



# startingpoint

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a manual for church membership and Christian living



## Overview of Starting Point

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## Understanding the “main thing”

### The Gospel

It comes as a surprise to many to learn how very different Christianity is from other religions; at its core, it isn't about morality, or philosophy, or self-fulfillment. Rather, it's about news—good news: the greatest news the world has ever heard. In fact, the word “gospel” literally means “good news,” and it is this news that stands at the center of the Christian faith, and should be the informing core of the Christian life. It is what the apostle Paul called a matter “of first importance” (1 Corinthians 15:3). The gospel, the “main thing,” stands at the beginning of our life with Christ. What exactly is this “main thing?” What is this good news? In this lesson, we will seek both to understand and to better appreciate the wonderful news of the gospel.

### Man's Dilemma Before God

No one can gain an understanding of the gospel without first recognizing his own rebellion against a perfect, holy God, and the severe consequences justly deserved as a result. In short, we must understand some very serious “bad news” before we can adequately appreciate the “good news.” There are two key elements to the dilemma we all face: our sinfulness and God's holiness.

#### A. Man's sinfulness

“A person must confront his own sinfulness in all its ravaging depths before he can enjoy the comforts of salvation.”—**Martin Luther**

##### 1. *What is sin?*

Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature.

- a. Not just actions, but attitudes.

*Matthew 5:27-28: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”*

- b. Not just acting wrongly, but also failing to act.

*James 4:17: “So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.”*

c. Not just actions and attitudes, but our nature—who we are at the core of our being.

*Genesis 6:5: "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."*

"A sin consists in doing, saying, thinking, or imagining anything that is not in perfect conformity with the mind and law of God."—**J.C. Ryle**

## 2. Sin's true nature.

Defining sin in relationship to God reveals its true nature: sin is essentially rebellion against God.

a. Sin is the willful and selfish rejection of God's rule while choosing to live independently of him.

b. Sin is always fundamentally and primarily against God.

*Psalm 51:4: "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment."*

## 3. Sin's universality.

All people are sinners and stand guilty before God.

a. Adam's sin brought sin and death to all men. All people sin because all are by nature sinners.

*Romans 5:12: "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned"*

b. All people confirm this through their actions: all are sinners.

*Romans 3:22-23: "For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."*

## 4. Sin's pervasiveness.

Man's sinfulness extends to every part of his being; nothing in him has been unaffected by sin.

a. Sin's corrupting effects have touched every part of his being: mind, will, emotions, and body.

*Romans 3:10-12: "...as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."*

- b. This means that man in his sinful state apart from God is incapable of pleasing or obeying God. Even seemingly “good” works are tainted by sin.

*Romans 8:7-8: “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”*

- c. Not only are we enslaved to sin, but we are completely responsible before God for our sin.

*Romans 14:12: “So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.”*

## **B. God’s holiness and wrath**

The other facet of mankind’s grave dilemma is the character of God. Indeed, man’s sinful plight can’t be fully grasped until it is viewed through the lens of God’s infinite purity and holiness.

- 1. The Bible portrays God as holy.

This idea has two main components:

- a. God is transcendent: He is infinitely higher than man—separate, different—He is wholly other than we.

*Isaiah 46:9: “...for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me!”*

- b. God is morally perfect and infinitely pure—untainted by evil desire, motive, thought, word, or deed.

*Deuteronomy 32:3-4: “...ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.”*

*Isaiah 6:1-5: “In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: “**Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!**” And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; **for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!**”*

- 2. Because God is holy, he must respond with fierce opposition to sin. This is the meaning of God’s wrath.

- a. Wrath is God’s holy response to sin: His personal, active antagonism to sin that derives from his settled opposition to every evil thing. It is therefore right—and even necessary—for God to hate sin, to oppose all wickedness, and to judge all who practice it.

*Habakkuk 1:13: "You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong."*

"The wrath of God is his steady, unrelenting, unremitting, uncompromising antagonism to evil in all its forms and manifestations."—**John Stott**

b. Some think that the idea of wrath is unjust or unbecoming to a God of love. This is largely because we underestimate both the extent and the seriousness of sin and the holiness of God. Not only is God perfectly justified in his wrath, but without it, his very character would be compromised.

3. In light of God's holiness, sin has grave and inevitable consequences:

a. A broken relationship with God

*Isaiah 59:2: "but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear."*

b. Enslavement to sin and Satan. Sin places us under the dominion of sin and Satan, unable to break free from their control.

*Romans 6:17: "But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted..."*

c. Consequences in life. All the sorrow, pain, suffering, sweat, tears, strife, sickness, and death we experience were not part of God's original good creation. They resulted from the entrance of sin into the world.

d. Eternal punishment. The ultimate, final, and irrevocable punishment for all who die in sinful rebellion against God is separation in hell from God's beneficent presence.

*2 Thessalonians 1:8-10: "in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed."*

## **God's Answer to Man's Dilemma: The Gospel**

How can we be saved from our sins and the righteous wrath of God? The answer is the gospel: the "good news" of God's saving work on our behalf through the person and work of Jesus Christ. "The gospel is not only the most important message in all of history; it is the only essential message in all of history."—**Jerry Bridges**

## A. The motive for the gospel: God's love and mercy

1. As we have seen, the holiness of God demanded that sin be punished. If God failed to punish sin, he would cease to be just. If he ceased to be just, he would cease to be God.

2. But the Bible teaches that, not only is God holy, he is also loving—love is essential to his very nature.

*1 John 4:7-8: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because **God is love.**"*

3. Even though we were deserving of eternal punishment, God, motivated by his infinite love, chose to take upon himself in the person of his Son the full measure of divine wrath.

*1 John 4:9-10: "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."*

4. This is the glory of the cross: God saved us in such a way that, in one and the same act, he preserved his uncompromising holiness and expressed his fathomless love and mercy.

*Romans 3:25-26: "whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, **so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.**"*

"How then could God express simultaneously his holiness in judgment and his love in pardon? Only by providing a divine substitute for the sinner, so that the substitute would receive the judgment and the sinner the pardon."—**John Stott**

## B. The nature of the gospel: grace

It is often said that "we are saved by grace," and so we are. Perhaps the best one-word summary we could use for what God has done for us through Christ's work on the cross is "grace."

1. Grace refers to "God's free and unmerited favor." It is God freely bestowing his goodness to people who deserve only punishment. Notice the components of this idea:

a. God is in no way obligated to show kindness and mercy to anyone—least of all those who have rebelled against his rule.

b. We are completely unable to earn any merit from God; we stand condemned in the courtroom of God's justice.

c. Yet God resolves to extend mercy and favor to us in spite of our guilt.

2. It is this grace—this “merciful resolve”—that is the source of our salvation and characterizes what Christ has done for us.

*Romans 3:23-24: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...”*

3. Because we are saved “by grace” alone, we can never earn our salvation or contribute anything to it. For all eternity, God alone will receive the glory and credit for graciously giving to us what we could never merit on our own.

*Ephesians 2:8-9: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*

### **C. The substance of the gospel: the person and work of Jesus Christ**

As stated earlier, the gospel is the “good news” of God’s saving work on our behalf through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the gospel; it is his holy history, the news of who he is and what he has done for us. The gospel includes Jesus’ birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and coming return.

#### 1. Jesus’ birth

Jesus is fully God, yet he was born into this world as a man, conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin named Mary. Jesus is therefore both fully God and fully man.

*John 1:1, 14: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...”*

*Matthew 1:20-21: “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” See also Hebrews 2:17; Philippians 2:5-8.*

#### 2. Jesus’ perfect, sinless life

Even though Jesus was subject to all the temptations to which we are all subject, he never once sinned in any way.

*Hebrews 4:15: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”*

### 3. Jesus' death on the cross

At the heart of Christ's life and ministry stands the cross. All His life had been preparatory for and led to that moment. At the cross, Christ provided the ground of our salvation—the basis upon which God saves us.

- a. Jesus' death was substitutionary in nature. He died on our behalf, receiving the legal penalty for our sins and satisfying God's wrath towards us.

*Isaiah 53:4-6: "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."*

*2 Corinthians 5:21: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*

- b. Because Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, God no longer holds us responsible to pay for our sin. All of our sins are forgiven: past, present, and future.

*Colossians 2:13-14: "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross."*

- c. Not only are our sins forgiven, but we are also "justified"—that is, we are declared righteous by God.

- Righteousness is a legal term: it speaks of a "right standing" before God.
- God considers the righteousness that Christ achieved as belonging to us.
- This declaration is a once-for-all, permanent event in our lives that nothing can change.

### 4. Jesus' resurrection from the dead

The resurrection demonstrates that Jesus' death was an acceptable and effective sacrifice on our behalf. Death is the penalty for sin, and Jesus' conquest over death in the resurrection shows that sin has also been overcome.

*Romans 4:25: "who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification."*

*1 Corinthians 15:17: "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."*

## 5. Jesus' ascension and return

The ascension marks the beginning of Jesus' reign. He now has all rule and authority, and he reigns in heaven with the Father, building his church, defeating its enemies, and interceding for his people. At the time that God has determined, he will return to consummate his work and initiate a new heaven and a new earth. Then we will reign with him for eternity, worshipping God and experiencing the full fruits of his saving work.

*Matthew 24:30-31: "Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."*

*Revelation 21:3-4: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.'"*

### **D. The centrality of the gospel: "the main thing"**

It is no mistake that we start with an exploration of the gospel. It does not simply mark the beginning of the Christian life; the gospel is to remain at the center of the Christian life. It is therefore to remain central to the life, ministry, and proclamation of the church.

"We never, therefore, move on from the cross of Christ—only into a more profound understanding of the cross." —**David Pryor**

It is our goal in this local church to keep the gospel at the heart of all that we do. It will be the substance of our proclamation, the fuel for our adoration, and the source of our motivation. We will do all we can to ensure that our zeal for the gospel is never eclipsed by any other doctrine, teaching, or practice. Our commitment to you is that, with all our might, we will endeavor to "keep the main thing, the main thing."

"The gospel is not only the most important message in all of history; it is the only essential message in all of history. Yet we allow thousands of professing Christians to live their entire lives without clearly understanding it and experiencing the joy of living by it." —**Jerry Bridges**





## Getting Started

### Our Response to the Gospel

The gospel tells us that God has acted through the person and work of Christ to save us from our sins and remove the barrier that exists between God and ourselves. The gospel is therefore objective; it is a matter of history. It is what Christ did for us; no matter how we feel, the ground of our salvation never changes. We are therefore not to look inward for the reason why God saves us, but upward and outward—to the Savior who died for us. However, salvation is not somehow “automatic.” The gospel comes to us as news, and it is news to which we must respond. After Christ died, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven, he sent the Holy Spirit to a group of believers in Jerusalem, thus giving birth to the church. On that day, in response to the preaching of the gospel by Peter, the hearers were pierced to the heart and asked the perceptive question, “What shall we do?” All who come to Christ must face this same question. And our answer to that question will determine whether we truly come to faith in Christ.

