church, which is the pillar and the support of the truth.

–Psalm 90:2; 115:3; Colossians 1:16-17; 1 Timothy 3:15; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:3.

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### OUR PURPOSE

“  
*To glorify our great God by joyfully worshipping Him  
above all else.*

God's ultimate desire is to magnify his own name above all creation. We were created for worship and now our lives as Christians are defined foremost as worshippers of the one true God. God himself is to be our true source of joy, hope, satisfaction, confidence, security, and trust. The fruit of this worship is manifest in simple faith and obedience, not merely in external conformity, but from the heart.

– Psalm 33:1; 115:1; Romans 11:36; Philippians 2:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15.

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## OUR MISSION

“*To preach the Gospel plainly and boldly and to make mature disciples who love, trust, and obey Jesus.*”

Jesus left the church to accomplish his mission until he returns. His mandate is short and sweet, yet all-encompassing: make disciples. This process of disciple-making is continuous. It is labor-intensive and never-ending. It requires the enablement of the Spirit to make it effective. Jesus gives an overview of the church’s mission in Matthew 28:18-20 where he gives the apostles instructions that perpetuate until he returns. We are to seek the lost among the nations and preach the gospel to them, bring new converts into the church and teach them to obey all of his instructions. We do this with great confidence knowing that Jesus is with us empowering this mission until this age is over.

– Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 1:28-29; Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

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## OUR VISION

“*To be a faithful church influencing the Mid-Valley and sending supporting Gospel-expansion.*”

Healthy churches reproduce themselves. Our vision is to be faithful ministry that replicates faithful ministry. This is done through training and raising up future ministry leaders and sending them out as pastors and missionaries, and by planting and supporting other churches. This the clear pattern of the New Testament. We ask God to use us in this way, not for the sake of our own influence, but for his own namesake. We accomplish this vision by seeking to be faithful with the next step of obedience, and then trusting the Lord to direct our steps as he sees fit.

– 1 Peter 2:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; John 20:2; Acts 1:8.

## Our Distinctives



### **EXPOSITORY PREACHING**

Biblical preaching unleashes God's power because it proclaims His message accurately. For preaching to be faithful it must not depend upon clever speech, human wisdom, or personal experience. Instead, true preaching evokes the authority of God and the power of the Spirit as the preacher clearly explains the meaning of God's word, exposes the motives of the heart, exhorts the will, and exalts Jesus Christ such that the hearers encounter the living God through the preaching event.<sup>36</sup>



### **BIBLICAL SHEPHERDING**

God designed the church to flourish under the servant-leadership of qualified men who lead, feed, care, and protect his flock. Elders (a.k.a. pastors and overseers) serve the church by devoting themselves to the ministry of the word and prayer and caring for God's people with joy and eagerness. A call to eldership is evidenced by godly character, competency in handling the Scripture, a personal desire for the work, and proven effectiveness in the spiritual gifts of teaching and leadership.<sup>37</sup>



### **VIBRANT BODY LIFE**

One of the greatest spiritual blessings to a Christian comes from participation in the lives of other believers. In the church, members are served and serve as each one uses their unique spiritual gifting to build up the body. Vibrant body life includes the sharing of spiritual resources through proactive discipleship, faithful counseling, and sacrificial service. The result is growth into maturity by the power of the Spirit according to what each member supplies.<sup>38</sup>



### **CHRISTLIKE GROWTH**

It is God's will for his people to grow in conformity to the likeness of his Son. While it is true that the Christian life is challenging and often described as a battle, Jesus himself guarantees that his disciples will grow because they are connected to him and that they have every spiritual resources needed for obeying him from the heart. He also describes our life in him as new, abundant, fruitful, powerful and victorious. For the Christian, obedience to Christ is not burdensome, but a delight.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Cf., Acts 20:27; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:16; 2 Corinthians 4:2; Colossians 1:28; 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6, 13; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 2:15.

<sup>37</sup> Cf., Acts 20:17; Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 2:8; 1 Timothy 3:1ff; Titus 1:6; 1 Peter 5:1-4.

<sup>38</sup> Cf., Acts 2:41-42; Romans 12:9-11; 1 Corinthians 12:7; 13:1-8; Galatians 6:1-2; Ephesians 4:1-6, 12, 15-16; Philippians 2:1-5; 4:1; Hebrews 3:14, 10:27; 1 Peter 1:22; 4:8-11; 1 John 4:7-14.

<sup>39</sup> Cf., Jeremiah 17:9; John 15:5; Romans 6:1-23; 8:13-14; Ephesians 2:10; 3:17-19; Colossians 2:6-7; Hebrews 6:1; 12:14; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 1:3-11, 18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

## Doctrinal Positions (Summarized)

WE BELIEVE the Bible is God's written revelation to man. It is verbally inspired in every word, absolutely inerrant in the original documents. We affirm the infallibility, sufficiency, and authority of Scripture.

WE BELIEVE that there is but one living and true God, an infinite, all-knowing Spirit, perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - each equally deserving worship and obedience.

WE BELIEVE in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and His personal return in power and glory.

WE BELIEVE that the salvation of man, who is sinful and lost, is instantaneous and accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit. He accomplishes this through the instrumentality of the Word of God when the repentant sinner - enabled by the Holy Spirit - responds in faith. This salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works. All the redeemed are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever.

WE BELIEVE in the Spirit-filled life. As the supernatural and sovereign Agent in regeneration, the Holy Spirit baptizes all believers into the body of Christ at the moment of salvation. The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs and empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption.

WE BELIEVE that all who put their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body, the church, of which Christ is the head. The purpose of the church is to glorify God by building its members up in faith, by instruction of the word, by fellowship, by keeping the ordinances, and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world. The formation of the church, the body of Christ, began on the day of Pentecost and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture.

WE BELIEVE in the bodily resurrection of both the saved and the unsaved; the saved unto the resurrection of eternal life and the unsaved unto the resurrection of eternal damnation.

## Doctrinal Positions (Detailed Statement of Faith)

Our statement of faith lays forth a comprehensive summary of what we believe the Bible teaches concerning significant matters of faith and practice.

### The Word of God

We believe and teach that the Holy Scriptures, as found in the sixty-six books of the Bible (i.e. the Protestant Canon) constitute the infallible and authoritative Word of God.

God has revealed Himself to man generally (i.e. in nature and conscience), but these avenues are insufficient for salvation because of man's persistent resistance (Romans 1:18-2:16). However, in the course of human history, our gracious God has also revealed Himself particularly through a variety of modes (e.g. Hebrews 1:1-4), all of which are made known to us through the Scriptures.

These Scriptures constitute God's special revelation to mankind. They are God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16), and thereby, are absolutely inerrant and infallible in the original documents (i.e. the autographic originals). Like the Living Word of God, i.e., Christ, the written Word of God is fully divine and yet, genuinely human. The Holy Spirit guided the writings of the human authors through their personalities, backgrounds, and styles (e.g. Jeremiah 1:5; Galatians 1:15-17) resulting in the production of God's book, the Bible (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Although we do not have in our possession the original documents, God in His providence has preserved thousands of subsequent copies which perpetuate the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts of the Bible. Therefore, through the methodology of textual criticism, it is possible to reconstruct texts which accurately reflect the original documents.

We believe and teach that although no one text-type or any particular version derived from it necessarily represents the autographs identically at every place, many of the various traditional and contemporary English translations should be looked upon as being reliable conveyers of God's Word to mankind.

In light of all these truths, the Bible is fully authoritative, in other words, it alone is our infallible rule for faith and all practice (e.g. Deuteronomy 32:44-47; Isaiah 1:10; 8:16, 20; 30:8; 34:16; 40:6-8; 55:11; Jeremiah 23:29; Zechariah 7:12; Matthew 4:4, 7, 10; 5:17-19; John 10:35; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12-13).

The full authority of the Scriptures also demands that the Bible be handled with the utmost Spirit-enabled precision (2 Timothy 2:15). Consequently, it is the total Word itself that must be taught and proclaimed unashamedly (Acts 20:18-32; 2 Timothy 4:2). This is absolutely essential since the Spirit uses the words from His Word to accomplish genuine results which endure for time and eternity (e.g.

Joshua 1:7-8; Nehemiah 8:2-9:3; Psalms 19:7-8; 119; Jeremiah 5:14; Ezekiel 1:1-3; 2:7; 3:4-11; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 24; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10; 2:13; 1 Peter 1:22-25; 4:11).

Believing unreservedly in the total truth and trustworthiness of Scripture, we employ the grammatico-historical method of interpretation. Such a literal or normal method, as it is sometimes called, does recognize the Bible's varieties of expression and literary forms and allows for figurative language; however, these vehicles of revelation find themselves in service to, not in contradiction with, the Word's incontestable clarity, consistency, and irreproachable historicity.

In application to theology, these great truths about the Bible demand that we neither fall behind nor charge ahead of the scriptural data upon which all true doctrine is founded and expressed.

## **The God of the Word**

We believe and teach that there is but one true eternally existing God. This unique God is triune, being one in essence (e.g. Deuteronomy 6:4), and yet existing ever and always in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (e.g. Isaiah 48:16; Matthew 28:19). Functional subordinations within the Trinity do not deny nor contradict the reality of the deity of the persons of the godhead.

