



# **New Member Handbook**

1425 S 7th St. Abilene, TX  
325-677-8185 | [ssbaptist.org](http://ssbaptist.org)



# Table of Contents

SSBC Pastor & Ministers	5
SSBC Non-Staff Elders	6
Staff	7
Section 1: Our Membership Process	12
Section 2: Gospel	13
Section 3: Our Story	16
Section 4: Our Purpose	17
Section 5: Our Theology	22
Section 6: Church Leadership: Elder-Led Congregationalism	31
Section 7: Why Join a Church?	33
Section 8: Areas to Serve	36
Section 9: Responsibilities of Membership	37
Section 10: Membership Covenant	38
Appendix A - SSBC Constitution and Bylaws	41
Appendix B - Home Group Vision	53
Appendix C - Discipleship Groups	61
Appendix D - "One Another" Passages in Scripture	67
Appendix E - Ten Questions to Ask When Joining a Church	69
Appendix F - Why You Will Join the Wrong Church	73
Appendix G - Danvers Statement	77
Appendix H - Nashville Statement	81
Appendix I - Gospel Study	85



# SSBC Pastor & Ministers



**Blake White**, Lead Pastor, Elder ([blake@ssbaptist.org](mailto:blake@ssbaptist.org))

Blake began serving as Lead Pastor at South Side on July 27, 2017. Previously he was the Campus Pastor of the Dripping Springs Campus of Austin Ridge Bible Church. Blake received a B.S. from Angelo State in 2005. He went on to earn a Master of Divinity in Christian Ministry from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2010 and then a Master of Theology degree in Biblical Theology from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2012. Blake is married to Alicia and they have 5 children: Josiah, Asher, Karis, Knox, and Bo. He enjoys dating his wife, playing with his children, reading, and has written a dozen theology books. His life verse is Colossians 1:28-2:5.



**Taylor Routon**, Worship Minister ([taylor@ssbaptist.org](mailto:taylor@ssbaptist.org))

Taylor began serving as the worship minister of South Side in March, 2018. Taylor grew up in the Texas panhandle and attended South Plains College and Wayland Baptist University earning a bachelor's degree. Taylor's heart for the worship ministry is to center it around the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the power of God for the salvation and his hope and aim is for people to experience the good news of the Gospel in everything at SSBC...especially the music! Taylor is married to Grace and they have two children: Remington and Lydia.



**Cody Bingham**, College Minister ([cody@ssbaptist.org](mailto:cody@ssbaptist.org))

Cody was born in Lubbock, Texas, and grew up in Central Virginia. There he attended Liberty University where he earned a B.S. in Pastoral Leadership, was a decathlete on the track team, and met his wife, Carylynne. They married in 2014. They have a son, Gabriel, and two daughters, Lyla and Natalie. Cody likes hanging out with family, writing, watching movies, and anything having to do with sports. He enjoys reading anything by C.S. Lewis, John Piper, Tim Keller, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and R.C. Sproul, or any of the Christian Classics.



**Nathan McCravey**, Student Minister ([nathan@ssbaptist.org](mailto:nathan@ssbaptist.org))

Nathan began serving South Side as Student Minister in January of 2019. Nathan is a graduate of Texas Tech University and has a Masters of Arts in Theological Studies from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Nathan and his wife, Katy, have served churches in Texas, Kentucky, and Oklahoma before joining South Side. They have two sons, Graham and Owen. Nathan longs to see students established as followers of Jesus Christ and families equipped to disciple their students in the faith.



**Joshua Cornett**, Family Discipleship Minister ([josh@ssbaptist.org](mailto:josh@ssbaptist.org))

Josh began serving as the Family Discipleship Minister at South Side in February 2020. Josh earned a B.S. in English Education from Florida State University in 2004 and a Master of Divinity from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2008. Since then, he has pastored in a variety of different roles, including Campus Pastor, Missions Pastor, and Children and Family Pastor. Most recently Josh, his wife Jaclyn, and their five children, Isaac, Caleb, Halle, Hannah, and Evie served as missionaries with the International Mission Board in Mexico and Colombia.

# SSBC Non-Staff Elders

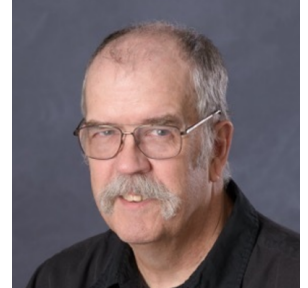
**W.O. Elmore** (325-864-5350, [walter.elmore1952@gmail.com](mailto:walter.elmore1952@gmail.com))

W.O. has been a member of South Side since 2007. W.O. works as a paralegal. He and his wife, Mendi, have two daughters and six grandchildren. They currently work in our Children's Ministry and Worship Ministry.



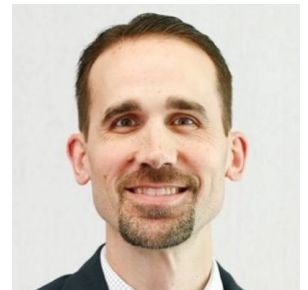
**Scott Kemp** (325-660-6965, [jscottkemp@gmail.com](mailto:jscottkemp@gmail.com))

Scott has been a member of South Side since 2002. He is retired and serves as a volunteer consultant in our church office. Scott and his wife, Linda, have three grown children and one grandchild. Scott offers oversight to our Benevolence Ministry, and has helped facilitate several of our family mission trips.