### Our Response to the Gospel

The appropriate response to the gospel has two components, which are often summarized under the term “conversion.” “Conversion is our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation.”—**Wayne Grudem**

Although repentance and faith are spoken of separately, they always work together in conversion. There is no true repentance without faith, and no genuine faith without repentance.

#### A. Repentance

The biblical words for repentance have at their core the idea of turning around or changing direction. To sin is to rebel against God and his rule over our lives. To repent is to turn back to God and to embrace him and his rule and authority over our lives.

1. Repentance is a command of God. All people are commanded to repent and believe the gospel.

*Acts 17:30: “...now he commands all people everywhere to repent.”*

This repentance has three primary aspects:

- a. Mind: an awareness of the holiness and majesty of God, of our sin and guilt, and of God's mercy and readiness to forgive.
- b. Emotions: a heartfelt sorrow for sin and joy at the prospect of forgiveness.
- c. Will: a willingness and steadfast purposing to turn away from all sin and to turn to God in obedience.

"The New Testament word for repentance means changing one's mind so that one's views, values, goals, and ways are changed, and one's whole life is lived differently. The change is radical, both inwardly and outwardly... Repentance means starting to live a new life." —**J.I. Packer**

2. Repentance is a gift from God. It is the grace of God that enables us to repent.

*2 Timothy 2:25: "correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth."*

## **B. Faith**

Faith is the instrument through which the saving benefits of the cross come to us. Salvation is "by grace"—grace is its ground, but it is "through faith"—faith must be exercised before salvation is received (Eph. 2:8). It is both a gift of God and an act of our will. God gives us faith, but we are responsible for exercising it.

1. What is faith?

The New Testament word for faith, when used in the context of salvation, means a true commitment of oneself to God, an unwavering trust in his promises, and a persistent loyalty and obedience.

Saving faith has three elements:

- a. Knowledge: We must have certain information—the gospel—revealed to us.

*Romans 10:14,17: "But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."*

- b. Assent: We must believe that what is revealed is true.

*Hebrews 4:2: "For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened."*

- c. Trust: We must place trust in what is revealed, being willing to stake our lives on it. This will find expression in our obedience and commitment.

*James 2:17, 22: "So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works."*

2. We are saved by faith alone, but true saving faith will be validated by a lifestyle that testifies to the reality of faith. True saving faith will always lead to obedience.

3. Faith is a gift from God, not a work that earns us favor with God.

*Acts 16:14: "The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul."*

### **C. Observing the Ordinances**

1. We respond to the gospel with repentance and faith in the finished work of Christ. Having received the free gift of salvation, believers are also to respond by observing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

2. What is an ordinance?

An ordinance is a blessing from Christ which is a sign (a picture) and a seal (a mark of being set apart) given to believers in order to teach and assure us of our salvation. The Lord ordained two ordinances: baptism (Matthew 28:19) and the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23), also known as "communion." Participation in the ordinances does not bring salvation; this comes only by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9; Galatians 2:16). These ordinances are visible signs of an invisible grace which has already taken place in the life of the believer.

3. Baptism uniquely depicts initiation into the Christian life, portraying the believer's union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). It points to the beginning of the Christian life (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38) and displays one's commitment to turn from sin and trust in Christ for salvation. For this reason, we do not baptize infants. If you were baptized as an infant, we would ask that—in obedience to Scripture and as part of becoming a member of Battle Ground Bible Church—you be baptized as a believer.

4. The Lord's Supper uniquely depicts continuing fellowship with God, a repeated act whereby the believer remembers the Lord's death and renews his commitment to Christ and participation in his church (1 Corinthians 11:27-34).

## 5. How do baptism and the Lord's Supper differ?

"Baptism [is] an ordinance that is only observed once by each person, as a sign of the beginning of his or her Christian life...The Lord's Supper [is] an ordinance that is to be observed repeatedly throughout our Christian lives, as a sign of continuing fellowship with Christ." —**Wayne Grudem**

Since baptism is a landmark moment in a believer's life, publicly marking one's identification with Christ and entrance into the church, we regularly set aside times for the baptism of new believers (or those who have yet to be baptized) in our Sunday morning services. This enables us to rejoice together as a church family with those being baptized and welcome new believers into the life of the church. We also make it a regular practice to share in the Lord's Supper together as a congregation at our Sunday morning and evening services.

### **God's Initiative Makes Our Response Possible**

In the previous lesson, we spoke about the pervasive, corrupting effects of sin. Sin is not only what we do, but who we are: apart from God, we are sinners by nature. So if we're truly "dead" in our sins (Ephesians 2:1) and powerless to change, how is it that we are able to respond to the gospel at all? It is here that the gracious nature of salvation becomes even more amazing: God acts, so that we can act.

#### **A. Chosen in eternity past**

God's actions began in eternity past when he chose us and determined that he would save us. This is often referred to as "election."

*Ephesians 1:4-6: "even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."*

#### **B. Effectively called**

God's choosing of us eventually results in his calling us and drawing us to himself.

1. God's drawing us to himself is often called "effective calling." This occurs when God invites and draws sinners to himself by his Spirit through the proclamation of the gospel.

2. While God is the one who draws, this does not mean that a person is somehow saved apart from his own willing response to the gospel. Through the grace of God, the "divine summons" of God brings about the response it requires.

*Romans 8:30: "And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."*

*John 6:44: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him."*

### **C. Regenerated (“born again”) by the Spirit**

When God calls us, he then changes our hearts so that we can freely respond. This change is called “regeneration.” In regeneration, God acts to change our inner natures and impart spiritual life to us. As a result, we become spiritually alive and are then able to believe the gospel and repent of our sin.

*Colossians 2:13: “And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him...”*

### **D. The supernatural nature of conversion**

Given what Scripture teaches about sin, it is not surprising that God must do a supernatural work in our hearts before we can be truly converted. Such an understanding of our conversion is important for our spiritual health.

“Scripture is clear in teaching that we are not all journeying toward God—some having found him, others still seeking. Instead, Scripture presents us as needing to have our hearts replaced, our minds transformed, our spirits given life. We can do none of this for ourselves. The change each human needs, regardless of how we may outwardly appear, is so radical, so near our roots, that only God can bring it about. We need God to convert us.”—**Mark Dever**

### **E. We must act, but God gets the glory.**

Recognizing God’s grace does not eliminate our responsibility to repent and believe. All people everywhere are commanded to do this (Acts 17:30). However, when we reflect back on our salvation and recognize that it was God’s prior actions that drew us to Himself, we are humbled and exult all the more over God’s amazing, undeserved, and glorious grace. We realize that, in the end, the difference between ourselves and someone who is unsaved is not our own superior goodness, intelligence, spiritual aptitude, or anything within ourselves at all. The only difference between us and them is the mercy and grace of God.





## Becoming Like Jesus

### Sanctification

As was noted in the last lesson, we get started in the Christian life when we respond to God's offer of salvation in Christ. No change could be more momentous—we are “born again” (John 3:3), we are “made alive” (Ephesians 2:5), we are transferred from the “domain of darkness” into “the kingdom of his beloved son” (Colossians 1:13), we are forgiven our sins (Ephesians 1:7), we are delivered from wrath (Romans 5:9), we are reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:18)—as Jesus put it, we pass “from death to life” (John 5:24). As dramatic as this change is, this is only the beginning. God's purposes for us don't end when we become Christians. Rather, conversion sets us on a glorious path in which God will continue to work out his gracious purposes in our lives. What are those purposes? How are they worked out? In this lesson, we will explore what God has for us as we continue in the Christian life.

### The Goal of Our Salvation: Holiness

Salvation is much more than simply deliverance from the penalty of sin. When God saves us, he makes us his own, and begins a renovation program: the process of making us more and more like our Lord Jesus—the process of making us holy. “In reality, holiness is the goal of our redemption. As Christ died in order that we may be justified, so we are justified in order that we may be sanctified and made holy.”—**J.I. Packer**

#### A. The barrier to holiness: sin

Sin not only deserves God's punishment; it mars God's good creation and obscures the display of his glory. He therefore desires to eradicate sin and its corrupting effects from his creation. For the believer, salvation is the beginning of the process of removing sin and its effects from our lives.

- At **regeneration**, the power of sin is broken and we are made alive in Christ.
- In **justification**, the penalty of sin is removed as we are declared righteous in Christ.
- In **sanctification**, the pollution of sin is progressively removed as we are made holy in Christ.

To be holy means to be set apart to God. This includes being set apart from all that is sinful and opposed to God. Holiness is God's goal for his people, and the Christian life involves the process of reaching this goal. The New Testament is full of words that describe this process: transforming, renewing, conforming, maturing, and growing. Although we will never reach perfection in this life, we are called to make every effort to live a holy life for the glory of God.

*1 Peter 1:15-16: "but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"*

*1 Thessalonians 4:7: "For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness."*

## **B. The model for holiness: Jesus Christ**

1. Jesus is our Lord, Savior, and example. We are to follow him in attitude and action. Paul called this being "imitators of God." John used the phrase, "we ought to walk as Jesus walked." Jesus said simply, "Follow me."

2. More remarkably, God himself has committed to making us like Jesus. The ultimate goal in sanctification is conformity to the image of Christ.

*Romans 8:29: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."*

## **C. The motive for holiness: love for God**

As we grow to know his love and appreciate what he has done for us, we will also grow in our desire to live a life that is pleasing to him—as Paul says, "a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called..." (Ephesians 4:1).

*1 John 5:3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."*

## **The Battle for Holiness**

While holiness is God's will for us, this does not mean that the process of sanctification is easy. Given our own sinfulness and the sinful world in which we live, this process involves a battle—one that will require our energies for the rest of our lives.

## **A. The power of sin is broken.**

As unbelievers we were slaves to sin—we were unwilling and unable to resist sin. When we were regenerated, we were freed from the power of sin—its ruling force in our lives was broken. We became willing and able to resist sin.

*Romans 6:2, 6, 11: "How can we who died to sin still live in it?...We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."*

Why then do we still sin?

## **B. The presence of sin remains.**

Although sin has been deposed as the ruler of our lives, it has not been removed as a factor in our lives. We are free from its dominion, but not its presence and influence—our quest for holiness is not unopposed. The remaining influence of sin is called different things: "the flesh," or "indwelling sin."

The sinful world we live in and the devil who opposes us take advantage of this situation to tempt us into all manner of sin. Here is how Paul describes this battle:

*Galatians 5:16-17: "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do."*

## **C. The heart is the battlefield.**

"Regeneration makes man's heart a battlefield where 'the flesh' tirelessly disputes the supremacy of 'the Spirit.'"—**John Owen**

1. Growth in holiness always comes through the pathway of the heart. The Holy Spirit doesn't just change us outwardly by "dressing us up" with new behaviors; he transforms us from within.