## **God the Father**

We believe and teach that God the Father is the Archetype (i.e. the perfect pattern) of all fatherhoods (Ephesians 3:15). This relational metaphor of Father applies not only to His unique person within the fellowship of the Trinity but also in a derived sense in reference to all of creation (e.g. Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 8:6a; Ephesians 4:6). As Father, He is the sovereign Architect of both creation (including personal beings, time, space, and history) and redemption (Ephesians 1:3-14).

The attributes of God as revealed in His Word give us various perspectives on the Father. His essential spirituality or personality (e.g. John 4:24) is well attested through affirmations and indications of His being self-conscious (e.g. Exodus 3:14), alive and active (e.g. Deuteronomy 5:26; John 5:17, 26), intelligent (e.g. 1 Samuel 2:3), emotional (e.g. Deuteronomy 5:9; Hosea 11:8; Romans 1:18), purposive (e.g. Isaiah 14:26-27; Ephesians 3:11), and free (e.g. Psalm 135:6; Daniel 4:35; Romans 9:18).

He exhibits an array of attributes (e.g. Exodus 34:5-7; Deuteronomy 7:9-10; 32:3-4; 1 Kings 8:22ff; Psalm 145:8ff; Nahum 1:2-8). Those which display His incomparable Deity—His self-existence or aseity, infinitude (including eternity, omnipresence [everything is totally exposed before Him], omniscience [everything is fully known by Him], and omnipotence [He is all-powerful over everything]), immutability (His unchanging purpose) and incomprehensibility (no creature can fully fathom His Person) (cf. respectively, Exodus 3:14; Psalms 90:2; 139:7-10; Hebrews 4:13; Revelation 11:17; Malachi 3:6; Isaiah 55:8-9)—are appropriately referred to as His attributes of greatness. Characteristics such as these are God's unique possessions (e.g. Isaiah 45:5-6) and are, therefore, incommunicable (i.e. non-transferable). He also richly displays communicable (or moral) attributes, i.e., characteristics of His goodness, such as justice or righteousness, grace (including His love, beneficence, restraint), and

faithfulness (cf. respectively, Genesis 18:25; Psalms 103:4, 13; 119:68; 2 Peter 3:9, 15; Lamentations 3:23). All of these particular attributes are circumscribed by His absolute holiness (e.g. Leviticus 11:44; Isaiah 6:3; John 17:11) and utter perfection (e.g. Matthew 5:48).

As to His attributes of greatness, He is transcendent (i.e. He is over, above, and beyond all creatures) in Being (e.g. Psalm 113:1-5; Isaiah 57:15a). However, from the perspective of His qualities of goodness, He is nevertheless genuinely immanent (i.e. He is actively concerned about all His creatures) (e.g. Psalm 113:6-9; Isaiah 57:15b).

## **God the Son**

We believe and teach that the second Person of the Godhead is eternally of the same essence of Being as the Father (e.g. John 10:30; 14:9). This full Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ is attested in various ways. He is called "God" (e.g. John 1:1; 20:28; Romans 9:5), "son of God" in the Semitic sense of sameness of nature (e.g. John 5:18; 10:33; 19:7), "the Lord" (e.g. 1 Corinthians 2:8), "the Holy One" (cf. Acts 3:14 with Isaiah 48:17), "the First and the Last" (cf. Revelation 1:17-18 with Isaiah 44:6), "the Alpha and Omega" (cf. Revelation 22:13, 16 with 1:8), and "the Amen" (Revelation 3:14). Also, He is especially recognized as Creator, Sustainer, and Savior (e.g. John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2; Titus 2:13). In His preincarnate appearances, He was known in the Old Testament both as "LORD" (e.g. Genesis 18:1-2, 22) and as "the Angel of the LORD" (e.g. Genesis 16:7). His attributes of greatness and goodness also correspond to those of the Father.

Without surrendering His full Deity—the emptying of Himself in Philippians 2:5-8 was not of His divine essence but pertained to the independent exercise of His Divine prerogatives during the First Advent—He took upon Himself genuine humanity (e.g. Hebrews 2:9-18) through the incarnation (John 1:14) which was initiated by the Virgin Birth or Miraculous Conception. He thereby became the unique God-man who consequently is the perfect Revealer, Savior, Mediator, and ultimately the Judge of all men (cf. respectively, John 1:18; Titus 2:13; 1 Timothy 2:5; John 5:27). Through this loving condescension, He fully accomplished His task of grace which culminated in His sacrificial death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, furnishing the grounds for the forgiveness of believing sinners (cf. respectively, Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Romans 6:1-11; Romans 1:4; 4:25; Acts 1:9).

Today He is building His church (Matthew 16:18) and continually ministers to her as the heavenly Advocate (e.g. Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1). He will return for His bride at the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) then will subsequently establish His millennial kingdom, reigning on the throne of David (e.g. Luke 1:31-33; Revelation 20). Furthermore, He will judge all people and either reward or punish them (e.g. Acts 17:30-31; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15).

## **God the Spirit**

We believe and teach that the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Godhead, is equal in nature with God the Father and God the Son (e.g. Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 18; 2 Corinthians 13:14). His

divine Personhood is attested by many references to His attributes of greatness and goodness. In His role of functional subordination within the economy of the Trinity, He bears divine witness to the Person and work of Christ in this age (e.g. John 15:26). In His relationship to the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit is their divine Author and Applier (e.g. 2 Samuel 23:2; John 14:25-26; 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; Ephesians 6:17; 2 Peter 1:21).

He is the predominate divine Agent in the Father's plan of salvation through the work of the Son (e.g. John 3:1-10; 16:8-11). The Holy Spirit has always been active in regeneration and renewal, i.e., in personal salvation and sanctification. He is vitally associated with our adoption, sealing and service (e.g. Romans 8:12-17; Ephesians 1:13; 5:18; Colossians 3:16).

Historically, the Spirit was intimately involved in the Church's birth at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). In this present age, all genuine disciples are baptized into Him (by Christ) thus uniting them into one Body, the Universal Church (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:4).

We believe and teach that in the Holy Spirit's gifting ministry (e.g. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11) the extraordinary gifts (e.g. miracles and tongues) were for attestations during the Apostolic era (Ephesians 2:20). They have served their purpose (e.g. 1 Corinthians 13:8-13; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4) and are, therefore, inappropriate for today. For example, instantaneous healings for the purpose of attestation are replaced by prescribed means of prayer in the established Church (e.g. James 5:13-16). Furthermore, historically conveyed illustrations in the Old and early New Testament eras of special fillings or empowerments for particular tasks have been superseded by evidences of His abiding presence, e.g., the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23).

### **Creation, Preservation, and Providence**

We believe and teach that God created out of nothing the physical universe and all that it contains, including metaphysical beings, in six literal days (e.g. Genesis 1:1-31; Exodus 20:11; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 11:3). He also sustains for His own purposes the whole of that which He has created (e.g. Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3).

We also believe and teach the sovereign providence of God (e.g. Psalms 103:19; 135:6; Isaiah 14:26-27; Daniel 4:34-35; Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11). His absolute sway is all inclusive, including, for example history (e.g. Daniel 2:20-21), circumstances of life (e.g. James 4:13-15), duration of life (e.g. Job 14:5), manner of death (e.g. John 21:18-19), helpful acts of men (e.g. Isaiah 44:28-45:7), harmful acts of men (Genesis 45:4-8; 50:20; Acts 4:27-28), salvation of sinners (e.g. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14), eternal punishment of ungodly men (e.g. Proverbs 16:4; Romans 9:22; 1 Peter 2:8; Jude 4), the greatest world events (e.g. Revelation 13:8), seemingly trivial circumstances (e.g. Proverbs 16:33; Matthew 10:29-30), etc. These truths, however, never nullify the responsibilities of created, moral beings (e.g. Acts 2:22-23).

## Angels

We believe and teach the existence of angels which were apparently the first issue of God's creation (cf. Job 38:6-7 with Genesis 1:1; Exodus 20:11; Nehemiah 9:6; Colossians 1:16). In relation to men, these created spirit beings currently have greater powers (e.g. 2 Peter 2:11), and yet, elect angels minister on behalf of elect people (Hebrews 1:14). Furthermore, someday redeemed people will judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3).

Morally, angels may be classified under two headings; holy or elect angels (e.g. Mark 8:38; 1 Timothy 5:21) and fallen angels (e.g. Matthew 25:41). There also seems to be various hierarchies of angels; for example, archangels (cf. Michael, Jude 9), special attendants (e.g. Genesis 3:24; Isaiah 6:2, 6), and designations in series (e.g. Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 3:10; 1 Peter 3:22).