**Samuel Maroney** (325-513-4414, [samuel@ssbaptist.org](mailto:samuel@ssbaptist.org))

Samuel and Karol have been a part of the South Side family since 2010. Samuel is a physician here in Abilene. He works with our College Ministry and our Missions Team. He and Karol have four daughters: Kenyah, Indiah, Joyah, and Mariah.



**John Reed** (713-660-9298, [johnreedtx@hotmail.com](mailto:johnreedtx@hotmail.com))

John has been a member of South Side since 2015. John is retired but was previously a CPA. He and his wife, Linda, have a son and a daughter and six grandchildren. John currently teaches an adult co-ed class.



**Russell Ueckert** (660-6806, [drueckert92@gmail.com](mailto:drueckert92@gmail.com))

Russell and Linda have been part of South Side since 2007. He is a veterinarian in Abilene. Russell teaches a Sunday School class and oversees the Men's Ministry at SSBC. He and Linda have 2 grown daughters and one grandchild.



# Staff



**Sarah Mathis**, Financial Ministry Assistant ([sarah.mathis@ssbaptist.org](mailto:sarah.mathis@ssbaptist.org))  
Sarah has worked in the SSBC office since 2016. Her main responsibilities are handling church finances & membership records. She is married to Chris, and they have 3 children: Noelle, Jared, and Kyle. They have been members of SSBC for 18 years.



**Grace Routon**, Communications Ministry Assistant ([grace@ssbaptist.org](mailto:grace@ssbaptist.org))  
Grace has worked in the SSBC office since 2020. Her responsibilities include creating graphics and maintaining the weekly announcements email. Grace is married to Taylor and they have two children: Remington and Lydia. They have been at South Side since 2018.



**Walt Tuck**, Facilities Manager  
Walt has been a part of South Side since September of 2001. He is a widower since August of 2001 and has 5 sons that grew up in this church. He taught 4/5 year olds for six years and assisted with our AWANA program for 6 years. He also served as a deacon for several years prior to taking his current position of Facilities Manager and Systems Maintainer in 2009.







Hey There!

Thanks so much for taking a "next step" at South Side. You would not be here if God were not at work in your life.

We believe the local church should be central to the Christian life. In Ephesians, we learn that the church is central to the heart of God. The church was always his main plan to display his glory to a watching world. It is "through the church" that his wisdom is made known to the rulers and authorities (Eph 3:10). The church is God's "eternal purpose" (Eph 3:11). If the church is central to the heart of God, she should be central in ours. So we are excited about your desire to learn more about our particular local expression of the bride of Christ.

It is our hope and prayer that this class, along with all of our ministries, would encourage and equip you to live all your days for the glory of King Jesus. There is no greater aim,

warmly in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Blake White', written in a cursive style.

Pastor Blake



# **Membership at SSBC**

# Section 1: Our Membership Process

1. Register for the Membership Class.
2. Receive and finish the Gospel Study, fill out the Member Information sheet, and read our Bylaws and Statement of Faith before attending the Membership Class.
3. Attend the Membership Class.
4. Sign up for a meeting with an elder.
5. Meet with an elder.
6. Sign the Membership Covenant.
7. Send in your picture.
8. Be voted into membership by the congregation at a Member's Meeting.

## Section 2: Gospel

The Apostle Paul wrote, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). He also wrote, "Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal 6:14). Speaking of Jesus, he said "Him we proclaim" (Col 1:28). Martin Luther said the gospel "is also the principal article of all Christian doctrine, wherein the knowledge of all godliness consisteth. Most necessary it is, therefore, that we should know this article well, teach it unto others, and beat it into their heads continually."<sup>1</sup> Here at South Side, we stake everything on the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the heart of Christianity, but sadly misunderstood or assumed in too many churches. The gospel is what sets Christianity apart from every other religion.

One way to see how well we "get" the gospel is by answering the question, "How do you think God feels about you today at this moment?" When we know the gospel deep down, we will know that if we are in Christ there is nothing we can do to make God love us more and nothing we can do to make him love us less. We are secure in Christ. Even though we may know the gospel intellectually, we forget it daily in our hearts, so we have to keep it central in the life of the church.

So, what is the gospel? "Gospel" simply means good news. In short, the gospel is Christ crucified on our behalf. The heart of it can be summed up in four words: Jesus in my place. The good news is that though we are sinful, God sent Jesus Christ to die and be raised for sinners and to launch the new creation in keeping with his promises. Or as Tim Keller has put it, "The Gospel is the good news that God himself has come to rescue and renew all of creation through the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf."

*"The gospel is the royal announcement that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived a perfect life in our place, died a substitutionary death on the cross for our sins, rose triumphantly from the grave to launch God's new creation, and is now exalted as King of the world."*<sup>2</sup>

-Trevin Wax

### The gospel answers four key questions:

- Where did we come from?
- What's wrong?
- What's the solution?
- How should we respond?

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (Smith, English & Co., 1860), 206.

<sup>2</sup> Trevin Wax, *Gospel-Centered Teaching* (Nashville: B&H, 2013), 39.

God is our holy creator. Sin is what's wrong with the world. The solution is the cross of Christ and the response is faith in Christ and repentance (turning from sin to God). Let's look deeper at each of these four answers.