2. The remaining sin in our hearts is deceptive, wicked, and in active rebellion against God.

*Romans 7:8, 21: "But sin...produced in me all kinds of covetousness...when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand."*

3. The Bible teaches that our sinful behavior is not caused by other people or our circumstances, but by our own desires, cravings, longings, or lusts. Whatever rules our hearts determines what we do and say in response to people and situations.

*James 1:14: "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire."*

*James 4:1: "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?"*

4. We do not sin because our hearts are empty, wounded, broken, or in need of love, self-esteem, or significance. We sin because of sinful desires that have not been recognized and put to death.

*Romans 8:5, 8: "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh... Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."*

5. Indwelling sin inclines our hearts to forget the gospel and to seek happiness, joy, peace, rest, security, and satisfaction outside of Christ. The heart's idolatrous pursuit of "life" outside of Christ leads to sinful behavior.

## **The Process of Holiness: Sanctification**

### **A. Sanctification defined**

Sanctification is the continuing work of God in the life of a believer. It is a progressive work in which we become more and more free from sin and like Christ. In short, our actual lives become increasingly conformed with our legal status before God.

1. *It is a process.* We don't become instantly perfect. Rather, we become progressively more holy as we cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

2. *There is discernable progress.* We actually do become more and more holy, overcoming various manifestations of sin (lying, pride, selfishness, etc.) and becoming more like Jesus in our attitudes and actions.

3. *It is a work of grace.* Many make the mistake of thinking that we are saved by grace but that we then become holy by our own efforts. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are justified by grace and we are sanctified by grace as well. Grace is necessary in both cases, and it is unmerited in both cases. The key difference is that in justification we are passive but in sanctification we actively cooperate with the Holy Spirit in receiving and responding to God's grace. This cooperative activity is vividly portrayed:

*Philippians 2:12-13: "Therefore, my beloved...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."*

## **B. The Holy Spirit works.**

The activity of the Holy Spirit precedes any action towards holiness on our part and makes our actions possible. Although we aren't always aware of his activity, if we are becoming more holy it is because he is at work.

*2 Corinthians 3:18: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."*

"The only good we do is what He does in us; it is not that we do nothing ourselves, but that we act only when we have been acted upon, in other words under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit."—**John Calvin**

## **C. We work.**

Because the Holy Spirit is at work in us, we can therefore work; he makes it possible for us to live holy lives. However, we must never be passive in this process. We are responsible before God to "work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12).

*Colossians 1:29: "For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me."*

*Hebrews 12:14: "Strive...for the holiness."*

"Sanctification...is a thing for which every believer is responsible... Whose fault is it if they are not holy, but their own? On whom can they throw the blame if they are not sanctified, but themselves? God, who has given them grace and a new heart, and a new nature, has deprived them of all excuse if they do not live for his praise."—**J.C. Ryle**

## **Our Weapons for the Battle**

God has equipped us with numerous aids for our battle with sin, and we seek to equip every member to maximize the use and effectiveness of these aids.

**A. The Bible exposes and judges the motives, intents, and desires of the heart. It provides truth—God's perspective on reality.**

*Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."*

**B. Prayer deepens our fellowship with God, and therefore brings a greater sensitivity to and conviction of sin. In prayer we can confess our sins, cultivate a hatred for sin and a love for godliness, and receive strength for our battle with sin.**

*1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

**C. The Holy Spirit dwells in us so that we can say "no" to the passions and desires of our sinful nature. God has made us new creatures in Christ, and he is actively at work to transform our hearts.**

*Galatians 5:16: "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."*

**D. Fellow Christians are a crucial part of this battle. We all battle sin and suffer from some degree of spiritual blindness due to the deceptive nature of sin. Therefore, each Christian should be committed to receiving help from others in this battle. This includes confessing our sin to each other and receiving observations from each other.**

*Hebrews 10:24: "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works..."*

In this church, the practice of sanctification is woven throughout all the facets of our church life. Each member is encouraged to practice **the spiritual disciplines**—especially Bible reading and prayer—and through them to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). An essential part of our small groups is the specific and personal application of God’s word to our lives. Our emphasis on relationships provides countless contexts in which we join arms and help each other grow in godliness. The weekly **preaching of God’s word** is a key means to our growth in godliness as a body. Through these avenues and more, we desire to live lives that increasingly reflect God’s character to a lost world.

## **The Essence of Sanctification**

The intentional pursuit of godliness is a priority because the Scriptures command it. In taking sanctification seriously, we are taking God’s holiness seriously and the reality of our own sin seriously. It is not uncommon to find some Christians who downplay the role of sin in their lives—such talk seems negative or counter-productive. However, few endeavors could be more exciting than the glorious pursuit of becoming more like Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Far from making us self-centered or morbidly introspective, our pursuit of holiness intensifies our joy as we become more amazed at God’s forgiveness, more free from the sin in our lives, and more intimately acquainted with our God. Ultimately, our holiness brings God glory as His character is increasingly displayed in our lives. Such mercy and grace provides powerful motivation to cooperate with God’s sanctifying work in our lives and so “become like Jesus in the context of the local church.





## Doing Life Together

### The Priority of the Local Church

#### Why Is the Church Important?

When it comes to the Christian life, the question of the church's importance is perhaps one that is too often overlooked. How often do we stop and think, "Why is the church so important? What is the purpose of the church?" The answer to such questions will provide us both direction for how churches should build the body of Christ and encouragement to be faithful as we play our part in it. In this lesson, we will explore the critical role that the local church plays in God's glorious purposes, as well as the overall vision of this particular local church. We will find that our relationships with other believers are a tremendous means of blessing, both for ourselves and others. God never meant for us to live the Christian life alone. Instead, he gives us the marvelous privilege of *doing life together*.

#### A. The church's ultimate purpose is the glory of God.

1. The Bible clearly reveals that mankind stands in rebellion against God. However, throughout history God has made himself known to people, called them to himself, and gathered them together to worship him and bring glory to his name.

*Exodus 19:4-6: "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, **you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples**, for all the earth is mine; and **you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**"*

2. Believers living after Christ came to earth have the even greater privilege of joining together to enjoy and proclaim the pinnacle of God's saving acts: the death of Christ on the cross for our sins.

*Ephesians 1:3-8: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, **to the praise of his glorious grace**, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us..."*

## **B. The church's role is exclusive.**

The church is God's chosen means for carrying out his purposes until he returns. He has ordained no other organization or structure for this purpose.

*Matthew 16:18: "...I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."*

*1 Timothy 3:15: "...if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth."*

## **C. The church's nature is corporate.**

Throughout the history of redemption, God has been acting to save a people, not a disconnected group of isolated individuals.

*1 Peter 2:9-10: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a **people** for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's **people**; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."*

There are many aspects of the Christian life that we typically think of as involving our personal relationship with God: our response to the gospel, our growth in godliness, our love for doctrine, and our empowerment by God's Spirit. While all of these things are critical for our personal lives, it is possible to understand them, incorrectly, as involving only our personal lives. It is a key assumption of New Testament teaching that the Christian life is to be lived out in relationship with other believers in the context of the local church.

Although we enter into a relationship with God as individuals, we nevertheless enter into something greater than our own individuality: the church—the community of God's people.

## **Why Should I Join a Local Church?**

Why go to all this trouble to learn about this church? Does it really matter if I actually join a church? Am I not already a member of "the universal Church?" Isn't my personal relationship with Jesus what really matters? Such questions are common, and not altogether surprising given our individualistic culture and natural tendency toward independence. However, such questions also reveal a misunderstanding about the church and God's purposes in and through the church. The Scriptures make it clear: **God's specific purposes for his people are accomplished as individuals join themselves to and participate in local churches.**

### **A. Local church membership is biblical.**

The primary New Testament metaphors for the church – body (1 Corinthians 12:27), temple (Ephesians 2:21), household (1 Timothy 3:15), and flock (Acts 20:28) – have as a key characteristic the idea of separate individuals joined together into a single entity. While all genuine believers are members of the universal body of Christ, they are to express this tangibly through membership in a specific local church.

### **B. Local church membership is vital to our spiritual health and growth.**

Without being joined together with other believers, we will lack the strength and nourishment that each member—including ourselves—is to supply.

*Ephesians 4:15-16: “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”*

### **C. Local church membership is sharing life together.**

Far from so many of our modern misconceptions, the biblical picture of the church can best be described as community: a group of people, joined by a common life, united by common values and a common purpose, devoted to living out this life together within the larger society. This is the type of church life to which God calls us—a life that shines as a testimony to his work in us. His intention for our lives together is more than simply attending the same Sunday meetings and believing the same doctrines.

*Acts 2:42-47: “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.”*

“Those first Christians of Acts 2 were not devoting themselves to social activities but to a relationship...They understood that they had entered this relationship by faith in Jesus Christ, not by joining an organization. And they realized that their fellowship with God logically brought them into fellowship with one another. Through their union with Christ they were formed into a spiritually organic community...We must grasp the idea that fellowship means belonging to one another in the Body of Christ, with all the privileges and responsibilities that such a relationship entails.”—

**Jerry Bridges**

## Fellowship: The Foundation of Our Relationships

Because the Holy Spirit has joined us together as a community, our relationships are to be marked by this reality. We don't simply attend the same service, or enjoy the same interests—we have been united at the deepest level by the Spirit of God. The New Testament characterizes our relationships with each other by the word *fellowship*.

“We should not think of our fellowship with other Christians as a spiritual luxury, an optional addition to the exercises of private devotions. Fellowship is one of the great words of the New Testament: it denotes something that is vital to a Christian's spiritual health, and central to the Church's true life...The Church will flourish and Christians will be strong only when there is fellowship.” —**J. I. Packer**

### A. What is fellowship?

The word often translated fellowship in the New Testament (*koinonia*—cf. Acts 2:42) is also rendered participation, partnership, and communion. The word expresses the idea of sharing something in common, or joining a mutual endeavor (often with sacrifice involved).

1. Biblical writers took up this word to describe the relationship believers have with God through Christ.

*1 Corinthians 1:9: “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

2. It was also extended to describe the relationship believers have with each other.

*1 John 1:3: “...that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”*

3. Our fellowship with God is what makes our fellowship with other believers unique. The richness Christians experience in their relationships with one another is human relationship at the deepest level possible.

C.J. Mahaney defines fellowship as “the communication of our current relationship with and experience of God himself.” Biblical fellowship is not merely “socializing”—it is sharing our common life in Christ: life that is rich, enduring, and eternal.

## B. The biblical example of fellowship

The Bible describes fellowship in concrete terms as actions we do with or for “one another.” Here is a sampling:

1. Worship God together (Ephesians 5:18-20).
2. Pray for one another (Ephesians 6:18).
3. Carry one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2).
4. Encourage one another (I Thessalonians 5:11).
5. Confess our sins to one another (James 5:16).
6. Correct one another (Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18:15).
7. Serve one another (Galatians 5:13).