At the head of all fallen angels stands Satan (e.g. Job 1:6-9, 12; Matthew 4:10). He is also called the devil (e.g. Matthew 4:1, 5, 8, 11; 25:41; Revelation 12:9), the serpent (cf. Genesis 3:1-4, 14-15 with Romans 16:20; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Revelation 12:9), the dragon (e.g. Revelation 12:9; 20:2), Beelzebub (e.g. Matthew 3:22), Abaddon or Apollyon (Revelation 9:11), Belial (2 Corinthians 6:15), the evil one (e.g. Matthew 13:19, 39; 1 John 5:19), the tempter (e.g. Matthew 4:3), the ruler/prince (e.g. Matthew 12:24; John 12:31; Ephesians 2:2), the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4), the accuser (e.g. Zechariah 3:1, ff; Revelation 12:10), the adversary (1 Peter 5:8), the deceiver (Revelation 12:9), the enemy (e.g. Matthew 13:25, 28, 39), murderer (John 8:44), the father of lies (John 8:44), a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8-9), etc.

Subsequent to his being created, Satan fell morally, and with him, a host of fallen angels, some of which today are bound while others are demons (e.g. Matthew 12:24; 25:41; Revelation 9:1-11). He then became the subtle instigator of mankind's fall (e.g. Genesis 3; Romans 16:20). Currently, he roams the earth, but his ultimate doom is guaranteed by the finished work of Christ. He will be cast to earth during the Great Tribulation (Revelation 12:7-12), and then incarcerated during the Millennium (Revelation 20:1-3). After a temporary release and final expression of rebellion (Revelation 20:7-8), he and his henchmen will be eternally consigned to the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10).

Although believers are in union with Christ, we are not to be presumptuous so as to seek to engage the Archenemy and his host. Our call is to be aware of his methods (2 Corinthians 2:11), stand defensively in the provisions of God (Ephesians 6:10-18), and resist, not engaging him in battle, but resist him in faith (James 4:7).

## Man and Sin

We believe and teach that man is a direct product of the creative handiwork of God (Genesis 2:7). God created mankind in and according to His own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27), and even after the fall, no matter how thoroughly distorted that image has become, it was not eradicated (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9).

The reality of the image and likeness of God indicates that mankind, via his original creation, resembles God in certain characteristics and capacities which are prerequisite for horizontal and vertical relationships and also for mankind's exercise of dominion over the rest of the earth. The grace of God in salvation, sanctification, and glorification focuses on the renewing of this image until it is finally perfect and eternally established (e.g. Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

Both male and female equally bear the image of God. Although they share the same essence of being, there are nevertheless functional distinctions and subordinations (cf. similar to the Trinity). These differences, biblically based upon creation, not cultural biases, are significant for both our families and our flock (e.g. 1 Corinthians 11:1-16; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1-6).

God's original intention for male and female image bearers is that they be united as a couple into a bond, graphically designated "one flesh" (i.e. marriage), for the purpose of companionship and so that they might be fruitful and multiply. God was pleased to ordain marriage as the first institution for mankind. Each of the relational partners in the design of God is to complement the other in all areas of being (e.g. Genesis 2:18-25). They are spiritual equals (Galatians 3:28) yet have differing roles according to God's wise purpose. This is why the sin of homosexuality, being "against nature" (Romans 1:26), violates the original order, and therefore, all who practice it stand under the condemnation of God. The only remedy, as in the case of sin in general and sins particularly, is God's gracious salvation appropriated by biblical repentance manifested in the fruit of obedience (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Through Adam's one act of disobedience, he not only fell from his estate of innocence into one of separation and alienation from God, but, as our representative, he also plunged the whole race into sin and death (e.g. Genesis 2:17; 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-21). Consequently, all persons from their conception and birth, are innately unholy and stand condemned by condition (e.g. Psalm 51:5; Ephesians 2:1, 3) and commission (e.g. Romans 1:18-3:20) before their Creator and Judge.

Man's depravity is total in breadth (e.g. 1 Kings 8:46; Psalm 14:1-3; Isaiah 1:2-6; 53:6; Romans 3:9-20) and depth (e.g. Ecclesiastes 9:3b; Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:14-23). Furthermore, all the functions of man's heart (i.e. rational, volitional, emotional, etc.) are morally tainted by sin and perversity (e.g. Genesis 6:5; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Ephesians 4:17-19), leaving mankind utterly hopeless and helpless in reference to any kind of human reformation or rescue (e.g. Isaiah 64:5; Jeremiah 13:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Colossians 1:21-22).

The realities are not only crucial for an accurate theology, but also for a biblically acceptable methodology for ministry (e.g. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

## **Salvation**

We believe and teach that the salvation of sinful men ultimately depends upon the sovereign grace of God (e.g. Romans 9:16; Ephesians 2:8-9). This great truth, however, never nullifies or diminishes the sinner's responsibility to repent and believe, or the believer's responsibility to evangelize (e.g. Romans

10:8-15). As a matter of fact, the Bible always makes clear its prerequisite for true faith and repentance as substantiated by a genuine commitment and as confirmed by evidences of obedience. Biblical Christianity is discipleship (cf. Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 9:23-26, 62; 14:25-35; Acts 11:26; etc.)

God's sovereign plan of salvation was divinely drafted in eternity past (e.g. Ephesians 1:4; Revelation 13:8), including all of its provisions (e.g. the work of Christ and the Spirit) and processes (e.g. Titus 3:3-7). Furthermore, on an individual, historical basis, His gracious intervention stands behind all the stages of salvation, i.e. past, present (sanctification), and future (glorification) (Romans 8:29-30).

Some notable aspects of God's plan of salvation include unconditional election (e.g. Deuteronomy 7:6-8; Amos 3:2; John 15:16; Acts 13:48; Ephesians 1:5, 11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2), effectual calling (e.g. John 6:44-45; Romans 9:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:14), regeneration (Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 31: 31-34; John 3:1-10; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23), adoption (e.g. Romans 8:15; Ephesians 1:5), justification (e.g. Genesis 15:6; Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 3:20, 24, 26, 30; 4:1-5), faith (Genesis 15:6; Jeremiah 17:7; Romans 10:9-10; Ephesians 2:8; Hebrews 11:1; James 2), repentance (e.g. 2 Kings 17:13; Lamentations 5:21; Luke 24:47; Acts 11:1; 20:21), conversion (e.g. Acts 15:19; 26:18), sanctification (e.g. Leviticus 20:22-26; John 17:17, 19; Acts 20:32; Ephesians 1:4; 5:26; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Hebrews 2:11; 10:10; 12:14), eternal security, perseverance (including all means, be they in the form of assurance or of warning; (e.g., Romans 8; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 2:19; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-27), etc.

We believe that as Christians, God has saved us to be holy and consequently to do good works. This holiness has both fixed and progressive aspects. Our sanctification—the process by which we become holy—has three sequential manifestations: first, positional sanctification which describes our standing before God having been unalterably set apart unto God for eternity (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2); second, progressive sanctification which describes our spiritual growth, victory over sin by means of God's grace, through the resources of the Spirit of God, the Word of God and the people of God (John 17:17, 19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23); third, glorification which describes a day when God will perfectly complete our maturity so that it corresponds to the position in Christ He has already given to us.

## **The Church**

We believe and teach that in the current era, commencing at Pentecost (Acts 2), Christ is building His Church (Matthew 16:18). The Church of which Christ is the Head (e.g. Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) is variously depicted as His Body (e.g. Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13), His Bride (e.g. 2 Corinthians 11:2), a building, spiritual house, or sanctuary (e.g. 1 Corinthians 3:9, 16-17; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:20-22; Colossians 2:7; 1 Peter 2:5), branches of which He is the life source (John 15:1-8), the flock of the Shepherd (e.g. John 10:11; 1 Peter 2:25), etc. This Church exists both universally (i.e. the total number of genuine disciples throughout Church history) and locally (i.e. local assemblies). Although salvation is bestowed and appropriated individually, the scriptural focus is always upon the

corporate body within which the individual is to be a complementary, contributing member (e.g. Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-27). Christ establishes and oversees this unity and diversity in order that the local Church might become the primary context for worship and service, especially including edification and evangelism (e.g. Ephesians 4:1-16). The primary purpose of the Church, whether viewed from the local perspective or the universal, is to glorify God (e.g. Ephesians 1:2-14; 3:21).

The Scriptures establish two categories of office within the Church: elders (also designated overseers or bishops, and pastor-teachers) and deacons (e.g. Philippians 1:1) to lead and serve the flock under Christ. Those who serve in these capacities must be qualified biblically (e.g. 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5) by being men of noteworthy integrity (i.e. above reproach). They must be characterized by an unwavering love and commitment to their own wife. Women deacons must be similarly qualified for service within the body (e.g. 1 Timothy 3:11). The shepherds of the church, having a divinely delegated authority, are especially accountable for the spiritual welfare of their Master's flock. He will judge both shepherds and sheep as to their spiritual faithfulness (e.g. Hebrews 13:7, 17).

Since the primary purpose of the Church is to glorify God, it is His ordained context for both discipleship and discipline. Everything in particular carried out by the Church must be done appropriately and in order (e.g. 1 Corinthians 14:40).