## God.

Most see God merely as "the man upstairs." A divine grandpa. A sky fairy. But biblically, He is the all-powerful and holy triune creator. He created us and therefore has the right to tell us how to live. We are his creation and therefore we are accountable to him (Isa 6:1-3, 59:1-2, Exod 34:6-7, Rom 1:18-23).

## Sin.

Sin is our fundamental problem. We have failed to honor God with our actions and thoughts. God is holy so our sins separates us from Him (see Rom 3:22-23, Eph 2:1-3 Isa 53:6 Isa 59:2 Heb 9:27).

## Christ.

Jesus is the Promised One from the Old Testament. "Christ" means king, the royal Son of David. Just as God promised, he came from heaven to earth to live the life we should have lived and died the death we deserved to die (Rom 3:21-24, 6:23, 5:6-8, 2 Cor 5:21).

## Response.

God calls us to believe in his Son. To trust him and entrust our lives to him. Repentance is to turn from sin to God. It is not that we no longer sin but that we are no longer at peace with sin (Mark 1:15, John 3:16, Eph 2:8-9 Rom 10:9-11).

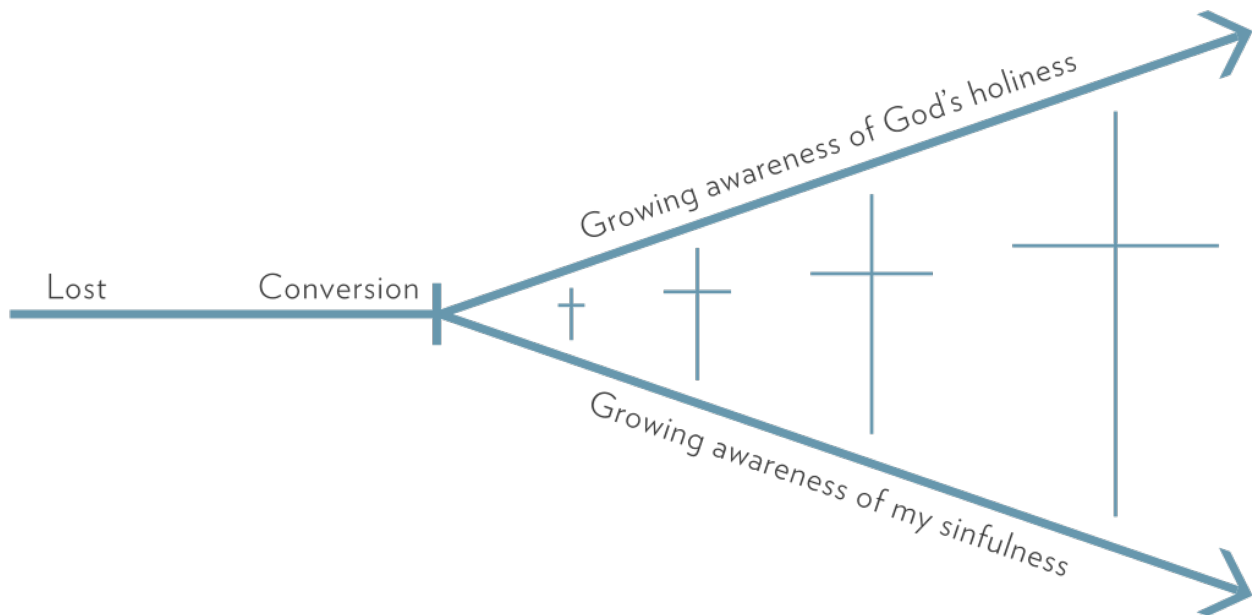
Here at South Side, we never get past this gospel. We believe in the functional centrality of this message for believers. In Romans 1, the Apostle Paul is eager to come visit the Christians in Rome because he is "eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation" (Rom 1:15-16, 1 Thess 1:5). Paul wants to come preach this gospel to the church in Rome. Clearly those who have already believed still need to hear this gospel message and that message is power. First Corinthians 1:18 also claims that the gospel is the power of God. In Colossians, Paul says that this gospel came to them (Col 1:5). He is so fixated on the gospel that he doesn't even mention the people who brought it. He just says the gospel came to them. Then he says "the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world" (Col 1:6). This message grows and bears fruit wherever it goes. Then he says "just as it has been doing among you." The gospel bears fruit among believers. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-5, Paul says that the church has taken her stand on this gospel and says "by this gospel you are saved" (1 Cor 15:2). Christians are being saved by the gospel. It taught us to believe and will see us through. He also tells the church in Corinth that this gospel is "of first importance" (1 Cor 15:3). The gospel has implications for all of life; for every relationship. When Peter is acting like a hypocrite in Galatians 2, Paul says he was "not acting in line with the truth of the gospel (Gal 2:14). The implications of the gospel reach far and wide.

Tim Keller writes, "All change comes from deepening your understanding of the salvation of Christ and living out of the changes that understanding creates in your heart. Faith in the gospel restructures our

motivations, our self-understanding, our identity, and our view of the world. Behavioral compliance to rules without heart-change will be superficial and fleeting. The gospel is therefore not just the ABCs of the Christian life, but the A to Z of the Christian life. Our problems arise largely because we don't continually return to the gospel to work it in and live it out."<sup>3</sup>

Part of the way we grow as Christians is a deepening of our understanding of both the holiness of God and the sinfulness of our own hearts. On first glance, this seems terrible since those are at odds. But when we keep the gospel central, we grow in our understanding of the sufficiency of the cross of Christ. We become cross-centered.