We must recognize our responsibilities as members of the body and position ourselves to serve others. In short, we must give ourselves to **purposeful involvement** in each others’ lives.

## The Fruit of Our Fellowship

Genuine fellowship profoundly enriches our relationships within the church.

### A. Growth in godliness.

Sanctification is a community project. We simply cannot make the same progress in isolation that we can make in community with other believers.

1. We need the consistent encouragement of others. Consistent, intentional, and specific encouragement is to be a mark of those who serve “the God of encouragement” (Romans 15:5).

*1 Thessalonians 5:11: “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”*

2. We need others to help us resist sin and to strengthen our resolve for godliness.

*Hebrews 3:13: “But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”*

3. We need the input of others to help us see our sin and repent from it. Because we are naturally blind and deaf to our own sin, we desperately need the correction of others. When given and received humbly, correction is a true expression of biblical love.

*Galatians 6:1: “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”*

4. We need to confess our sins to others so as to weaken sin's power and invite accountability. Few things are more effective in cultivating humility and promoting fellowship than confessing our sins and pursuing evaluation from others.

*James 5:16: "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."*

## **B. Providing mutual care.**

We live in a fallen world, and the effects of sin—our own and others'—are all around us: pain, sorrow, sickness, death. God has promised to care for us, and much of his care comes to us through other believers. Indeed, Christians are to be distinguished by their sacrificial love for one another.

*1 Corinthians 12:24-26: "But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together."*

## **C. Benefiting from the diversity of gifts.**

The Holy Spirit distributes gifts to build the church. But God has also made us dependent upon one another—no one person has all the gifts necessary. To mature as a body, we need one another and the unique gifts each one brings.

*Ephesians 4:16: "...from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."*

*1 Corinthians 12:7: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."*

## **D. Presenting a compelling witness.**

Ultimately, our lives together are intended to show the world a compelling picture of the grace of God. Our unity and love for one another is one of the most powerful testimonies we can give to unbelievers who are lost, isolated, fragmented, and ultimately without hope.

*John 13:35: "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

## **A Means of Our Fellowship: Small Groups**

One of the primary ways we build relationships and cultivate fellowship with each other here is through our network of “Small Groups.” While we are joined to all believers in the local church, Small Groups allow us to relate more deeply with a small number of people. Small Groups provide an important context for accomplishing a number of biblical priorities.

“The value of the small group is that it can become a community of related persons, and in it the benefit of relatedness cannot be missed nor its challenge evaded. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say, therefore, that small groups... are indispensable for our growth into spiritual maturity.”—**John Stott**

### **A. The purpose of Small Groups**

#### *1. Application of God's word to our lives.*

Merely hearing God's word is insufficient; we must apply it to our lives for there to be fruit. Small Groups enable us to do this together. We seek to apply the Bible's teaching, review Sunday messages, discuss Christian books, and use a variety of other resources with the intention of growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### *2. Pursuit of biblical fellowship.*

Genuine fellowship isn't practical in a large crowd. Care Groups provide a place where we can build intimate relationships, care for one another, and help each other grow in our relationship with God.

#### *3. Ministry to one another.*

God has made us dependent on each other, and Small Groups provide a context where we can minister to each other with the gifts that God has given us. Meetings often include times of prayer for one another and opportunities for individuals to exercise spiritual gifts for the edification of others.

### **B. Our responsibilities within Small Groups**

Each member is important to the group, and should seek to contribute to the group's health and success. We each have the responsibility in our group to:

#### *1. Faithfully attend meetings and functions.* We're much more likely to benefit if we are actually present!

*2. Willingly participate.* Come ready to contribute, to serve, to share, and to open yourself to others. When the group has an assignment, diligently complete it. Both you and others will benefit from your participation.

*3. Build relationships with other members outside the meeting.* Don't confine your investment to the Small Group meeting—let this be the springboard to rich, enduring relationships.

## **The Church: Dear to God and Dear to Us**

Our main concern is not whether you become part of our church, but that you become a part of a church. Ultimately, this is not an issue of our personal preference or convenience, but of the glory of God. We exist for his glory, and Scripture is clear that God desires to make his glory known through the church. This is why the church—the gathering of God’s redeemed—is so dear to him. We trust it will become dear to you as well.

“If I had never joined a church till I had found one that was perfect, I should never have joined one at all. And the moment I did join it, if I had found one, I should have spoiled it, for it would not have been a perfect church after I had become a member of it. Still, imperfect as it is, it is the dearest place on earth to us.”—

**Charles Spurgeon**

As we see in the New Testament, this life is one that is to be shared with others. The church—with all its imperfections—is to be a foretaste of our fellowship with the saints in heaven (Hebrews 12:22-24). May this amazing privilege be our ongoing experience as we “do life together.”





## Serving and Giving

### Servanthood and Stewardship

One of the realities of Christian existence is that we now belong to Another (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). All that we are and all that we have now belong to God. Of course, everything that we are and have—our personality, intellect, gifts, abilities, opportunities, possessions—has been given to us by God anyway (1 Corinthians 4:7)! Conversion simply gives the believer the opportunity to offer all of this back to God for his glory and for our eternal good. A common metaphor in Jesus' parables is that of the servant—we are not called to be great as our culture defines greatness, but to serve faithfully. The words we long to hear on that final day are “Well done, good and *faithful* servant.” Such is the nature of the Christian life: serving is not something we do on occasion—it is a way of life. The Christian life is not one of observation, but participation. In this lesson we will explore two of the primary ways we are called to *participate*: through servanthood and stewardship (the faithful use of our resources) within the context of the local church.

“Fellowship involves sharing what we have with others. One of the most valuable things we can share is ourselves: our time, our talents, and our energies in serving one another in the Body of Christ.”—**Jerry Bridges**

### Servanthood

#### A. The Christian's call to serve

There are to be no passive participants in the church. Indeed, one of the express purposes of our salvation is to rescue us from an existence leading to death and to set us free to serve God: “...*how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God*” (Hebrews 9:14).

Serving is therefore a God-given expectation of every Christian. But it is much more than merely a duty; what higher privilege is there than to give one's life in glad service to our gracious, sovereign God who saved us? Since our service to God is closely connected to our salvation by God, we begin our exploration of servanthood with the greatest servant of all: Jesus Christ.

### 1. Servanthood is modeled by Jesus' example.

Although Jesus was worthy of the worship and service of all creatures, he humbled himself as a servant, and modeled a lifestyle of servanthood for all who would follow him.

*Philippians 2:5-8: "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."*

*Mark 10:43-45: "But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

### 2. Servanthood is mandated by Jesus' call.

While we can do nothing to earn our salvation, our salvation nevertheless ushers us into a life of following our Master, relinquishing our prerogatives and rights. A critical aspect of following Christ is following his example of servanthood.

*John 13:14-17: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."*

### 3. Servanthood is motivated by Jesus' sacrifice.

At the heart of all of our service to God stands the cross. Because we stand forgiven, we are set free to find joy in knowing and serving God. Because the Spirit indwells us, we find we have fresh affections for God and a new desire to glorify God. We do not serve God in order to be forgiven or to gain God's favor, but because we have been forgiven and have received God's favor as a gift. Gratitude and joy provide the fuel for the believer's service to God and others.

*2 Corinthians 5:14-15: "For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised."*

"We should serve God not just because it is a duty, because serving him is much more than that. We should serve God because it glorifies God. He is worthy of everything we can do for him and his church. Wouldn't you agree?"—**Donald Whitney**

## **B. The requirements of Christian service**

The grace of God expressed through the cross of Christ provides the primary basis for our service to God. When this is the case, our servanthood will be characterized by certain qualities that both provide godly motivation for service and assure that our service is glorifying and pleasing to God.

### *1. Christian service is God-centered.*

When we serve other people, whether they be fellow Christians in the local church or non-believers in our lives, we are actually rendering service to God himself. This reality helps to purify our motives for serving, helping us to put to death the isolation that comes from selfishness and the craving for others' approval that comes from pride.

*Colossians 3:23-24: "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ."*

### *2. Christian service is others-focused.*

When serving is motivated by grace, it will not be self-serving, but rather characterized by an authentic desire to glorify God and to meet the needs of others. Few things so distort our service as selfishness, but grace-motivated service actively places the desires of God and the needs of others above one's own.

*Galatians 5:13: "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."*

### *3. Christian service is characterized by humility.*

True servanthood adopts a posture that others are more important than self. A servant doesn't demand recognition or dictate how he is to serve, but rather takes simple delight in being used by God to meet the needs of others.

*Philippians: 2:3-4 "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."*

### *4. Christian service is empowered by the Spirit of God.*

The believer not only labors for God, but by the power God provides. Dependence upon God for motivation, strength, and effectiveness in serving assures that God receives the glory for our service. God gives each believer spiritual gifts that motivate and empower our service for his glory and others' good.

*1 Peter 4:10-11: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."*

## **Giving Expression to Servanthood in Our Church Family**

**A. An important aspect of membership is finding a place to use one's gifts to glorify God and serve others. Involvement in service typically takes one of two forms:**

1. *Spontaneous ministry opportunities:*

We all have numerous opportunities provided to us by God to serve him and others. These spontaneous occasions encourage us in our dependence upon God and our cultivation of servant's hearts. It is essential that we respond to these unique opportunities as the Lord provides them.

2. *Structured ministries of the church:*

These include ongoing commitments made in various aspects of church life, such as Care Groups, Ministry Teams, and Children's Ministry. These ministries provide concrete service opportunities and meet specific needs, as well as providing a source of relationship building and ongoing accountability.

**B. Ministry Teams provide wonderful opportunities to serve alongside others to accomplish specific objectives, meet identified needs in the church, and use your gifts for the glory of God.**

## **Stewardship**

Stewardship involves the faithful use of resources that belong to another. An important part of following Christ is the use of our material resources for God's purposes and to meet the needs of others. In fact, Scripture is clear that an authentic relationship with Christ *will find expression* in the faithful use of our resources for his purposes. For the remainder of this lesson, we will examine a second important means of participation in the Christian life: the use of our money and possessions for the glory of God, the work of his church, and the well-being of others.

"Christian stewardship is the management of life and all its resources for the glory of God."—**Murray J. Harris**

### **A. The reality of stewardship.**

The faithful use of our resources begins with a stark realization: God owns everything! All that we have comes from him, and therefore we don't really own anything; we are merely stewards—overseers or managers—over things that belong to God.

*Psalm 50:10-12: "For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine."*

## **B. The significance of stewardship.**

The faithful use of our resources is not only commanded by God; it is in fact an undeniable indicator of our spiritual health. Materialism, selfishness, greed, hoarding, anxiety over money—all of these reveal that our trust lies not in God but in money. In the same way, generosity and faithfulness reveal that our trust is in God—by such things we confess that God, not our possessions, is the source of our life.

*Luke 16:11-13: “If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”*

*Matthew 6:19-21: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

## **C. The substance of stewardship.**

In addition to meeting our physical needs, God provides material resources to further the work of his kingdom through the local church. Throughout salvation history, God has called his people to support his work through giving.