Within the context of the assembly (e.g. Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 14:19, 23, 28-35; Hebrews 10:24-25) the primary ordinances of believers' baptism by immersion (e.g. Matthew 28:16-20; Romans 6:1-14) and communion (e.g. 1 Corinthians 10:14-22; 11:17-34) are to be perpetuated. It is also the context for preserving purity (cf. Leviticus 11:44; 20:24-26; 1 Peter 1:4-16) including the Scriptural obligations of discipline and separation (e.g. Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5:1-8; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; 6:14-7:1; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 5:11-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; Titus 3:9-11; 2 John 7-11).

Each local church is independent or autonomous in status although there may be occasions of interdependence among local assemblies of the same mindset and loyalty to the Lord and His Word (e.g. Acts 15:19-31; Romans 15:26-27).

### **Last Things (Eschatology)**

We believe and teach that the study of eschatology is to have primarily an ethical effect on the people of God (e.g. 1 John 2:28-3:3; 2 Peter 3:10-14).

Individual eschatology involves biblical considerations of death, the intermediate state, resurrection, judgment, and the final state. The soul's existence is not interrupted by physical death (e.g. Luke 16:19-31). The believer's soul/spirit is ushered immediately into the presence of Christ at physical death (e.g. 2 Corinthians 5:1-8) until the time of the Rapture, when he along with those disciples physically alive at the first phase of our Lord's return (e.g. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17) will receive bodies

suited for a new, ultimately eternal order (e.g. 1 Corinthians 15:12- 58; Philippians 3:20-21). These redeemed ones all are part of the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6). At physical death, the souls/spirits of the unregenerate also continue to exist, but in conscious torment until the final (i.e. "second") resurrection which will be followed by the final judgment (e.g. Revelation 20:13-15).

Although it is difficult to organize and interrelate the two kinds of resurrection and biblical references to the various judgments, the overarching facts are transparently clear. All men will experience a bodily resurrection: the saved to eternal life and overwhelming joy; the unsaved to eternal separation and everlasting punishment (e.g. Daniel 12:2-3; Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:19- 29; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-11).

Cosmic eschatology comprehensively takes in both the consummation of history and the completion of God's eternal plan. The universal kingdom or reign of God (e.g. Psalm 145:13) will be completely and finally established to remain unchallenged (e.g. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

According to that dimension of His sovereign plan mediated through time, space, and history, the final stage of His Kingdom over the present cosmos draws nearer in an accelerating manner. His covenant and kingdom promises are being fulfilled in successive order. Although significant spiritual dimensions of the kingdom began in conjunction with the first coming of Christ, the King will return again to fulfill God's many promises regarding the nation of Israel (e.g. Ezekiel 37; Romans 10-11). As it was prior to His first coming—it was not easy to discern a two-staged coming of Christ from the Old Testament Scriptures—so it will be prior to His second coming (e.g. Jesus in Luke 4:18-19 quotes Isaiah 61:1ff and stops mid-thought). The two phases of His final coming, normally designated as Rapture and Revelation, are most often mentioned side-by-side without clear distinctions in New Testament contexts (e.g. 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:1; 2:8; 2 Timothy 4:1; Titus 2:13). What is clear, however, is the fact that both the Rapture (e.g. John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:17) and the Revelation will launch and establish His Millennial Kingdom on earth (e.g. 2 Samuel 7:1-17; Psalm 89:4, 29, 34; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Daniel 7:13-14; Revelation 19:1-20:4).

His two-phased coming is presented in the New Testament as being near or imminent, although its timing is unknown to men (e.g. Mark 13:33-37; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11). Furthermore, though the fact of the Rapture is clear, its timing (in relationship to Daniel's Seventieth Week or the Great Tribulation) remains variously interpreted. Nevertheless, the primary responsibility of the true disciple is to wait expectantly and serve faithfully until He comes.

After Christ's 1000-year reign on the throne of David, Satan will be loosed briefly after his millennial confinement for one final insurrection (Revelation 20:7-9). At that time, he will be defeated and eternally confined to the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). Then the final judgment of all the unrighteous will take place (Revelation 20:11-15) and the new heaven and the new earth will be established inaugurating the eternal state (Revelation 21-22).

# Bylaws

As a church in Oregon, we are legally incorporated so that we can carry out certain functions in our state. These include practices such as buying property and accepting donations as a tax-exempt organization, among other things. These bylaws express the basic parameters of how the church functions in accordance with the requirements set forth by the State of Oregon. Our ultimate allegiance and authority is Scripture itself (as outlined in the bylaws below, approved 5-16-2020).

## **BYLAWS OF CORNERSTONE BIBLE CHURCH, INC. ALBANY, OR**

### **ARTICLE I: STATEMENT OF FAITH**

1. **WE BELIEVE** that the Bible, including both the Old and New Testaments, is the perfect and inspired Word of God, and that nothing can be added to, or taken away from it, because it is the complete and final authority for Christian faith and living.
2. **WE BELIEVE** in the unity and equality of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
3. **WE BELIEVE** that Jesus Christ is and always has been God; that He was physically born of a virgin and though tempted with sin, He lived a sinless life; He was crucified and physically died on the cross of Calvary, was buried, and was bodily resurrected from the dead on the third day; He ascended to Heaven and is coming again.
4. **WE BELIEVE** the Holy Spirit serves to glorify Christ; He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment as He draws sinners to the Savior; He indwells the believer at the moment of salvation and permanently resides within to guide him through life.
5. **WE BELIEVE** that Satan is real; he is the defeated enemy of God and all believers, but as the god of this world, he continues to wage spiritual warfare on all mankind; he will ultimately spend eternity in Hell.
6. **WE BELIEVE** that man was created in the image of God.
7. **WE BELIEVE** that man, through an act of willful disobedience, fell into sin and is separated from God who is holy and pure. Man has no ability to mend the relationship on his own.
8. **WE BELIEVE** that God gave His only begotten/unique Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins, thereby providing forgiveness and eternal life for all who believe in Him. This salvation cannot be lost; therefore man can have assurance of his salvation.
9. **WE BELIEVE** in the ordinance of baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper as symbolic of the work of Jesus Christ.
10. **WE BELIEVE** that the Church will be raptured before the Tribulation. We believe in the physical return of our Lord Jesus Christ to this earth, in the bodily resurrection of the dead and the ultimate accountability of everyone before God: the saved to everlasting life in heaven, and the unsaved to everlasting punishment in hell.

For a full statement of faith with supporting Scripture references, please see our church website (cbcalbany.com).

## ARTICLE II: MEMBERS

- 1. Eligibility of Members.** Members shall be limited to those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).
- 2. Qualification for Admission.** The manner of admission to membership in said corporation, as provided in Article V of the Articles of Incorporation, shall be as follows: 1) completion of church membership application and classes; 2) confession of personal faith in Jesus Christ before at least two elders; 3) a willingness to observe the ordinances of Christ and to be governed by his word; 4) an acceptance of the statement of faith; 5) a desire to be actively involved in the ministry of Cornerstone Bible Church.

All members must be at least eighteen (18) years of age and willing to submit to the authority of God's Word (1 John 2:3-6) and the elders (Hebrews 13:17). After being recommended for membership by the elders, new members will be presented to the congregation. The present members of Cornerstone Bible Church and those hereafter admitted as members shall constitute the membership of this corporation.

- 3. Duties of Members.** Each member of this church commits to: [1] love, honor, esteem and pray for each other as well as for the church leaders (Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:11-14); [2] preserve the purity and peace of the church through maintaining sound doctrine and godly living (Ephesians 4:1-3); [3] put on humility toward one another (Philippians 2:3; 1 Peter 5:5) and submit to the authority and discipline of the church under the care of its leaders (Matthew 18:15-18; 1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 3:10-11; Hebrews 13:18); [4] support the church in its ministry with prayers and financial giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:7); [5] personally participate in the work of ministry according to their God-given gifts and abilities (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12-14; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Ephesians 4:11-32; 1 Peter 4:10-11); and [6] willingly support the ministry with regular attendance at worship services (Hebrews 10:23-25) and participation in the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
- 4. Privileges of Members.** Cornerstone Bible Church functions as a body under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:23) and the leadership of the elders who serve as under-shepherds of Jesus Christ. Being a member of this church does not afford those individuals any rights to property, contract or civil rights based on the principles of democratic government. Likewise, being a member does not grant unqualified access to church records (including, but not limited to financial reports, documents pertaining to members, detailed meeting minutes, and correspondence). This information is considered personal and confidential and is therefore held in trust among church leaders. Determinations of the internal affairs of this church are ecclesiastical matters and shall be determined exclusively by the church's own constitution consisting of The Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws. The final authority in all matters is the Holy Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Church members shall have the use of the church facilities for weddings, funerals and fellowship activities when approved by the elders and/or administrator.

- 5. Discipline and Restoration of a Member.** The elders have ultimate responsibility for determining deviations from Scripture and the Statement of Faith. The spirit of discipline must always be that of restoration through repentance, with the objective of maintaining the purity and unity of Christ's church (1 Corinthians 5:1-7, Titus 3:9-11). Before continuing to the third step of church discipline, the elders shall have sole authority for proceeding with the process of church discipline (Matthew 18:15-20). Likewise, the elders shall have sole authority in confirming the genuineness of a person's repentance. Once the process of discipline has begun of any member, resignation of membership will not end the process.