## THE CROSS CHART



The Gospel-Centered Life™ by Robert Thune and Will Walker,  
Greensboro, NC New Growth Press 2009. Page 19

*May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*  
*Gal 6:14*

<sup>3</sup> Tim Keller, *Prodigal God* (New York: Dutton, 2008), 118-19.

## Section 3: Our Story

In 1892, First Baptist Church Abilene was started. The next year, they started a Sunday School mission. Brother T.J. Hinds was paid \$2 an hour to lead "Sabbath School" in the Hays Laundry Building in South East Abilene. They called it the South Side Sunday School Mission. Later, they bought land and built a chapel on 9th and Willow and met there for 15 years. In 1907, they moved to the corner of 8th and Oak. On March 8, 1908, they were constituted as the Oak Street Baptist Church with 55 charter members. Reverend M.F. Drury served as the first pastor. During the pastorate of Rev. E.T. Miller in 1920, the church was moved to South 7th and Palm. That year they changed the name to South Side Baptist Church. They worshipped in the tabernacle until the auditorium was completed in 1925. The education building was built under the leadership of W.C. Ashford in 1948. He pastored from 1931 to 1951. In 1958, plans were made to build an auditorium to seat 1350. The current worship center was built in 1961, to hold 1200 under the leadership of Frank Royal, who pastored from 1951 to 1965. H.O. Wynne was pastor from 1966-78. The old church worship center was torn down in 1976. D.J. Bennett pastored from 1979 to 1985. Dale Hill pastored from 1985 to 1988. Jerry Paulding pastored from 1988-1998. Steve Hardin served as interim and taught and instituted elder leadership from 1998-2000. Kevin Ueckert pastored from 2000 to 2015. He mentored many aspiring pastors throughout his tenure, including Blake White, who came as Lead Pastor in August of 2017.



# Section 4: Our Purpose

Before we discuss the purpose of the church, we must know what the church is. It is not a place, but a people. Pastor Mark Dever defines the church as “a body of people who profess and give evidence that they have been saved by God’s grace alone, for his glory alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. . . . A church is a local collection of people committed to Christ, to regularly assemble and have his Word preached and obeyed, including Christ’s commands to baptize and to celebrate the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>4</sup> A true and healthy church will be characterized by these five essentials:

1. The right preaching of Scripture
2. The proper administration of the ordinances
3. The development of biblical leadership
4. The gracious implementation of church discipline
5. A clear focus on the mission Jesus gave us.<sup>5</sup>

What, then, is the purpose of the church? SSBC exists to glorify God by making disciples in Abilene and the world as we live out the love of Jesus Christ in a community of faith. Our desire is to be fully devoted followers of King Jesus, continually growing in love for Christ, fellow believers, and unbelievers. Our mission is fleshed out by seven core values:

- We Worship Jesus in All of Life
- We are Ruled by God’s Word
- We are Disciples Who Make Disciples
- We are in Authentic Community
- We are Committed to Missional Living
- We Give Sacrificially
- We Serve the Church

## We Worship Jesus in All of Life

We are committed to King Jesus in all of life, all of Christ for all of life. Growing as a Christian means increasingly and progressively submitting every area of our lives to the gracious Lordship of Jesus Christ. We seek to press His crown rights into every nook and cranny where we have influence. We are called to center our lives around him. Our earnest desire is to see Christ exalted in all of life (Phil 1:20-21). In this sense, all of life is worship (Rom 12:1-2, 1 Cor 10:31). Every ministry will seek to keep Him in his preeminent place.

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<sup>4</sup> Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 157. Similarly, Mack Stiles defines a church as “a gathering of baptized, born-again Christians who covenant together in love to meet regularly under the authority of the Scriptures and the leadership of the elders to worship God, be a visible image of the gospel, and, ultimately, to give God glory” in Mack Stiles, *Evangelism* (Wheaton: Crossway 2014), 71.

<sup>5</sup> Joe Thorn, *The Character of the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 2017), 13.

# We Are Ruled by God's Word

We gather to read the Bible corporately, preach the Bible expositively, to pray the Bible, to sing the Bible through solid lyrics, and to see the Bible through baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>6</sup> We are committed to the truth of God's inerrant, authoritative, understandable, and effective Word. God works through his Word to grow the church and grow disciples (John 17:17, 1 Pet 2:2).

*"The wisdom of what a person says is in direct proportion to his progress in learning the holy scriptures." -Augustine*

Since one of our purposes is to know truth, we are committed to the weekly, systematic exposition of Scripture. Expository preaching is simply working through books of the Bible, section by section and verse by verse, where the points of the sermon are derived from the points of the passage for the morning. The substance, structure, and spirit of the Text should inform the sermon. We consider this the most important value to look for when looking for a church. Mark Dever writes, "If you are looking for a good church, the role of the preacher of God's Word is the most important thing to consider. I don't care how friendly you think the church members are. I don't care how good you think the music is. Those things can change. But the congregations' commitment to the centrality of the Word coming from the front, from the preacher, the one specially gifted by God and called to that ministry, is the most important thing you can look for in a church."<sup>7</sup> Many churches claim the Bible is authoritative but the proof is in the pulpit. How is the Bible handled on Sunday mornings? Many use the Text like drunks use a light post: more for support than illumination.<sup>8</sup> Or like a diving board where they jump off at the start, never to return. Or like the patio furniture, with an occasional visit. We want to treat the text like the pool itself, where we stay and are refreshed.