1. In the Old Testament, God’s people were to give a tithe, or the first tenth, of their income to God. This practice predated the giving of the Law (Genesis 14:20; Genesis 28:22), and was later formalized in the Law of Moses for the maintenance of the temple and provision for the priests and Levites who served there (Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 14:22-24).

2. In the New Testament, giving to support the work of the church remained an expectation of believers.

a. Giving to support the needs of individuals:

*Acts 4:34-35: “There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.”*

b. Giving to support the church’s leaders so they can devote their time and energies to serving the church:

*1 Corinthians 9:13-14: “Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.”*

c. Giving to support the extension of the gospel:

*Philippians 4:15-16: "And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again."*

3. The practice of tithing illustrates important guidelines and provides a helpful starting point for regular giving to the church.

a. The financial support of the New Testament church is likened to the support of the temple in the Old Testament.

b. Believers are commanded to financially support the local church where they receive care and training.

*1 Timothy 5:17-18: "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer deserves his wages.'"*

*1 Corinthians 9:13-14: "Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (cf. Matthew 10:10).*

c. We are to give regularly and systematically. This demonstrates a commitment to God and a trust that he will provide for all our needs.

*1 Corinthians 16:2: "On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper..."*

d. In the New Testament, obedience to God's law is intensified due to the transforming work of the Spirit in light of Christ's work on the cross. For example, hatred is likened to murder—Matthew 5:21-22; lust is likened to adultery—Matthew 5:27-28. In the same way, our giving is not merely to be thought of as "paying our dues," but should flow from the giving of our entire selves to God. In light of this, tithing is a reminder of God's ownership of us, and is an appropriate starting point for our giving.

*2 Corinthians 8:3-5: "For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us."*

4. Offerings over and above our regular giving provide for special needs, specific ministries, care for the poor, and the expansion of the gospel.

*Acts 4:34-35: "There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need."*

#### **D. The heart of stewardship.**

What we actually do with our money reveals where our heart truly is (Matthew 6:21). But in addition to the command to give, Scripture also addresses our motives and attitudes towards giving. Here is just a sampling:

1. *Giving is to be generous, not stingy.*

*2 Corinthians 9:6: "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."*

2. *Giving is to be enthusiastic, not grudging.*

*2 Corinthians 9:7: "Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."*

3. *Giving is to be deliberate, not haphazard.*

*2 Corinthians 9:7: "Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (cf. Acts 11:29).*

4. *Giving is to be discreet, not showy.*

*Matthew 6:1-4: "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."*

5. *Giving is to be with faith, not anxiety.*

*Malachi 3:10: "Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need."*

## **The Privilege of Participation**

One of the great tragedies in much of western Christianity is the misconception that “church” is an ornate building or a service to be attended, rather than the community of God’s people, saved by his grace. By definition, then, to be a member of the church is to be a participant in the life of God, with the people of God, made possible by the grace of God. Viewed in this light, our participation in the life of the church is not an option, or the prerogative of a privileged few, but the call and responsibility of every person redeemed through the work of Christ on the cross. Having been purchased by God, we have the awesome privilege of offering all that we are and have to him for his glory.





## What is really important at BGBC

### Core Values

One of the most important questions that any local church can ask itself is: Who are we? What do we value as a local body of believers? The question of core values is exceedingly important because core values determine a church's thrust, and direction, or lack of the same.

A church's core values may be selfish, sinful and harmful to the church's continued existence, or they can be biblical, positive and pro-active. Core values influence a church's decision making, problem solving, risk-taking, task setting, team building, and the allocation of time, personal finances and resources.

Therefore, the leadership of Battle Ground Bible Church has identified and highlighted eight core values that drive everything that our local body does and aspires to.

- TRUTH  
We are devoted to proclaiming the **truth** with boldness. (2 Tim. 4:2)
- EXALTATION.  
We are devoted to magnifying and **exalting** Jesus Christ through the praise and prayer of the gathered body. (Eph. 5:18-19; John 14:13)
- DISCIPLESHIP.  
We are devoted to **discipleship** that changes lives. (Mt. 28:19-20; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:1-17)
- RELATIONSHIPS.  
We are devoted to accountable **relationships** that unify the body of Christ. (Gal. 5:13-14; Eph. 4:1-3; Phil. 2:1-5; Heb. 10:24-25)
- MINISTRY.  
We are devoted to making every member a **minister**. (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:7)
- LEADERSHIP.  
We are devoted to developing broad godly **leadership**. (Eph. 4:11-12)
- OUTREACH.  
We are devoted to impacting our community and the world through gospel **outreach**. (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8)

- REPLICATION.

We are devoted to **replicating** like-minded sister churches.

These are the core values that drive Battle Ground Bible Church. And so in light of these core values and the teaching of Scripture, we as a local body are devoted to *Building a Community of Worshipers with a Passion for God and Compassion for People in Our Community and around the World.*





## Where is BGBC going?

### Vision

What is vision and why is it important? George Barna has defined vision this way: *Vision for ministry is a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances.*

The apostle Paul was a man of vision. In Romans 15:19-20 he said that his vision was to spread the gospel of Christ where no one else had been. By that time, Paul had spread the gospel from Jerusalem throughout modern Turkey and Greece and into Illyricum (modern day Yugoslavia). Preaching the gospel is a command, but determining where and how takes vision.

But Paul's vision also meant that he *couldn't* do certain things—even things he wanted to do, like go to Rome (Rom. 15:22). Good is often the worst enemy of the best. Doing too many good things may mean not getting the more important things done well. Vision sets priorities!

Therefore, the leadership of Battle Ground Bible Church, through prayer and divine guidance, has cast the following vision for our church:

- WHAT WE WANT TO PROVIDE (TO BE)

*Christ-centered environments where biblical change is happening, authentic community is formed, gift-oriented ministry is encouraged, and spiritual leadership is cultivated.*

- WHAT WE WANT TO ACCOMPLISH (TO DO)

*A center for gospel outreach in our immediate community*

*2 like-minded sister churches by 2012*

*2 Missionary families/individuals sent to a foreign field by 2010*





## How do I get connected?

### Ministry

The leadership of Battle Ground Bible Church is passionate about seeing every member connected to a ministry for their edification as well as the edification of others, so that the vision of BGBC will be realized. Therefore, the following is a list of the ministries of BGBC. Please examine the list below and discover where you can best connect to employ your gifts. The ministries listed below are meant to make you aware of where you can serve and where you can be served. Once you have found that ministry, contact the church office and or the person indicated and they will direct you to the appropriate ministry leader.

- Children's Ministry
  - Sunday School Teachers
  - Children's Church Teachers
  - Teacher's Assistants
  - Vacation Bible School Workers
- AWANA
  - Games Coordinators
  - Memory Verse Assistants
  - Teachers
- Jr. & Sr. High (FUEL Student Ministries)
  - Discussion group leaders
  - Chaperones
- Adult Sunday Morning (Focus Groups)
  - Teachers
  - Teacher's Assistants
- Adult Small Groups
  - Spiritually Vital: Mixed Adult
  - Cornerstone: College & Career
  - Point Man: Men.
  - Women After God: Women.
- Outreach Team
  - Home Visitation
  - New Visitor Follow-up
- Friendship Team
  - Door Greeters
  - New Visitor Data Input
  - Membership Attendance Input
- TLC Food Pantry
  - Bible Study Leaders
  - Support Personnel
- Young @ Heart (Senior's)
  - Seniors Dinners
  - Nursing Home ministry
  - Ministry to Shut-ins
- Music Ministry
  - Choir/Praise Team
  - Musicians
  - Vocalists

## Ministry Descriptions

- Children's Ministry

The Children's Ministry is for all toddlers through the sixth grade. They are taught practical Bible lessons during Sunday School (Sunday, 9:30am) and Children's Church (2<sup>nd</sup> Service, 10:45am). There are teachers and assistant teachers with each age and grade level. Throughout the year they minister through special events like a community picnic and Vacation Bible School. For details contact Pastor Justin (567-2844).

- AWANA

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). That's the heartbeat of our AWANA ministry. AWANA is a Wednesday evening ministry designed for children from 2 years prior to kindergarten to 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The children learn Scripture, play games and win awards. Because this ministry is so large it is in constant need of people who have a heart for children. For details contact Roger Criswell (474-9472).

- FUEL Student Ministries (Jr. & Sr. High)

The FUEL Student Ministries is a youth ministry program that targets middle school and high school students. They meet for Sunday School/Fellowship Group (Sunday, 9:30-10:30am) for a highly in-depth Bible Study with discussion and application of biblical, theological and doctrinal topics. They also meet for an Outreach Night (Wednesday, 6:30-8:00pm), which includes active church leadership within the worship team and small group discussion. During the month the students meet for various Activities or Events that are for the purpose of fun, fellowship and service. For details contact Pastor Justin (567-2844).

- Adult Sunday Morning (Focus Groups)

Adult Sunday morning classes (9:30-10:30 AM) are designed for people who would like to get into God's Word in a more open discussion style format. Interaction and questions are always welcomed and encouraged.

- Adult Small Groups

Small Groups are one of the best ways to connect at BGBC if you want to grow in your relationship with Jesus. Our small groups are designed to help you develop significant relationships with others who can encourage and challenge you to consistently apply God's Word to each area of your life. Small Groups are not "another thing" at BGBC, they are one of the most important mediums for discipleship and care for each person who is a part of the BGBC family.

Each small group is made up of anywhere from 6 to 12 people and meets from 1 ½ to 2 hours, morning or evening, throughout the week.

- **Spiritually Vital: Mixed Adult**

These small groups are for men and women, married or single. These groups meet at various times each month. For details contact Pastor Kenny (567-2844).

- **Cornerstone: College & Career**

This group is uniquely geared for young college students and young working people. For details contact Pastor Justin (567-2844).

- **Point Man: Men.**

This is a men only small group. For details contact Pastor Kenny (567-2844).

- **Women After God: Women.**

This is a women only small group. For details contact Jane Turpin (567-2844).

- **Friendship Team**

The Friendship Team is a multifaceted team that mainly cares for the greeting ministry and administrates the follow-up of visitors and members. The Friendship Team is the first impression a visitor receives when they enter the church. They also gather and record the attendance information for ministry follow up throughout the week. For details contact the church office (567-2844).

- **TLC Food Pantry**

The Love of Christ Food Pantry is a ministry designed to make physical and spiritual food available to those in financial need. But The Love of Christ Food Pantry is unique in that it is an explicitly evangelistic ministry where each participant is required to attend a 30 minute Bible study in which the person and work of Jesus Christ is taught and people are encouraged to commit their lives to Him. For details contact Pastor Kenny (567-2844).

- **Music Ministry**

Music is a gift that God has given us to express our love for Him in worship. BGBC has been blessed with a great music ministry. Choir, praise team, vocalists, leading and musicians are always welcomed to exercise their gifts and talents in this critical ministry of music and worship. For details contact Mike Fights (474-6978).