If an elder is the subject of a disciplinary matter, he shall not sit as a member of the elders. He shall be entitled to the same biblical process of discipline and restoration as other church members. However, two or more witnesses must substantiate an accusation brought against an elder (1 Timothy 5:19).

Scripture outlines the biblical process of church discipline as follows:

1. When a member becomes aware of another member engaged in persistent sin, he or she is to go alone to the offending party and seek to restore his brother or sister. Before going, one should first self-examine. And when going, one is to adopt a spirit of humility and have in mind the goal of restoration (Matthew 18:15; James 5:19-20; Galatians 6:1-2).
2. If restoration is not reached, then "by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established." These witnesses are to accompany the one seeking to resolve the matter. This second step should also be preceded by self-examination and exercised in a spirit of humility with the goal of restoration (Matthew 18:16, Deuteronomy 19:15-20, 2 Corinthians 12:20-13:6).
3. If there is no repentance after steps 1 and 2, the matter shall be brought before the elders. If the elders determine there is an offense with no confession of sin and repentance then they will, "tell it to the church" during partaking of the Lord's Supper. At that point subsequent contact should focus on admonishment and calling the person to repentance (Matthew 18:17-20; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).
4. If the person refuses to hear the church, an announcement will be made to the church of their refusal to repent, the member's name will be removed from the church roll (see II.6) and they shall be to the church "as an unbeliever." If an unrepentant offending party is removed as a member, contact with the person from that point forward should be for the sake of salvation or restoration. The congregation will be informed of this action during partaking of the Lord's Supper.

In the case of a substantiated accusation against a member in leadership, that person shall step down until the elders have reviewed the accusation and determined a path forward.

In the instance of a divisive person who comes into the church the elders may act quickly to reject that one so as to protect the unity and purity of the church as instructed in Titus 3:9-11.

Should the restoration process be successful after step 3 or 4, an announcement should be made during partaking of the Lord's Supper reinstating their membership.

6. **Removal of a Member.** A member who is physically able and fails to show a willingness to meet the responsibilities of a member shall be contacted by the elders or staff. Based upon the person's response the person's membership may be revoked. In addition, members who have not responded to church discipline shall have their names removed from the roll. Disciplined members shall be advised of the action by letter. Upon request for removal of membership, the elders will be advised, and a letter of confirmation sent. Members who permanently move from the area will be removed as members after six months unless they notify the church office of their plans.

- 7. Dual Memberships.** With approval by the elders, a member of this church may hold membership at another church. Otherwise, when a member joins another church, that person shall be removed as a member of this church.

### **ARTICLE III: CHURCH BODY MEETING**

- 1. Schedule.** The church's fiscal year shall begin on January 1 and end on December 31 of each year. The membership will conduct bi-annual church body meetings, preferably in April and November of each year, or as deemed necessary by the elders.

Special church body meetings may be called by the elders or by one-third of the church members petitioning the elders when important issues need to be brought to the attention of the congregation.

At the spring meeting, ministry leaders will present an annual ministry report. The fall meeting will include an affirmation of the next year's annual church budget and affirmation of new elders and deacons if there are ready candidates. The elders will present as needed a list of candidates for the office of elder and position of deacon, for the church body to review before the fall meeting.

- 2. Procedure.** A quorum sufficient to conduct business shall consist of the following: a majority of the voting elders; and at least one-eighth of the regular church members participating inclusive of elders. A moderator may be appointed by the elders.

Any believer is welcome to attend the church body meeting. Only members of Cornerstone Bible Church will be allowed to participate in a church body meeting. The elders may declare any meeting to be closed to non-members and/or prohibited from recording at any time and for any reason.

The elders shall set the meeting agenda items and set the methods to ensure the integrity of the process.

- 3. Member Affirmation.** The members shall vote by ballot upon the initial calling of the lead pastor, non-staff elders and deacons. The members shall affirm the purchase or sale of real church property, the annual budget, and changes to the Bylaws. Approval of any of these items is by two-thirds majority of the members present.

The members may call for a written ballot. Upon the call for a written ballot, ballots shall be counted by the members under the supervision of elders and/or deacons. Absentee ballots may be requested by church members. All absentee ballots must be received by the Church Clerk before the meeting begins.

### **ARTICLE IV: ELDERS MEETINGS**

- 1.** The elders shall meet as necessary to provide oversight to the spiritual needs of the church. Individual elders will also meet regularly with the deacon(s) and other lay persons in the various ministries which are under their oversight. When the term "elders" is used collectively in this document it refers to the "board" or "body" of elders.
- 2.** The elders are empowered to elect a chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary from among their members. The secretary/treasurer, chairman and vice-chairman shall serve as the officers of the corporation. The board shall be comprised of a majority of elders with one pastoral staff person.

3. The chairman, or in his absence, the vice-chairman, will schedule and lead elders meetings and submit a summary report of the elders activities to the congregation at regular meetings.
4. The secretary or assignee will keep accurate records of all regular meetings and furnish copies of the minutes to all elders prior to the next meeting.

## **ARTICLE V: CHURCH LEADERS & STAFF**

1. **Membership of leaders and staff.** Any pastor, elder, deacon, paid staff and any person affirmed by the elders to hold a leadership responsibility in a ministry must be a member of Cornerstone Bible Church, and believe wholeheartedly in our Statement of Faith, church government, Bylaws, philosophy of ministry, and objectives. All elders and pastors (with the exception of the lead pastor) and all deacons shall be members of the church for at least one year before serving and be approved by the elders.
2. **Candidacy of elders and deacons.** During July of each year, the elders will receive written recommendations from members of the congregation for candidates to serve as elders and deacons. The elders also will recommend elder and deacon candidates. The candidates will then be examined by the elders to confirm their qualifications, and then, if qualified, biographical sketches of candidates shall be provided to the members.
3. **Elders.** The elders operate in a plurality. The elders shall be the spiritual overseers of the church and have the full responsibility for the government and discipline of the church (Hebrews 13:7, 17). "The elders" are the lead pastor and elders who are actively serving on the board. The number of elders will depend upon the size and needs of the ministry and the men gifted by God to serve in this way.
  - 3.1 **Qualifications.** Elder candidates must be examined in accordance with the qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4. If after examination the candidate meets these qualifications and is approved by the elders, he may then be presented to the congregation for affirmation.

In matters of faith and doctrine, an elder candidate should be a spiritually mature man whose life adorns the office. He shall be able to teach and defend his biblical convictions. In addition, an elder candidate must be a member of the church and believe wholeheartedly in our Statement of Faith, church government, Bylaws, philosophy of ministry, and objectives.
  - 3.2 **Duration of service.** An elder will continue to serve until he biblically disqualifies himself, desires to remove himself from the office, or is requested to step down by the other elders. At that point he will no longer be considered an elder. An elder may request a sabbatical for up to two years and still retain his elder status.
  - 3.3 **Ministries.** The biblical duty of the elders is to oversee and be ultimately responsible for all the ministries, committees, finances, and functions of the church. Elders are to guard and maintain the spiritual and doctrinal integrity of the ministry (Acts 20:27-32). They shall be committed to prayer, Bible study, discipling, leadership, and love. Practically speaking, the elders are to teach the Bible (Acts 20:27); to shepherd the flock (1 Peter 5:2); to guard the church against false teaching (Acts 20:29); to maintain the peace and purity of the church (2 Corinthians 12:20-21); to serve with sincerity (Acts 20:31); and to be willing to give of themselves to the church. Elders are characterized as admonishing, encouraging, and helping in a patient way (1 Thessalonians

5:14; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; 4:2). The elders will be responsible for oversight of the church's financial records.

**3.4 Hiring, dismissal, and review.** The elders will, upon due process, hire and dismiss all pastoral staff and the church administrator. The elders will receive any positive or negative information from the congregation regarding the ministries and ministers. The elders will review the person and ministry of the lead pastor, staff pastor, church administrator, and staff directors of all ministries, admonishing and challenging them in their particular calling.

If at any time the elders are persuaded that a staff pastor's ministry has become ineffective, or if the pastor decides to resign, the elders will first counsel with the pastor and then make an announcement or allow the pastor to announce his resignation.

When it becomes necessary to employ a new lead pastor, the elders may appoint a pulpit committee to find qualified candidates for the position. Upon finding a person who meets the requirements set by the elders, the committee shall recommend the candidate or candidates to the elders for final approval. Once a candidate has met with and been approved by the elders, an opportunity to preach before the congregation shall be arranged, after which the elders shall make a recommendation to the congregation for affirmation at a properly-called church body meeting.

**3.5 Interim leadership.** During the time period where there is only one elder (the lead pastor), lay ministry leaders shall work alongside him to provide spiritual care and oversight for the flock. The support of other biblically qualified elders from outside the ministry will also be enlisted. A plurality of elders will be established through affirmation by the lead pastor, the confirmation of other biblically qualified elders, and the affirmation of the members at a church body meeting.