## The Benefits of Expository Preaching:

- It keeps the preacher honest
- It allows the people of God to be exposed to the whole counsel of God
- It keeps preachers from avoiding the hard parts of Scripture
- It teaches Christians how to read their Bibles correctly
- God works through his Word, not stories, humor, or the pastor's creativity

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<sup>6</sup> J. Ligon Duncan, "Foundations for Biblically Directed Worship," in *Give Praise to God* ed. Philip Graham Ryken, Derek W.H. Thomas, and J. Ligon Duncan (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 65.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 58.

<sup>8</sup> David Helm, *Expositional Preaching* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014), 24.

## We Are Disciples Who Make Disciples

The “Great Commission” is called great for good reason. In Matthew 28, Jesus says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Disciples of Jesus are to make disciples wherever they go and teach what Jesus commanded. And obviously part of what Jesus commanded was to make disciples. Disciples are those who make disciples who make disciples. This is the church’s marching orders, issued by the risen Lord.

The layer of ministry we encourage to help fulfill this call is through D-Groups. See Appendix C for more details on D-Groups.

## We Are in Authentic Community

We worship a Triune God, a God who has been in community from all eternity: one nature, three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God created us to be in community. The New Testament is full of the “one anothers.” There is no lone ranger Christianity. We need one another.

The main metaphor for the church in the Bible is that of family. Every time we read the word “brothers,” we should think family. We are brothers and sisters in Christ with God as our Father. The key environments at SSBC for connecting are corporate worship on Sunday, Home Groups, D-Groups, Bible Study classes, and Wednesday night Equipping Classes.

## We Are Committed to Missional Living

We are called to be a missional people, concerned with the promotion and expansion of the gospel globally and locally. Our God is a missionary God. As you join this church, you join the mission of God. God sent the Son and the Spirit and the Son and Spirit send the church (John 20:21). We desire members to live with gospel intentionality in all of life. We want you to view Abilene as your mission field. God has you here for his purposes (Acts 17:26).

Tim Chester and Steve Timmis write, “Major events have a role to play in church life, but the bedrock of gospel ministry is low-key, ordinary, day-to-day work that often goes unseen. Most gospel ministry involves ordinary people doing ordinary things with gospel intentionality. Whether it is helping a friend, working at the office, or going to the movies, there is a commitment to building relationships, modeling the Christian faith, and talking about the gospel as a natural part of conversation.”<sup>9</sup>

*“If there is one Lord to whom all people belong and owe their allegiance, the people of the Lord must promote this reality everywhere.”<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Total Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 63.

<sup>10</sup> John Dickson, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 115.

We are to live with gospel intentionality in all of life's various rhythms. We go to work, we leisure, we spend time in our neighborhood, with our family, and we eat. Those rhythms are set. We don't want to add your busy life, but we want the members of SSBC to live intentionally on mission in the various rhythms of your life.

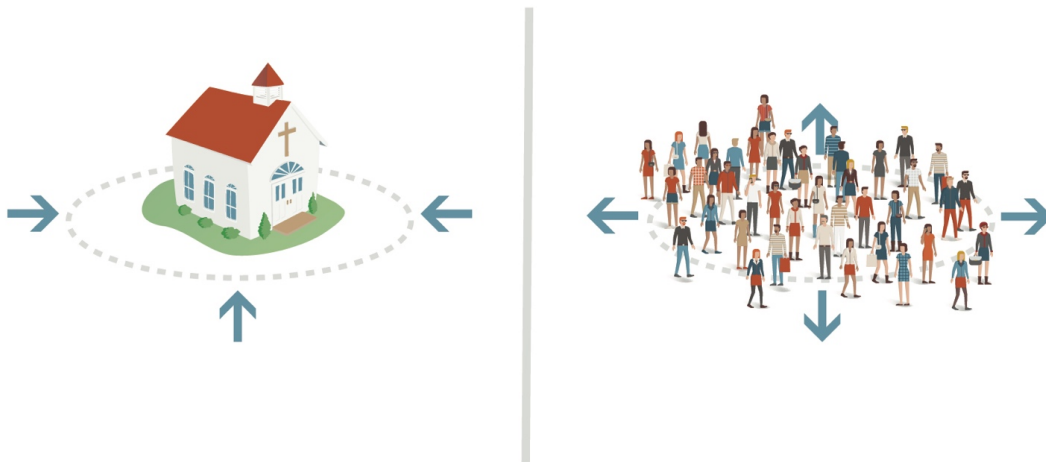
We are part of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) at the national level. There are some 47,000 churches in the SBC. We, along with around 2,700 other Texas churches, cooperate with the Southern Baptist of Texas Convention at the state level. We all give to what is known as the "Cooperative Program" (CP) so that we can do more together. Around 73% of CP giving goes toward missions while 22% goes towards seminaries to help educate around 16,000 SBC students. So, when you give to SSBC, a portion of your money helps fund these entities. The SBTC sends 55% to the SBC (IMB, NAMB, Seminaries, ERLC) and uses the other 45% for ministries in the state of Texas.