# The Constitution of Battle Ground Bible Church

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## Article I - Name

The name of this body of believers shall be Battle Ground Bible Church, Inc.

## Article II - Purpose

The purpose of this church shall be to preach and teach the Word of God, to worship God, to observe the ordinances of baptism and communion, to develop the spiritual life of every believer, and to seek to win the lost to Christ, both at home and on foreign fields.

## Article III - Doctrine

### 1. The Holy Scriptures

We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the verbally, inspired Word of God, the final authority for faith and life, inerrant in the original writings, infallible and God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matthew 5:18; John 6:12-13).

### 2. The Godhead

We believe in one triune God, eternally existing in three persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, co-equal in power and glory, and having the same attributes and perfections (Matthew 28:18-20; Deuteronomy 6:4; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

### 3. The Person and Work of Jesus Christ

- a. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin named Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful men (John 1:1,2,14; Luke 1:3; Galatians 4:4-5).
- b. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His shed blood and death on the cross as a representative, vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice; and, that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead (Romans 3:24,25; 1 Peter 2:24; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:3-5).
- c. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, and is now exalted at the right hand of God, where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate (Acts 1:9-10; Hebrews 9:24; 7:25; Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1,2).

### 4. The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

- a. We believe that the Holy Spirit is a person who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, and that He is the Supernatural Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ, indwelling and sealing them unto the day of redemption (John 16:8-11; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 1:13-14).

- b. We believe that He is the Divine Teacher who guides all believers into all truth; and, that it is the privilege and duty of all the saved to be filled with the Spirit (John 16:13; 1 John 2:20,27; Ephesians 5:18).

#### 5. The Total Depravity of Man

We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but that in Adam's sin the race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God; and, that man is totally depraved, and, of himself, utterly unable to remedy his lost condition (Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 3:22-23; 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3,12).

#### 6. Salvation

We believe that salvation is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins (Ephesians 2:8-10; John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

#### 7. The Security and Assurance of Believers

- a. We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 8:1,38-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; 1 Peter 1:5).
- b. We believe that is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word; which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion to the flesh (Romans 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13; Titus 2:11-15).

#### 8. The Two Natures of the Believer

We believe that every saved person possesses two natures, with provision made for victory of the new nature over the old nature through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit; and, that all claims to the eradication of the old nature in this life are unscriptural (Romans 6:13; 8:12-13; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:10; 1 Peter 1:14-15; 1 John 3:5-9).

#### 9. Separation

We believe that all the saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Savior and Lord; and, that separation from all religious apostasy, all worldly and sinful pleasures, practices, and associations is commanded of God (2 Timothy 3:1-5; Romans 12:1-2; 14:13; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

#### 10. Missions

We believe that it is the obligation of the saved to witness by life and by word to the truths of Holy Scripture and to seek to proclaim the Gospel to all mankind (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:19-20).

#### 11. The Ministry and Spiritual Gifts

- a. We believe that God is sovereign in the bestowment of all His gifts; and, that the gifts are for the purpose of perfecting the saints today; and, that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles gradually ceased as the New Testament Scriptures were completed and their authority became established (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12).

- b. We believe that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith, in accord with His own will, for the sick and afflicted (John 15:7; 1 John 5:14-15).

## 12. The Church

- a. We believe that the Church, which is the body and the espoused bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism made up of all born-again persons of this present age (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 5:25-27; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; 2 Corinthians 11:2).
- b. We believe that the establishment and continuance of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:27, 20: 17, 28-32; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11).
- c. We believe in the autonomy of the local church free of any external authority or control (Acts 13:1-4; 15:19-31; 20:28; Romans 16:1,4; 1 Corinthians 3:9,16; 5:4-7,13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- d. We recognize the ordinances of water baptism and the Lord's Supper as a scriptural means of testimony for the church in this age (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42; 18:8; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

## 13. Dispensationalism

We believe that the Scriptures interpreted in their natural, literal sense reveal divinely determined dispensations or rules of life which define man's responsibilities in successive ages. These dispensations are not ways of salvation, but rather divinely ordered stewardships by which God directs man according to His purpose. Three of these - the age of law, the age of the Church, and the age of the millennial kingdom - are the subjects of detailed revelation in scripture (John 1:17; 1 Corinthians 9:17; 2 Corinthians 3:9-18; Galatians 3:13-25; Ephesians 1:10; 3:2-10; Colossians 1:24-25; Hebrews 7:19; Revelation 20:2-6).

## 14. The Personality of Satan

We believe that Satan is a person, the author of sin and the cause of the fall; that he is the open and declared enemy of God and man; and, that he shall be eternally punished in the Lake of Fire (Job 1:6-17; Isaiah 14:12-17; Matthew 4:2-11; 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

## 15. The Second Advent of Christ

We believe in that "Blessed Hope," the personal, imminent, pretribulation and premillennial coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His redeemed ones; and in His subsequent return to earth, with His saints, to establish His Millennial Kingdom (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Zechariah 14:4-11; Revelation 19:11-16; 20:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; Revelation 3:10).

## 16. The Eternal State

- a. We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:46; John 5:28-29; 11:25-26; Revelation 20:5,6,12,13).
- b. We believe that the souls of the redeemed are, at death absent from the body and present with the Lord, where in conscious bliss they await the first resurrection, when spirit, soul, and body are reunited to be glorified forever with the Lord (Luke 23:43; Revelation 20:4-6; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; 3:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

- c. We believe that the souls of unbelievers remain, after death, in conscious misery until the second resurrection, when with soul and body reunited they shall appear at the Great White Throne Judgment, and shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, not to be annihilated, but to suffer everlasting conscious punishment (Luke 16:19-26; Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Jude 6-7; Mark 9:43-48; Revelation 20:11-15).

In subscribing to these articles of faith, we by no means set aside, or undervalue any of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; but we deem the knowledge, belief and acceptance of the truth as set forth in our Doctrinal Statement, to be essential to sound faith and fruitful practice, and therefore requisite for membership in Battle Ground Bible Church. In as much as this Doctrinal Statement is the fundamental interpretation of God's Word and forms the only basis of true fellowship, it shall be established as irrevocable in any part for the life of this body of believers.

#### **Article IV - Associations**

This church, recognizing Christ as its Head, shall not be subject to any other authority and having been started under the direction of the Indiana Bible Church Mission shall be associated with that organization for as long as deemed necessary by both bodies. This church may associate with IFCA International as long as that fellowship remains true to the Word of God and His purpose for the Church; but under no circumstances shall such association, or agreement, ever be construed as bringing this church under the authority of any person, group, or body, but is completely autonomous.

#### **Article V - Membership**

##### **Section 1. Charter Membership**

All those interested in becoming members following the adoption of this constitution shall be considered charter members of this church.

##### **Section 2. Reception of Members**

Those desiring membership shall make known their desire to the Pastor or Deacon board. The applicant shall be willing to meet with the Deacon board if requested. The applicant will be received by the recommendation of the Deacon board and with the following requirements:

1. Public confession of Jesus Christ as personal Savior.
2. Acceptance of the Doctrinal Statement of the church without mental reservation.
3. Sufficient interest manifested by attendance and cooperation.
4. Acceptance of the applicant by a majority of the church.
5. Be baptized by immersion. Applicant must be baptized as herein prescribed.

##### **Section 3. Discipline of Members**

The objective of church discipline is to lovingly cause a member to repent of sin and be restored to fellowship with God and the church. A member that manifests continual disobedience to the Word of God or comes into disharmony with the church doctrine as found in Article III, or displays attitudes that disturb the unity and peace of the church shall be subject to church discipline. The following is the process for church discipline:

#### A. Informal Discipline

Preceding formal church discipline, a witness to the sin will personally and privately encourage the member to repent. Matthew 18:15; Galatians 6:2. Should the member not repent, the witness will take one or two other witnesses to encourage the member to repent. Matthew 18:16. Should the member still not repent, the witnesses will officially advise the Pastor and Deacons of the member's sin and refusal to repent. The Pastor and Deacons will investigate the situation. Matthew 18:17

#### B. Formal Discipline

If the Pastor and Deacons determine that the accusations of sin and failure to repent are true, they shall declare the member under discipline, notify the member of their action in writing, and advise the church membership of their action at a duly called Congregational Business Meeting. A member under discipline shall not hold voting rights, be entitled to hold elected office, affect a quorum, or be entitled to participate in church business meetings except as requested by the Pastor and Deacons. No member may withdraw from membership while under discipline. If reasonable efforts on the part of the church membership fail to bring the member to repentance, the church shall have final authority to remove the member from the membership at any duly called Congregational Business Meeting. Matthew 18:17b; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

#### C. Inactive Members

Members becoming delinquent shall be visited and if completely inactive for a period of 12 months may be dropped from the membership. The membership shall be reviewed annually by the Pastor and Deacon board.

#### Section 4. Voting

Every member of the church, 16 years old or older, has the right to one vote on any and all matters of church business brought before the congregation. The vote required (majority, 2/3, 3/4) for action on any matter of business shall refer to actual members voting and not to total membership.

### **Article VI - Officers**

All officers shall be elected from the voting membership by majority vote of the church membership, voting at a properly called congregational meeting. No member shall hold more than two church council offices at the same time. Neither shall any member be elected to the same office for more than three consecutive terms.

Any officer may feel free to resign by giving notice in writing to any member of the church council. Any vacancy may be filled by majority vote of the church council until the next annual elections. New offices may be created by the congregation as the need arises.

#### Section 1. Pastor (Elder)

- A. The pastor shall be chosen at a public meeting by a 3/4 majority vote of all voting members present and voting. His term of office will continue until resignation or dismissal. He shall meet the requirements of Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7.
- B. The duties of the pastor shall be to teach the Word of God and take spiritual oversight of the church. He shall administer the ordinances as observed by the church and ever seek to promote the cause of Christ in the community.

- C. The pastor may feel free to resign as led by the Holy Spirit. However, out of Christian courtesy at least a 30-day notice shall be given to the board of Deacons. The pastor may be dismissed by the same procedure as he is chosen and will be given a 30-day notice dismissal.

## Section 2. Deacons

The board of Deacons shall consist of a minimum of three members, as soon as qualified men are available; each elected by the congregation to a three year term; one going off the board each year unless re-elected. The deacons shall elect their own chairman and secretary. Each shall meet all the qualifications as required by 1Timothy 3:9-13. It shall be their duty to:

- A. Assist the pastor in the spiritual ministry of the church.
- B. Lead the congregation in the absence of a pastor.
- C. To serve as a pulpit committee in the selecting of a pastor.
- D. To give general guidance to the church as outlined in the constitution.

## Section 3. Trustees

The board of trustees shall consist of a minimum of four members chosen by majority vote of the congregation at the annual elections, as soon as qualified men are available. The terms of office shall be two years with two or more trustees being elected each year. They may elect their own chairman and secretary. The chairman shall preside at all meetings and the secretary shall keep records of all major decisions. The church treasurer shall act as their treasurer and be welcome to their meetings.