- 4. Lead Pastor.** The lead pastor as a "teaching elder" must have the same spiritual qualifications as the other elders. His primary area of ministry shall be teaching and preaching the Word of God, discipling, and shepherding. He shall be committed to the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture. The lead pastor will also be responsible for shepherding the flock along with the other elders and staff pastors. He will serve as a member of the elders and will keep the congregation informed as to the church's spiritual progress and direction by reports at church body meetings. The lead pastor is accountable to the elders.
- 5. Pastoral staff.** The pastoral staff will assist the lead pastor as fellow laborers in the ministry, serving the Lord with gladness and in a spirit of cooperation. The pastoral staff and ministry directors shall be under the direction of the lead pastor and the elders.
- 6. Deacons.** A deacon must be examined and qualified on the basis of 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and is essentially of the same Christian character as an elder. The term "deacon" comes from the Greek diakonos, meaning "servant." Practically speaking, the deacons are the "hands and feet" of the ministry, serving in and providing care in various ministries, especially for the physical and financial responsibilities of the church as directed by the elders. The elders and deacons will work together in meeting the needs of the congregation. The number of deacons will depend upon the size and needs of the ministry and upon the Lord gifting men and women to serve.

- 7. Church Administrator.** The church administrator will reflect the spiritual characteristics of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. He may be requested to meet with the elders, and he must wholeheartedly agree with our Statement of Faith, church government, Bylaws, philosophy of ministry, and objectives. He shall be accountable to the lead pastor and the elders.
- 7.1 Responsibilities.** The church administrator will oversee the support staff and care of the facility; supervise the keeping of strict records of all monies coming into the church; oversee the prompt deposit of all funds into previously-approved bank accounts; oversee the recordkeeping of envelopes and contributions; and keep the church's financial statements current and in order. The church administrator has the authority to administrate within the confines of the budget and follow the directions set down by the elders. The church administrator is responsible for keeping an alphabetical listing of members' names and addresses, as well as a copy of the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws in the registered office of the church. The church administrator shall be responsible for maintaining and securing all receipts and legal documents, including titles, insurance policies, deeds, and data.
- 8. Support staff.** The support staff shall report to the church administrator, and consists of, but not limited to, the church bookkeeper, secretaries, receptionist, custodial workers, regular and part-time, as well as volunteers. All staff must believe wholeheartedly in our Statement of Faith, church government, Bylaws, philosophy of ministry, and objectives. If at any time the church administrator and elders recognize that a staff member's ministry has ended, the church administrator will discuss the separation with the staff person. All paid and unpaid church support staff members will be under the direct or delegated supervision of the church administrator.
- 9. Church Clerk.** The church clerk shall be appointed by the elders. The church clerk shall be responsible for oversight of the following church body meeting responsibilities:
- (1) Ensure that the congregation is notified of the meeting as stated in the Bylaws.
  - (2) Ensure that a quorum sufficient to conduct business is met.
  - (3) Ensure that the meeting is called to order.
  - (4) Ensure that the elders' agenda is presented and executed in an orderly fashion.
  - (5) Ensure the recording, publishing, and distribution of the meeting minutes in a timely manner.

## **ARTICLE VI: ORDINATION**

Any man who has been a member of the church for at least one year, who displays the genuine call of God into the work of the ministry and who possesses the qualifications stated in 1 Timothy 3:2-7, 1 Peter 5:1-3 and Titus 1:6-9, may request, or be recommended to the elders for ordination into the ministry of Jesus Christ.

The Ordination Process Notebook outlines the procedure.

## ARTICLE VII: CHURCH POLICY

- 1. Morality and grounds for church discipline.** The Bible clearly teaches that sexual immorality, homosexuality, adultery, fornication, abortion, unbiblical divorce or separation, factious or divisive behavior, along with many other habitual sins are offenses grievous unto God and that, apart from genuine confession and repentance, they are sufficient grounds for church discipline (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 7; Titus 3:9-11; Proverbs 6:16-19).
- 2. Marriage & Sexuality.** According to Scripture the only morally right definition of marriage is the joining of one natural man and one natural woman (Genesis 2:24; Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 5:22-23). Sexual activity is designed by God to take place in the context of natural marriage and any sexual relations outside of this is sin (1 Corinthians 6:9-20; Galatians 5:19-21).
- 3. Gender Roles.** Men and women are spiritually equal in position before God, yet God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions and roles for men and women in the home and in the church. The husband is to be the leader of the home, and men are to be the leaders of the church. Accordingly, only men are eligible to serve as elders, to receive licensure, and to be ordained by the church. Women shall not be allowed to teach men or to exercise authority over men (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:18; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 3:4-5, 12).
- 4. Waiving of rights.** No constitutional or legal rights afforded to the church can be waived without the written approval of the elders.
- 5. Discretion of contributions.** In the exercise of its religious, educational, and charitable purposes, the church may establish various funds to accomplish specific goals. Contributors may suggest uses for their contributions, but all suggestions shall be deemed advisory rather than mandatory in nature. All contributions shall remain subject to the exclusive control and discretion of the elders.
- 6. The sole and final authority for our beliefs.** Our Statement of Faith and our Bylaws do not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible, as the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God, speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind; and it is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of the church's faith, doctrine, practices, policy, and discipline, the elders are the final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.
- 7. Facilities.** The church's facilities were provided through God's benevolence and by the sacrificial generosity of church members. The church desires that its facilities be used for the fellowship of the body of Christ and to bring glory to God. Although the facilities are not open to the public, we make our facilities available to approved non-members as a witness to our faith, in a spirit of Christian charity, and as a means of demonstrating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in practice.

However, facility use will not be permitted by persons or groups for the purpose of holding, advancing, or advocating beliefs or practices that conflict with the church's faith or moral teaching which is summarized in the Bylaws. Nor may church facilities be used for activities that contradict or are deemed inconsistent with the church's faith or moral teachings, which are summarized in the Bylaws, but originate from the Bible. The elders, or an official designee, are the final decision-maker concerning use of the church facilities.

## **ARTICLE VIII: MEMBERS' GRIEVANCES**

We believe that Christians are prohibited from bringing lawsuits against the church, one another, elders or the staff, and are instructed to resolve personal disputes between members. In the event of any dispute, claim, question, or disagreement between members arises the members shall use their best efforts to settle such dispute, claim, question, or disagreements as befits Christians. They shall consult and negotiate with each other in good faith and recognizing their mutual interests not to disgrace the name of Christ and seek to reach a just and equitable solution. Disputes between a church member and the church shall not be litigated in the civil courts since it is biblically forbidden (1 Corinthians 6:1-11).

All members of this church agree to submit to binding arbitration of any matters that cannot otherwise be resolved, and expressly waive any and all rights in law and equity to bringing any civil disagreement before a court of law, except that judgment upon the award rendered by the arbitrator(s) may be entered in any court having jurisdiction thereof. All disputes shall be arbitrated by a committee of at least three elders. The committee's finding shall be binding upon the members and if they do not comply, they shall be subject to church discipline.

## **ARTICLE IX: INDEMNIFICATION**

- 1. Insurance.** The church will purchase and maintain liability insurance on behalf of any and all persons who are or were a director, officer, leader, employee, committee member or volunteer of the church (while serving in their capacity as such). Such insurance will be purchased for the purpose of protecting these people from covered loss resulting in liability in connection with their activities on behalf of the church.
- 2. Indemnification Requests.** Should any director, officer, leader, employee, committee member or volunteer of the church incur any liability as a result of their affiliation with or service to the church that is not covered by the church's insurance policy, and should such liability result in any out-of-pocket cost to such individual, then such individual may request indemnification from the church. The granting of full, partial, or no indemnification shall be at the discretion of the elders.
- 3. Indemnification Decisions.** If an indemnification request is made by an active elder, then he will recuse himself from the indemnification decision (whether to indemnify, and the dollar amount of such indemnification). Such decisions by the elders will be final.
- 4.** If one part of this document is legally challenged, the remaining parts will remain in effect.

# Appendices & Articles

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## The Gospel Summarized

*The Gospel is the good news that Jesus saves sinners through no effort of their own. He died, rose and was ascended into heaven to redeem all who would trust in him. Salvation is by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Here is a summary of the essential truths of the Gospel:*

There is a God in heaven who created you and me. Your own conscience testifies to his existence since you are made in his image and for his glory. Creation itself clearly displays his wisdom and power [Rom 1:21-23].

Each of us is accountable to this God to live according to his standard of morality [1 John 1:5]. But we are sinners by nature and we've all fallen short of God's glorious calling [Rom 3:23] by lying, lust, getting angry, and most importantly not worshipping God with our whole hearts [Luke 10:27].

The bad news is that you are unable to remove the stain of your sin or reconcile yourself to God [Isa 64:6].

No amount of good erases the bad. God is a just judge and when you die he will assess your life by his moral standard. God will pay you what your sin has earned, which is eternal punishment [Rom 6:23]. Thankfully God is gracious! He is compassionate. He offers forgiveness and reconciliation to himself without lowering his standards or changing the rules.

How did God do this? He sent his Son, Jesus, into the world as a baby. Jesus grew into manhood always obeying and never once sinning [Heb 4:15]. Jesus came to die. He was executed as a criminal on a cross, where God punished him for sins he never committed [Rom 3:24-26; Gal 3:10-14].