Annually, we take up two special mission offerings where the money will go directly to the work of missions and church planting: the Christmas Missions Offering and the Church Planting Offering.

Additionally, we have been more hands on with several missionaries and mission organizations:

- 2 IMB Couples in SE Asia
- 1 IMB couple in Central Asia
- Grace Ministries - India
- World Baptist Foundation - Haiti
- Church planting in Northern Iraq
- Church Plan in Salt Lake City, Utah
- Grace Church - Sharjah
- Cadence Missionary Couple in Germany
- Underground Coffee
- Pregnancy Resources of Abilene
- Sponsoring church for the International Evangelical Church.

## WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

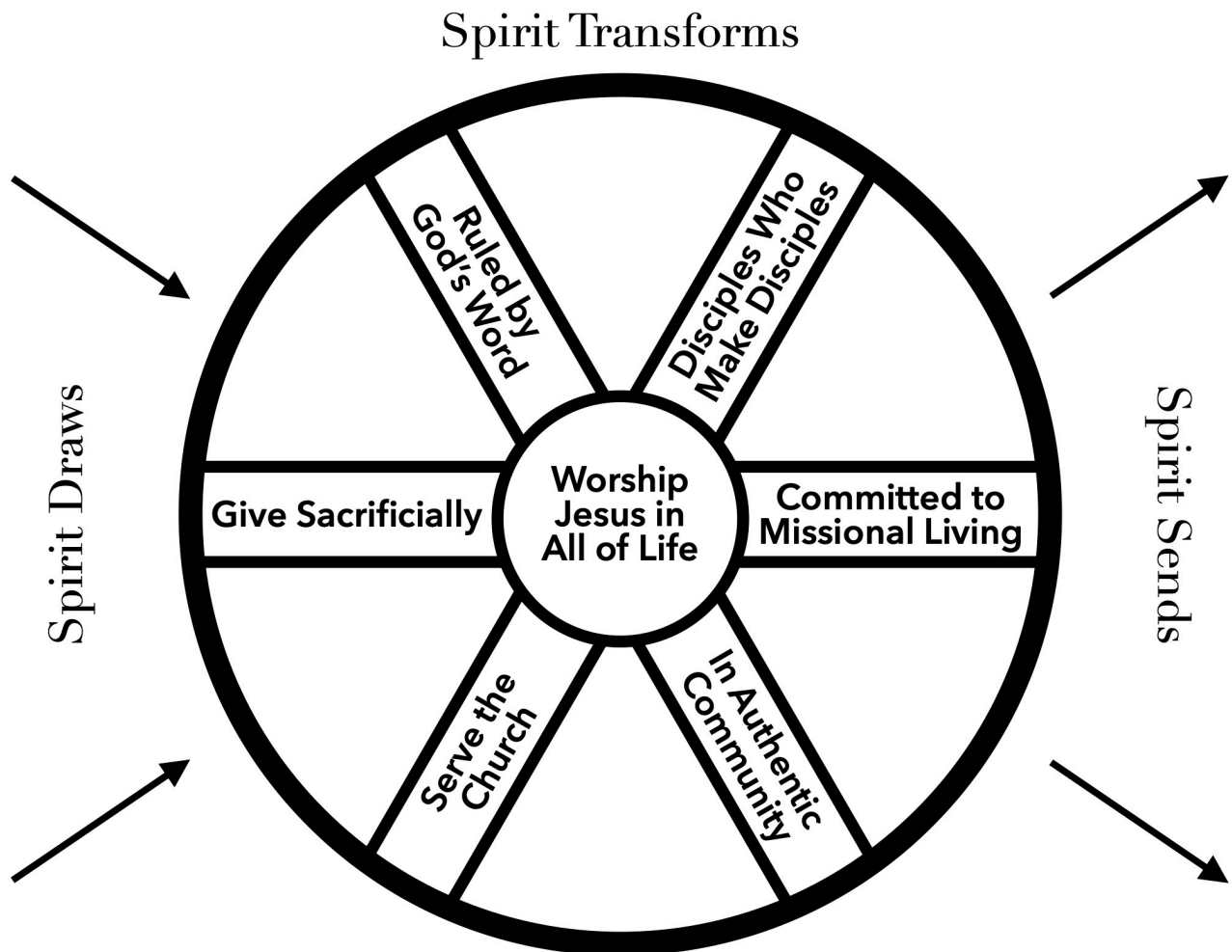


## We Give Sacrificially

Believing that consumerism and materialism are two of the most powerful idols in American culture, we want to fight against them by living generous lives. Jesus taught us that where our treasure is, there our heart is. We want hearts focused on the Kingdom of God, so we put our treasure toward it. God calls believers to give cheerfully, proportionately, sacrificially, and regularly. We not only give sacrificially of our treasure, but also our time and our talents. Life is meant to be spent for the glory of God and the upbuilding of the church.

## We Serve the Church

Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45) and we are called to follow him. Our purpose is to see consumers moved to contributors, members moved to missionaries, an audience moved to an army for the Lord. Knowing truth must lead to serving others. In John 13, the Lord of the universe stooped down to wash the dirty feet of his disciples and said he has set an example for us to follow. We desire our members to be serving in some way to help build up the body of Christ (Eph 4:7-16).