The board of trustees shall make decisions by majority vote and assume responsibility for improvements, maintenance and repair of church property defined as: land, buildings, vehicles, and all other physical equipment. However, it cannot obligate the church to any indebtedness without the approval of the majority of the church membership. No deacon shall be elected to the trustee board.

## Section 4. Clerk

The church clerk shall be elected to a one year term by the congregation at its annual elections. The church clerk shall keep minutes of all important decisions of the council or congregation to be kept on file as church property.

## Section 5. Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, and Financial Secretary

- A. The Treasurer shall be chosen by a committee comprised of 2 Deacons and 2 Trustees. The term shall continue until resignation or dismissal. The recommendation will be submitted to the congregation and subject to a  $\frac{3}{4}$  vote of the congregation for approval. The committee will review at least bi-annually the compensation of the Treasurer and make recommendations to the congregation if necessary.
- B. The Treasurer may feel free to resign as led by the Holy Spirit. However, out of Christian courtesy at least a 30-day notice shall be given to the board of Deacons/Trustees. The Treasurer may be dismissed by the same procedure as he is chosen and will be given a 30-day notice of dismissal.
- C. The offices of Assistant Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall be elected by the congregation at the annual elections. Their duties are described under ARTICLE VIII. Part A. The term of office shall be two years.

## Section 6. Sunday School Officers

- A. The Officers of the Sunday School shall be: Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and Secretary. All offices shall be for the period of one year subject to re-election. The Sunday School shall have its own officers elected by majority vote at the annual elections. New offices may be created as needed for the growth of the Sunday School.
- B. Teachers shall be chosen by the Sunday School officers; the pastor and deacons being consulted before any decisions are made. Each teacher shall have a personal testimony of salvation and adhere to the doctrinal statement of the church.
- C. Committees may be elected by the Sunday School as found advisable for the operations and growth of the work.

## Section 7. Church Council

- A. The church council shall consist of the pastor, the deacon board, the trustee board, treasurer, assistant treasurer, clerk, financial secretary, Sunday School superintendent, youth director, music director, missions committee chairman, and head usher. The chairman and vice chairman shall be chosen by the church council. It shall be the duty of the chairman to preside at the meetings of the councils and at the annual meeting of the congregation. He shall also be responsible for the outworking of the decisions of the council. The vice chairman shall perform the duties of the chairman in his absence. New offices may be created as the need arises providing the office is approved by 3/4 of the church council.
- B. The council shall meet at least one (1) week prior to each congregational meeting.

### **Article VII - Congregational Meetings**

- A. There shall be an annual congregational meeting scheduled in February, at which time all officers shall report to the congregation. In addition to the annual meeting, there shall be three quarterly business meetings in order that the congregation will be kept aware of the work of the church.
- B. Officers, including Sunday School officers, will be elected at the annual elections scheduled in November coinciding with the fall quarterly business meeting. At this meeting new officers shall be chosen where terms have expired. Each member of the church, 16 years or older, shall have one vote. All terms of office begin and end January 1. Public announcements shall be made before all such meetings.
- C. Special meetings may be called by a majority of the church council or membership, to be announced in all the services two (2) Sundays prior to said meeting.

### **Article VIII - Finances**

- A. The finances of the church shall be the responsibility of the church finance committee consisting of the treasurer, assistant treasurer, and financial secretary. The financial secretary shall be responsible for the counting and recording of any and all offerings, leaving a permanent record at the church at all times. The treasurer shall be responsible for the depositing and disbursement of all funds. All disbursements shall be made by check or electronic payment. A financial report shall be presented to the church council during their scheduled meetings. The assistant treasurer shall assist the financial secretary or the treasurer in whatever way needed. The members of the finance committee shall be elected by the congregation at its annual elections to a term of two years.

- B. Accounting and reporting of the official funds of the church. i.e., general, deacon, building, etc., will be responsibility of the treasurer. New funds may be created changed, or discontinued after recommendations from any church committee have been made to and approved by congregation. Other accounts may be created within committees and classes only by approval of the trustee board. Committees and classes will be responsible to collect and account for monies, and report to the trustee board or finance committee as often as a report is requested. These committees and classes may elect their own treasurer.
- C. An auditing committee shall be appointed annually by the trustee board to audit the treasurer's books and any other accounts responsible to the trustee board or finance committee. The auditing committee shall report its findings at the annual congregational meeting.
- D. The church shall be supported entirely by freewill offerings.
- E. The fiscal year of this body of believers shall be from January 1-December 31.

### **Article IX - Missions**

In accord with the purpose of this church, missions emphases shall be presented to the church as often as necessary. Mission support shall be given only to those missionaries and mission agencies that are in agreement with the doctrinal statement of this church. A majority vote of the congregation will determine those missionaries supported financially by this church. The missions committee shall be responsible for the mission conferences and mission awareness within the church. The missions committee chairman shall be elected by the congregation, and the committee members shall be chosen by the church counsel to assist. Prayer support shall be encouraged at all times for missionaries.

### **Article X - Dissolution Clause**

All buildings, grounds, and assets shall remain in the possession of the membership of this church, however should the circumstances arise where the church dissolve or the membership with its leadership depart from the doctrinal statement or willfully violate this constitution, then all assets held shall become the property of an organization in total harmony with this doctrinal position and one recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as one organized exclusively for religious, charitable, literary or educational purposes, and it shall become the duty of the deacon board to carry through on this matter. In the event of dissolution, first consideration shall be given to the Midwest Church Extension whose assistance was helpful in the formation of the church.

### **Article XI - Amendments**

The constitution may be amended by the following procedure:

- A. The proposed amendment shall be presented to the church council. If 2/3 of the council approve the amendment, it shall be brought to the congregation at a properly announced meeting.
- B. If 3/4 of all members present, 16 years and older, approve the amendment, it becomes an amendment in force in the constitution.

The adoption of the constitution by a majority of the congregation will make it effective immediately.

**Amendments:**

This printing incorporates all amendments through November 2009.