Three days later Jesus rose from the dead, conquering sin and death forever [1 Cor 15:4]. His sacrifice was an act of love to provide the way for sinners to come to God.

If you turn from your sin and from trusting in your own good deeds and believe in Jesus Christ as your only hope before God, then God promises he will forgive you [Rom 10:4, 13], and he will credit you with the perfect life that Jesus lived [2 Cor 5:21].

God created you to love and enjoy him. And now you can have the fullness of joy which includes eternal pleasures at the Father's right hand in heaven [Ps 16:11] and abundant life on earth which comes from knowing God [John 17:3].

## Navigating the Gray Areas of Life<sup>40</sup>

Christian young people and their parents face a host of decisions every day that challenge even the most discerning believers. The Bible is very clear on matters such as lying, stealing, coveting, murder, adultery, immorality and many other behaviors explicitly called "sin". But what about all those daily decisions that fall in between the "black" and "white" of scripture? We usually refer to these as the "gray" areas of life, or issues which are matters of Christian freedom. How do we make wholesome, wise, and Christ-honoring decisions when the Bible seems less definitive, giving us freedom of conscience in some areas? It is not enough to simply ask "what's wrong with it?" or to reason "I haven't found a Bible verse prohibiting it, therefore it's ok". The following is a brief list of helpful questions which promote honest reflection, and compel us to think biblically and critically not only about each decision but the motives behind them.

Regarding each decision ask:

### ***Will it be a spiritual advantage to my life?***

In other words, will I be enhancing my growth by doing this or that? Will it cultivate more strength, endurance, discipline, and discernment? Will it build rather than tear down my life? Sleep may be a good thing but too much of it will not be profitable. There's nothing wrong with recreation and leisure time but without careful parameters one could be spiritually weakened (1 Corinthians 6:12-20; 10:23-31).

### ***Will it slow me down with excess baggage in the Christian race?***

We are to live our Christian lives by faith. There are certain activities or behaviors which may not be wrong but could become excess distraction and temptation for some. Living a faithful life for the Lord requires diligence, perseverance, struggle, and focus. We should avoid behaviors and activities that add bulk to an already challenging set of spiritual priorities (Hebrews 12:1-3; 1 Corinthians 9:24 -27).

### ***Will it potentially enslave me?***

According to God's word we are not to allow anything to "master" us (1 Corinthians 6:12). Whatever your decision about a gray area of life, you must stay away from that thing which will bring you under its power. Because of sinful desires which are at war with God's Spirit within us (James 4:1) we can easily underestimate the enticement of everyday experiences. Many people have quickly come under the bondage of entertainment, media, food, money, romance and a host of other enjoyments God has

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<sup>40</sup> By Jerry Wragg, "Navigating The Gray Areas of Life" accessed May 7, 2020: <http://www.gibcjupiter.org/booklets/>

richly given to us. We often rationalize by conveniently overestimating our spiritual ability to say no (as in the case of Demas - 2 Timothy 4:10).

### ***Will it hypocritically cover my sinful desires?***

In other words, am I doing it "in the name of" true biblical freedom when the truth of the matter is I'm really satisfying sinful desires? We are to be honest with ourselves. We are not to put a veil over our sinful motives while pretending to be truly "free in Christ" (1 Peter 2:16). It is very common to turn liberty into license (Galatians 5:13). If you spend a good bit of time defending your "privilege" to exercise a Christian liberty, perhaps you ought to let go of it for a time as a means of testing your motives. Is it truly a "freedom?" If so, it should be easily dispensed with for the sake of maintaining integrity before the Lord.

### ***Will it violate Christ's supreme rule in my life?***

Every believer should be submitting every day to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. However, not everyone agrees on just what the Lord wants. Some are convinced in their conscience that something is wrong and others have a freedom of conscience to do that same thing. We must ask ourselves, "for me personally, is this something the Lord would be pleased with?" If we have any doubts we should not do it (Romans 14: 20-23). If you believe that the Lord's will for your life would not be violated, then you're free to proceed (Romans 14:5). But be careful here, Paul warns us to be completely free from doubts. In other words, we should not be involved in some "gray" activity without having sought counsel, studied God's word, prayed, and scrutinized all possible pro's and con's before proceeding. If important issues are bypassed and the conscience is violated, the result is sin (Romans 14:23).

### ***Will it impair my judgment or hinder the Holy Spirit's control of my will?***

We are taught by Scripture that we must yield our will to the complete direction of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18; Romans 8:6-14; Galatians 5:16-25). Any activity that may diminish our ability to remain alert and sensitive to the things of God should not be taken lightly. This principle can have broad and specific application for the Christian. For example, unregulated relationships with unbelievers can cloud one's judgment, plant seeds of confusion about the truth, and "de-sensitize" us to the Spirit's conviction (1 Corinthians 15:33-34). Consider also the very real dangers associated with chemical substances (e.g. pain medication, alcohol, tobacco, etc.) which may lower inhibitions and skew our moral compass. We must be careful to avoid if possible all potential hindrances to the influence of the Holy Spirit.

### ***Will it build up other Christians by its example?***

We must never exercise a Christian freedom at the expense of another's faith. What you do in front of others is not simply a matter of your freedom in Christ to live as you choose, but rather an issue of building up other believers in their spiritual maturity. We must be careful not to unwittingly

encouraging another toward a behavior that may violate their conscience, thereby putting “a stumbling block in a brother’s way.” (Romans 14:13). The pattern of our lives sets an example, and it is a tremendous encouragement to carefully limit our liberty out of love so as to never hurt a brother or sister in the Lord (Romans 14:15; 1 Corinthians 10:23-33).

### ***Will it lead others towards Christ?***

This is a very difficult issue. The Bible teaches that we are never to get into a situation where our innocent behavior is “spoken of as evil” (Romans 14:16). For example, if what we are doing, though not sinful, could misrepresent the Lord, His church, His people, or His truth, to the world then we should avoid it. Not only are we to build up less mature believers in the body but we are also to have character that is above legitimate question in the eyes of unbelievers (1 Peter 2:12-24; 3:13-17; 4:15). Some things are not evil but can easily be associated with questionable elements of society or even worldliness. Remember, if Christian freedoms are truly “freedoms” then we should be as ready and willing to give them up as enjoy them.

### ***Will it be consistent with Christ-like character?***

We want to imitate Jesus Christ in all our desires, words, thoughts, and deeds. If we say we belong to Christ then our first consideration when deciding whether to do this or that should be what the scriptures teach about our Lord’s attitude toward His heavenly Father, toward obedience, toward people, toward the truth, etc. Is this consistent with who He is, His likeness? Could this bring His name and the gospel into question? Will others see what I’m doing and question my commitment to follow Him? (1 John 1:6; 2:6).

### ***Will it magnify the glory of God?***

We should live in such a way that the word of God is honored (Titus 2:5) and God’s glory is on display (1 Corinthians 10:31). We must ask if the activity or behavior could undermine God’s name. Could God’s honor and praise be diminished as a result of this? Some things may seem mundane and rather non-spiritual (i.e., eating, working with hobbies, leisure, etc.) but Christians must always be alert as to how God can be gratefully praised for all He has provided. We must avoid anything that could detract from bringing Him thankful praise for everything we have the freedom to enjoy.

### ***A Word about Unity in the Body of Christ:***

Beyond these questions, believers have the liberty to make decisions in those areas where the scriptures give no clear direction for what is sin. Anyone who is less free in their conscience is warned not to judge others who are free, but rather be thankful for God’s leading in their life (Romans 14: 3b-4). This is very difficult for the “less-free” to balance. What their conscience perceives as sinful easily becomes a universal standard for everyone because their conscience is strongly affirmed by strict avoidance of such activities. Consequently, they will feel less fearful and more comfortable when

others adhere to the same conduct. However, each believer whose conscience is not as "free" as others must first acknowledge their internal boundaries and be honest about the tendency to judge others without biblical warrant (Romans 14:3b-13a). They should confess the sin of judging and seek the forgiveness of those whom they have offended. Second, they should thank God for their present state of maturity and for using the conscience to protect them from potential dangers unforeseen. Third, they must press on to maturity in the Scriptures by studying each issue so as to properly inform their conscience along clear, biblical lines. Finally, they should be patient as the Lord works in their hearts to cultivate discernment and balance, never violating their spiritual sensibilities in the meantime.

Regarding those with greater liberty, equally, Romans 14:13b-21 and 15:1 warn them not to think less of others without freedom, but rather love them by first, never being an offense or spiritual hindrance. Wherever a complaint arises, careful and thoughtful interaction should follow so that an understanding is reached for God's glory. The conscience of one should not "rule" another in areas of liberty, but love should prevail in every consideration, even if it means eliminating the exercise of certain liberties (e.g., Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:12-13). Second, serious consideration should be given to whether a liberty particular context. Some Christian freedoms may be unquestioned because of cultural "norms" or common Christian practice, while the freedom in other contexts may be imprudent because of the spiritual background and history of certain groups and peoples. For example, the mealtime consumption of wine may be the "norm" and so one's liberty (all other spiritual questions above having been considered) will most likely be a non-issue. On the other hand, in a culture where the abuses of alcohol are decried by both the saved and the unsaved, such liberty may cause greater questions and bring an unintended but very real reproach upon Christ and His Church.