# Section 5: Our Theology

We are a deliberately Protestant church, meaning we adhere to and uphold the “five solas” of the Reformation as articulated in the Cambridge Declaration:

- Scripture Alone
- Christ Alone
- Grace Alone
- Faith Alone
- To the Glory of God Alone

Affirmations and Affiliations:

- Southern Baptist Convention
- Southern Baptists of Texas Convention
- The Pillar Network
- 9 Marks Ministries
- The Danvers Statement
- The Nashville Statement
- The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

# The Baptist Faith and Message (2000)

## I. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

*Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.*

## II. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

### A. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

*Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.*

### B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to

consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

*Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.*

### C. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

*Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 6:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.*

## III. Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

*Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.*



## IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

*Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.*

## V. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

*Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7, 26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5 13;*

2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

## VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

*Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.*

## VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

*Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.*

## VIII. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

*Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.*

## IX. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to

pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

*Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.*

## X. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

*Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.*

## XI. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

*Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.*

## XII. Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

*Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.*

### XIII. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

*Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.*

### XIV. Cooperation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

*Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.*

### XV. The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians

should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

*Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16,43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.*

## **XVI. Peace and War**

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

*Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.*

## **XVII. Religious Liberty**

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

*Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.*

## **XVIII. The Family**

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband

and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

*Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.*

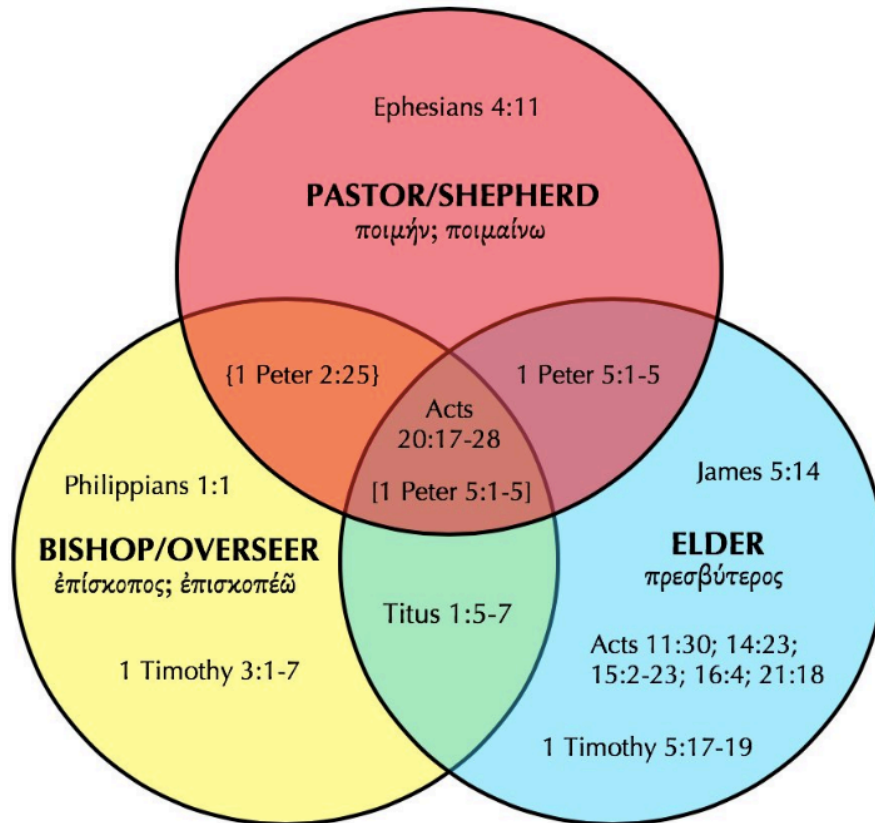
# Section 6: Church Leadership: Elder-Led Congregationalism

As a Baptist church, we are autonomous, meaning we are self-ruling. In other words, no outside agency or organization can tell South Side Baptist Church what to do or believe. Our leaders come from within our body.

Church leadership is like plumbing. You can have all the bells and whistles in a house, but if your plumbing is bad, your house will be bad. Plumbing is essential. Biblical church leadership is likewise essential for a healthy church.

The Bible has a lot to say about church leadership. Paul wrote “the pastoral epistles” so that we would “know how one ought to behave in the household of God” (1 Tim 3:15). The Scriptures are clear that Jesus is the head of the church (Eph 1:22-23). As John Stott put it, “Scripture is the royal scepter by which King Jesus rules his church.” Under Him, the church is to be led by a plurality of spiritually-qualified male elders and served by spiritually-qualified male deacons. In the New Testament, the offices of pastor, elder, and overseer are interchangeable. They all refer to the same office (1 Pet 5:1-4, Acts 20:17-28, 1 Tim 2:12, 3, Titus 1, Phil 1:1). Everywhere pastors/overseers/elders are mentioned, it is in the plural. Elders are spiritually qualified men who lead, teach, shepherd, and oversee the church. Deacons are spiritually qualified men (1 Tim 3:8-13) who serve the church by meeting practical needs. Elders provide spiritual bread; deacons provide physical bread.

Congregationalism means that the congregation is responsible for doctrine and discipline. Every member is a priest and therefore has a job: they are to protect the gospel (Gal 1) and protect the witness of the local church (1 Cor 5, 2 Cor 2). Jesus has given the assembled church the keys of the Kingdom (Matt 16:18-19, 18:15-20, 1 Cor 5). The local church is where believers are gathered in Jesus name to make declarative statements on Heaven’s behalf. Jesus is among them so that they can bind and loose using the keys of the kingdom.