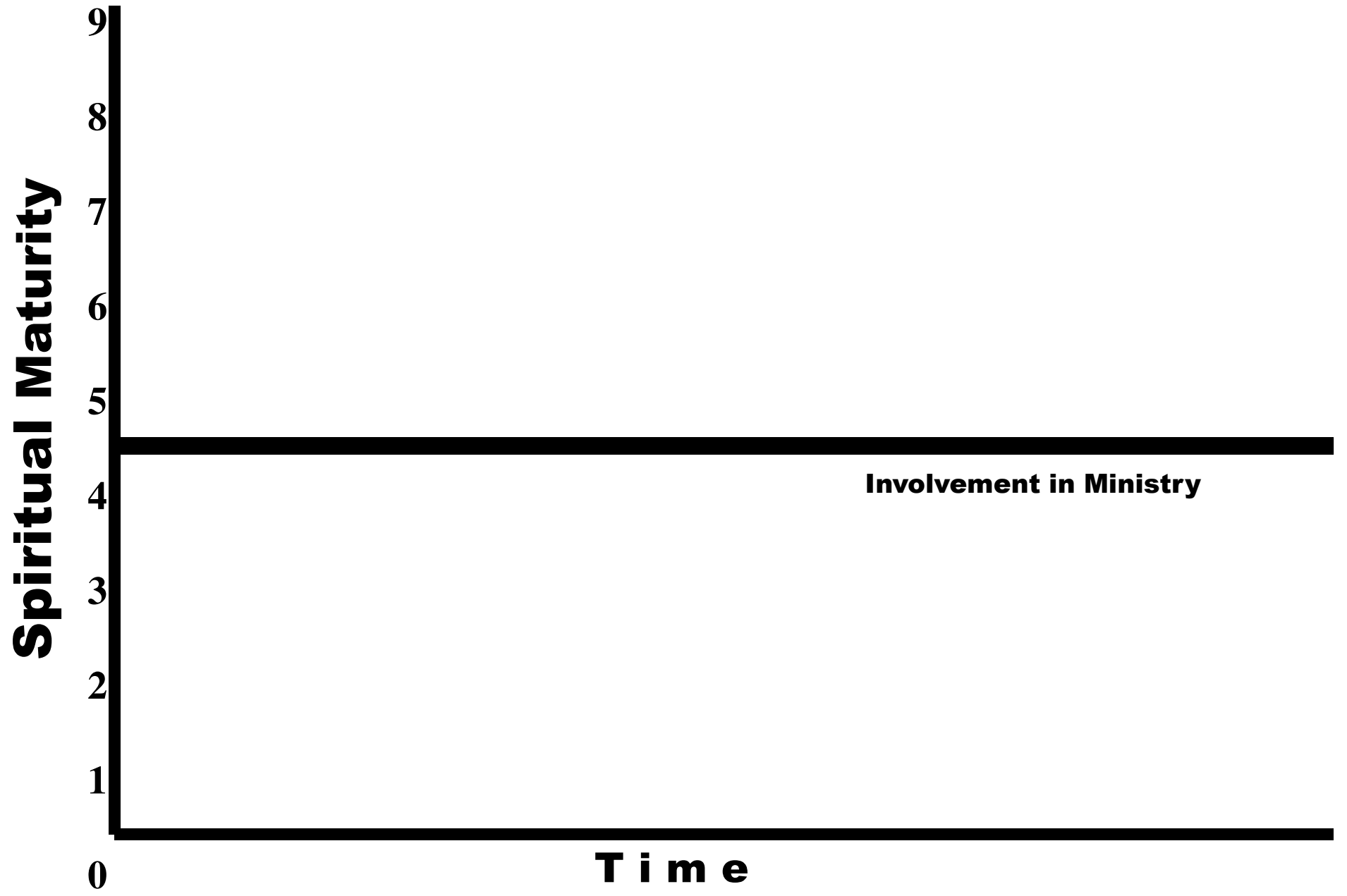


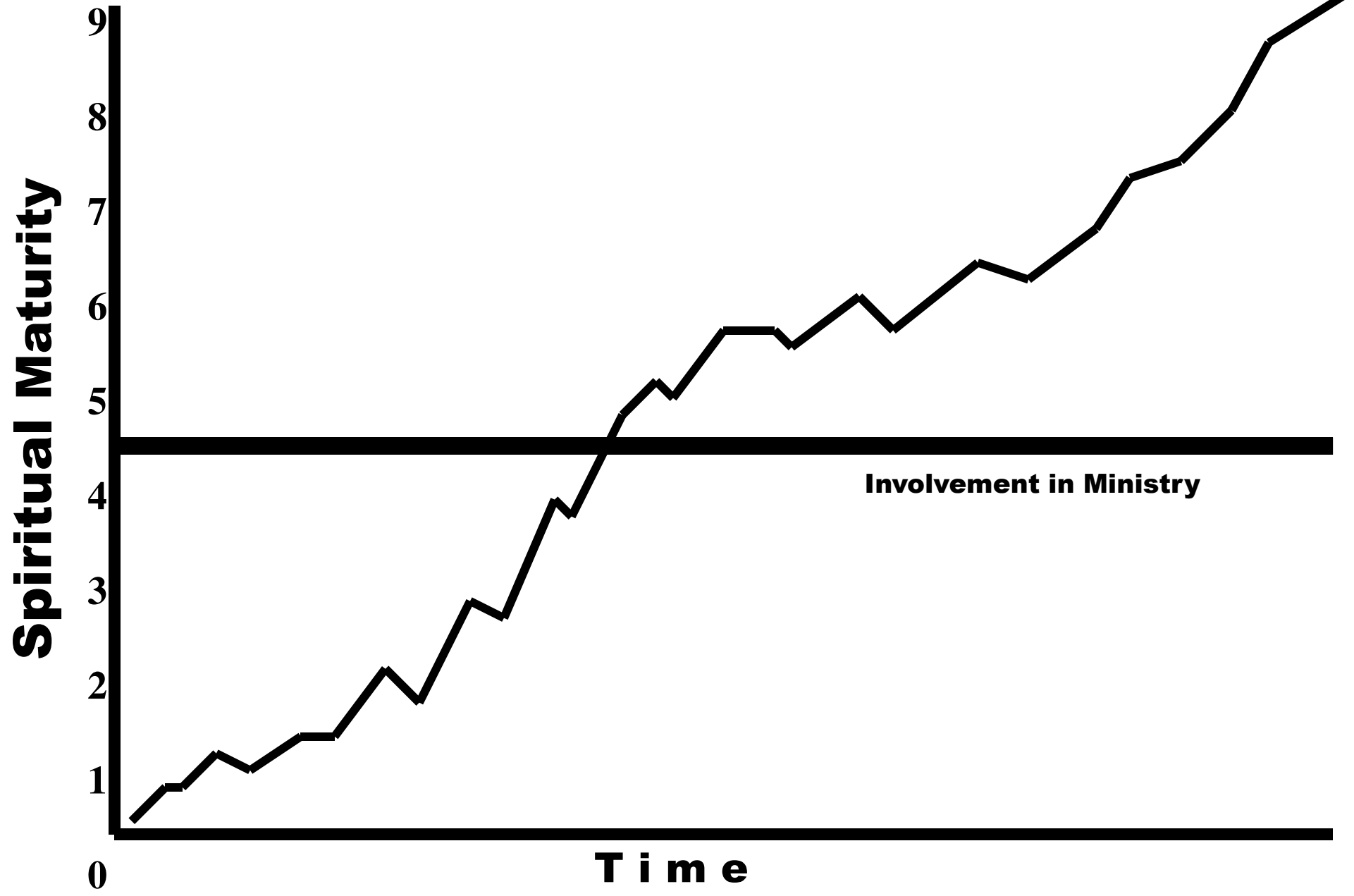
**Battle Ground Bible Church Doctrinal Statement**

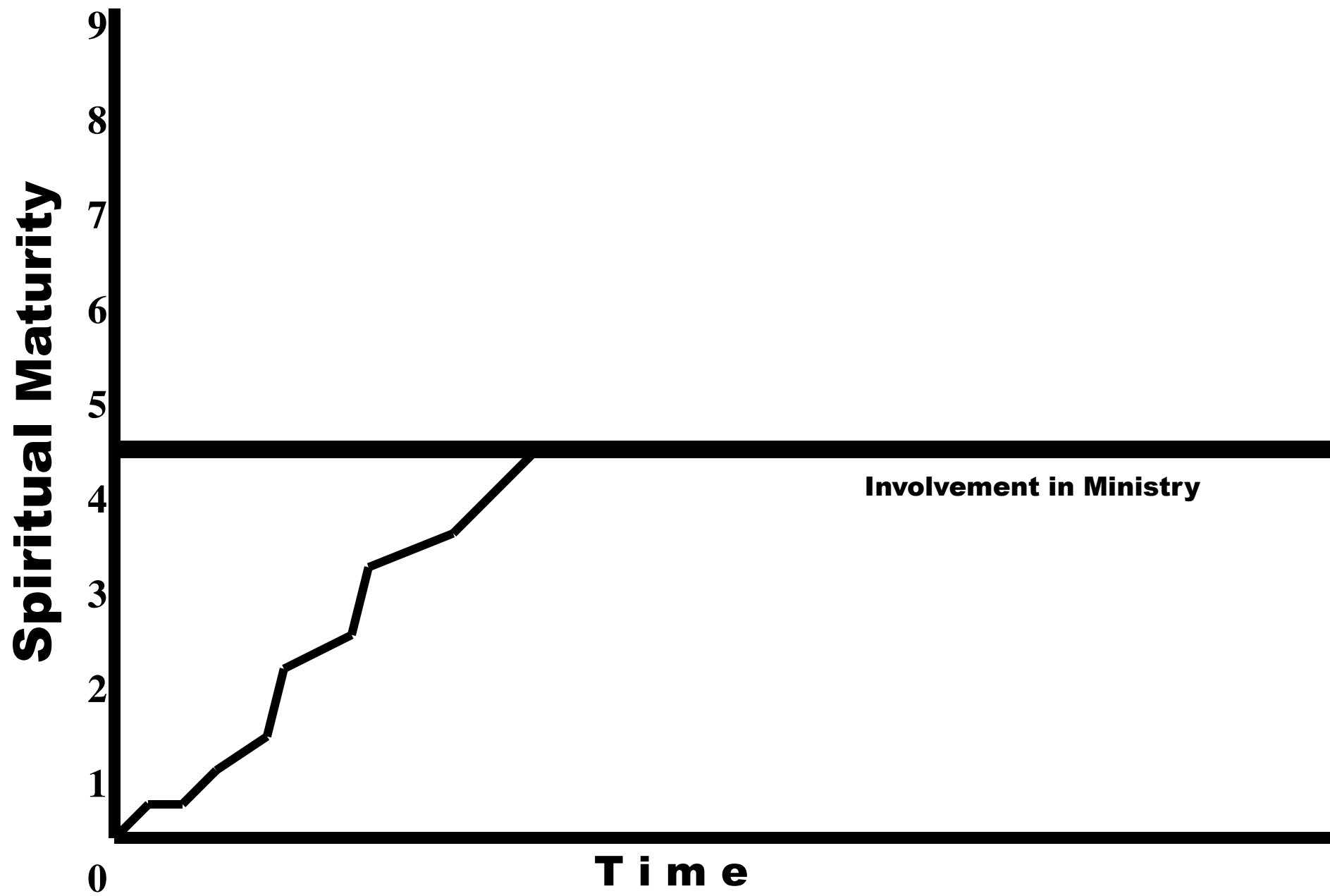
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in full agreement with the doctrinal statement of Battle Ground Bible  
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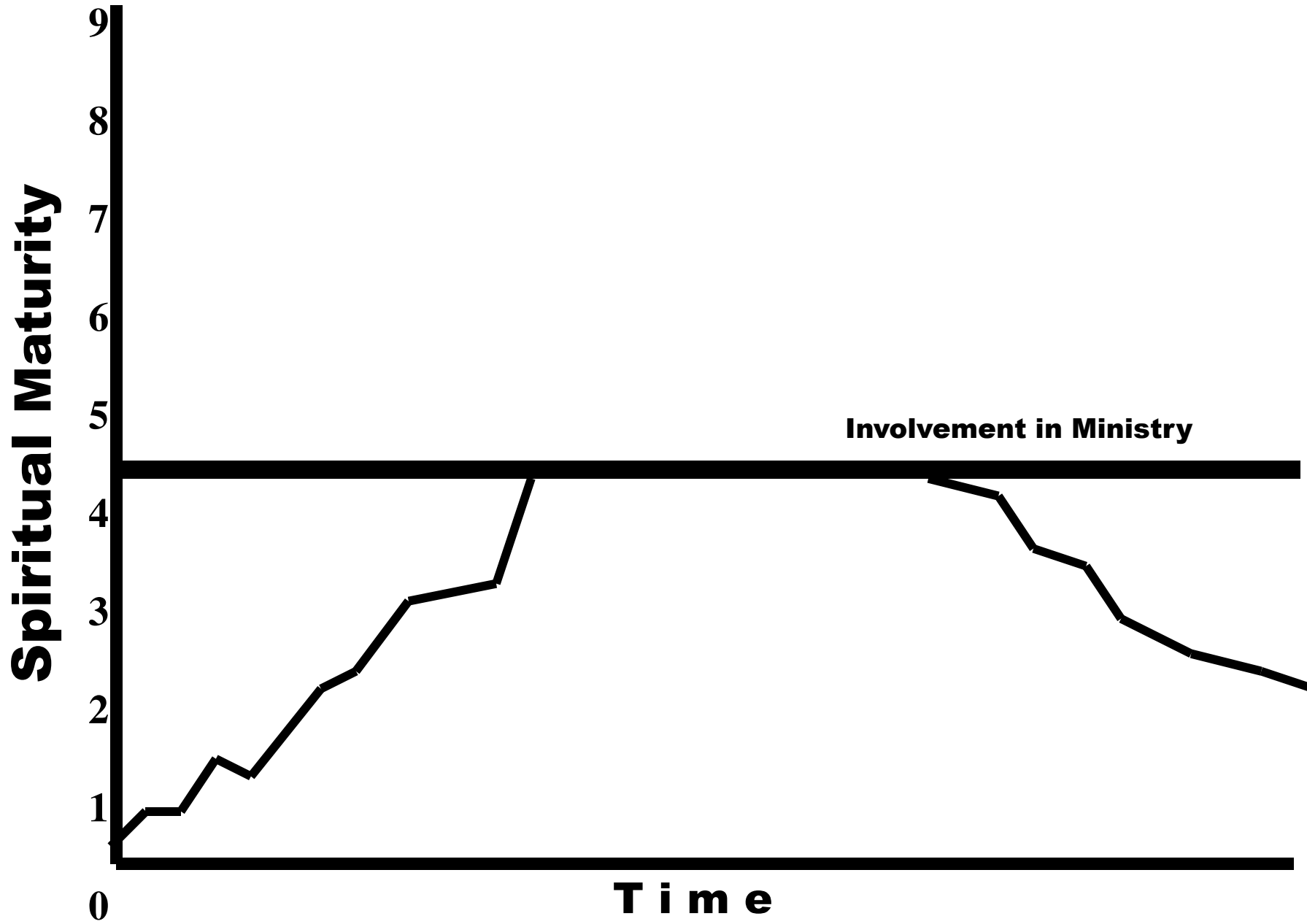
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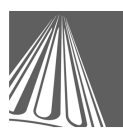












**Battle Ground  
Bible Church**

a passion for God and compassion for people

2430 East 600 North  
West Lafayette, IN. 47906  
765.567.2844 // [www.bgbc.org](http://www.bgbc.org)  
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