Finally, those with greater liberty of conscience should carefully discern the difference between a "clear" conscience and a "seared" one. Some participate in "gray" activities with ease because they have consistently and with cavalier involvement suppressed the warnings of their conscience. This is often rationalized by appealing to the absence of an explicit text prohibiting the practice. How can we know the difference? According to 1 Timothy 1:5-7, when the conscience is silenced the result is "fruitless discussion" (vain and senseless talk), pride, and arrogant but ignorant assertions about truth (see also 1 Timothy 4:2-3). In other words, the more someone engages in activities which their conscience warns them against, the more they become blinded to the truth, cannot see the dangers, and therefore, perceive themselves to be "free" though they are deceived. Conversely, the evidence of a clear and maturing conscience is simply humility, submissiveness, and obedience (1 Peter 2:16-19; 3:16-17). Where these are absent it is a given that one's conscience may "feel" free but is simply suppressed. In conclusion, Paul spoke of each of these realities within the Church and we should not be surprised at the struggle. Remember, we shall all give an account of ourselves before God! (Romans 14:10)

## The One-Anothers

There are many instructions to believers, but one of the primary ways that the New Testament defines our relationships with others is by commanding us to do something as it relates to “one another.” Roughly one-third of the “one another” commands deal with the unity of the church; one-third of them instruct Christians to love one another and about 15% stress an attitude of humility and deference among believers.

Here is a list of our obligations to one another in the Lord:

**ENCOURAGE** one another (Romans 1:12)

**HONOR & PREFER** one another (Romans 12:10; 1 Corinthians 11:33; Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5)

**BE LIKEMINDED** with one another (Romans 12:16; 15:5; Philippians 2:3)

**MAKE PEACE & EDIFY (BUILD UP)** one another (Mark 9:50; Romans 14:19)

**LOVE & SERVE** one another (John 13:14, 34-35; 15:12, 17; Romans 13:8; Galatians 5:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:22; 3:11; 3:23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 5).

**INSTRUCT** one another (Romans 15:14)

**DON'T JUDGE, COMPLAIN, OR SPEAK** against one another (Romans 14:13; James 4:11; 5:9)

**PRESEVE UNITY & SHOW TOLERANCE** toward one another (1 Corinthians 12:25; Ephesians 4:2)

**GREET (i.e., WARMLY RECEIVE)** one another (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14)

**DON'T CHALLENGE & DEVOUR** one another (Galatians 5:15; 26)

**HELP CARRY THE LOAD** for one another (Galatians 6:2)

**BEAR WITH WEAKNESSES, BE TENDER & FORGIVE** one another (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13; Romans 15:7)

**SPEAK HONESTLY** to one another (Colossians 3:9)

**COMFORT & ENCOURAGE** one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11)

**PROVOKE SPIRITUAL PROGRESS** in one another (Hebrews 10:24)

**CONFESS SIN TO & PRAY FOR** one another (James 5:16; 1 John 1:7)

**SEEK THE GOOD OF** one another (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

# Joining the Church at CBC

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## Belonging to a Church is a Gift

Belonging to a biblical church is an incredible privilege and responsibility. Joining a church is an important decision and has lasting implications for your spiritual walk. A biblical church, though imperfect, is a grace from God to each of us. And God does amazing things in us and through us as he forms the Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts. He gets the glory and the credit for all of it.

We're delighted to see the Lord work as he adds to our number at CBC. With each additional member comes a package of new spiritual needs and gifts that shape the body.

### *The Process of Joining CBC*

First, read through "Becoming a Member at CBC" so that you can understand what we believe the Bible teaches about:

- What it means to be a member of a church
- Why it matters to be a member of a church
- What we believe doctrinally
- How we operate

If you are ready to take the next steps in joining CBC, here is the process:

- Attend membership class and
- Complete a membership application
- Meet with the pastor and another leader for an interview
- Public reception into the church

## Your Responsibilities to Jesus & His Church

Will you endeavor by God's power to faithfully carry out these responsibilities by the grace of Jesus Christ as part of your worship to him?

### *Your Commitments to the Body*

- Will you diligently strive to grow in holiness so that you are increasingly conformed to the image of Jesus Christ? (1 Peter 1:14-19)
- Will you protect the unity of the body of Christ by walking in love and guarding against the pride that so often divides churches? (Ephesians 4:1-6)
- Will you be faithful to gather with God's people on the Lord's Day for corporate worship as you have opportunity, not forsaking the assembly in selfish living? (Hebrews 10:25)
- Will you pray for your shepherds and submit to their spiritual leadership, knowing that they will give an account to Christ for your souls? (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)
- Will you faithfully use your God-given spiritual gifts so that others are built up in their walk with the Lord? (1 Peter 4:10)
- Will you offer your time and your resources to the Lord so that the ongoing needs of gospel-ministry are met? (2 Corinthians 8-9, Philippians 4:13-20)
- Will you seek out mature believers to disciple you, and will you also disciple others? (1 Corinthians 11:1; Romans 16:15; Matthew 28:18-20).
- Will you be willing to humbly give and receive correction and spiritual counsel, being careful to flee from pride and hiddenness in your life? (2 Timothy 2:24-26; Matthew 7:1)
- Will you nurture a faithful devotional and prayer life? (Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- Will you strive to proclaim and live the truth of the gospel in front of your unsaved family and friends, praying that they would see their need for Christ, and repent and believe? (Philippians 2:11; 1 Peter 2:9)
- Will you strive to maintain a credible testimony of love for Jesus Christ in this community, patiently enduring persecution if necessary, and boldly proclaiming the gospel as you have opportunity? (1 Peter 2:11-12)
- Will you seek to protect your brothers and sisters through speech that honors Jesus and refuse to take part in gossip? (Ephesians 4:29; 1 Timothy 3:8-11; 4:11; 5:13; James 3:1-12)

# Application for Joining CBC

*This form provides a format for us to get to know you in a deeper way. After you complete this application, you will have an opportunity to discuss your answers in an informal interview with a couple of church leaders. Don't worry about getting everything word-perfect, just answer honestly.*

## Personal Information

_____			____/____/____
Full Name			(date)
_____			
Home Address	City	State	Zip
_____		_____	
Phone (cell or home)		Email Address	

## Family Information

Marital Status:    Single    Married (date:\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_)    Widowed    Divorced    Separated

If divorced or separated, please elaborate on back page under additional comments.

Children living at home:

Name	Date of Birth	Name	Date of Birth
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

## Spiritual Background

Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?                      YES    NO    NOT SURE

Have you been baptized since you professed faith in Christ?                      YES    NO

If yes, date and church: \_\_\_\_\_

The following sections allow you to explain your relationship with Jesus Christ. If you need more space to write you can use the last page of this application.



Church Background

Are you presently, or were you previously, either a member or regular attender of another church? YES NO

If yes, please complete the following:

Name of Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Attendance from: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for leaving: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently, or were you when you attended a member in good standing? YES NO

If no, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Did you meet with the elders or leaders and explain your reasons for leaving? YES NO

Please summarize: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In what ways did you serve in the church listed above? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If you are a student or a seasonal person living in the area temporarily, do you desire to belong to your existing church and Cornerstone Bible Church? YES NO

## Cornerstone Bible Church Information

How long have you been attending Cornerstone Bible Church and for what reason did you first attend? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why do you want to join Cornerstone Bible Church? \_\_\_\_\_

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Have you carefully read our Statement of Faith? YES NO

Do you understand and agree with it? YES NO

If there are any areas of misunderstanding or disagreement, please state briefly what they are: \_\_\_\_\_

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Can you freely worship Christ among us and joyfully serve in spite of any differences, and will you be careful to hold doctrinal disagreements in a manner that protects the unity of the church out of submission to Christ and love for the body? YES NO

Have you read the CBC Bylaws and do you agree to abide by them? YES NO

Have you read the "Your Responsibilities to Jesus & His Church" and do you agree to them? YES NO

Please explain your understanding of the authority of elders and what it means to submit to the loving rule of the elders over you. (Hebrews 13:17): \_\_\_\_\_

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Are you willing to submit to that loving leadership? YES NO

Have you received biblical counseling? YES NO

Have you provided biblical counseling? YES NO

What is your view of biblical counseling and how it relates to secular counseling and Christian counseling? \_\_\_\_\_

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Please list any areas that you are interested in receiving biblical counseling: \_\_\_\_\_

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How would you explain discipleship in the church? \_\_\_\_\_

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According to 1 Peter 4:10 you are to use whatever gifts you have received from God to serve others, how do you understand your spiritual gifting? How have others played a role in affirming your gifting?

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Please list the areas of ministry within Cornerstone Bible Church in which you are interested in serving:

(1) \_\_\_\_\_ (3) \_\_\_\_\_  
(2) \_\_\_\_\_ (4) \_\_\_\_\_

Do you attend a Life Group? YES NO

If yes, which one(s): \_\_\_\_\_