## The benefits of a plurality of elders are at least ten-fold:

1. It is the biblical model.
2. It balances pastoral weakness.
3. It diffuses congregational criticism.
4. It adds pastoral wisdom.
5. It enables corrective discipline of the staff if needed.
6. It increases confidence in the members of the church
7. It provides a stronger defense against false teaching.
8. It provides continuity of leadership
9. It provides pastors for pastors
10. It protects against burnout by alleviating pressure and responsibility to one person

We are a “complementarian” church, meaning we affirm and guard the equality of men and women, both made in the image of God, while upholding differing but complementary roles in the home and in the church. We seek to equip and empower women for all sorts of ministry, but Scripture clearly forbids a woman from holding the office of elder or deacon (1 Tim 2:11-14, 3:11, 1 Cor 14:33-35). See “The Danvers Statement” in Appendix G for more information.

*Elders set the direction, the ministry staff takes us there, while the deacons make sure we have enough gas to get there.<sup>11</sup>*

<sup>11</sup> Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 169.



# Section 7: Why Join a Church?

Christianity is a corporate faith. The vast majority of the “you’s” in the Bible are actually “y’all’s.” In other words, “you” is almost always plural. Additionally, there are some fifty “one another’s” in the New Testament. In Scripture, when one becomes a follower of Jesus, they join the family of Jesus. The metaphor of family is the most predominant metaphor for the church in Scripture. Just consider how often we are addressed as “brothers and sisters.” To be a Christian is to be a part of a local family. Joe Hellerman shows there are four themes emerging from the use of family terminology:

1. There is an emotional bond with one another.
2. There is interpersonal harmony and absent of discord among one another.
3. There is sharing of resources within the family.
4. There is undivided commitment to the family.<sup>12</sup>

We worship a Triune God. He has eternally existed as Father, Son, and Spirit. Our God is communal and we are created in his image. Therefore, human beings are created for community. Chester and Timmis write, “By becoming a Christian, I belong to God and I belong to my brothers and sisters. It is not that I belong to God and then make a decision to join a local church. My being in Christ means being in Christ with those others who are in Christ. This is my identity. This is our identity. To fail to live out our corporate identity in Christ is analogous to the act of adultery: we can be Christian and do it, but it is not what Christians should do. The loyalties of the new community supersede even the loyalties of biology (Matthew 10:34-37; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 11:27-28). If the church is the body of Christ, then we should not live as disembodied Christians.”<sup>13</sup>

*“Membership in the body of Christ means locking hearts and lives together with other Christ followers under godly, mature, present, give-an-account-for-your-soul, admonish-you-when-you-are-unruly, help-you-when-you-are-weak, encourage-you-when-you-are-fainthearted leadership. It means integrating your life with others for the purpose of doing God’s family business as God’s chosen children.”<sup>14</sup>*

Everywhere Scripture assumes that Christians are embedded in local community. Everywhere it is assumed that when one joins the universal church, they join express that in joining local churches. Jesus is the head and the church is his body. We all go together and we need each other (Heb 3:12-13, 10:19-25, 1 Cor 12:12-31, Acts 2:42-47).

Really, what we are talking about is “committed love.” Local church membership consists of fulfilling certain responsibilities and enjoying certain benefits. It is committed love. Mark Dever writes, “Church membership is our opportunity to grasp hold of each other in responsibility and love. By identifying ourselves with a particular church, we let the pastors and other members know that we intend to be committed in

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church was a Family* (Nashville: B&H, 2009), 78-79.

<sup>13</sup> Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Total Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 41.

<sup>14</sup> Todd Wagner, *Come and See* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2017), 122.

attendance, giving, prayer, and service. We allow fellow believers to have greater expectations of us in these areas, and we make it known that we are the responsibility of the local church. We assure the church of our commitment to Christ in serving with them, and we call for their commitment to serve and encourage us as well.”<sup>15</sup>

He goes on to say, “Joining a church increases our sense of ownership of the work of the church, of its community, of its budget, and of its goals. We move from being pampered consumers to becoming joyous proprietors. We stop arriving late and complaining that we don’t get exactly what we want; instead, we arrive early and try to help others with what they need. We must begin to view membership less as a loose affiliation useful only on occasion and more as a regular responsibility, becoming involved in one another’s lives for the purposes of the gospel”<sup>16</sup>

*Church membership is “a formal relationship between a church and a Christian characterized by the church’s affirmation and oversight of a Christian’s discipleship and the Christian’s submission to living out his or her discipleship in the care of the church.”<sup>17</sup>*

It is hard to genuinely love other believers without church membership. You can have an abstract romanticized love for “the church” in the abstract but biblical love has names and addresses. When you know them, you can commit yourself to them and they to you. Only then can we genuinely and effectively love one another. As Thabiti Anyabwile put it, “Saying you belong to \*the\* church without belonging to \*a\* church is like saying you’re married without having a wife.” Or saying you are a member of the universal gym without ever joining a local gym. It just doesn’t work.

## Benefits of Church Membership:

- Identifies a person as a genuine believer
- Provides a spiritual family for support and encouragement in their walk with Christ
- Provides a place to discover and use gifts
- Places believers under the spiritual protection of godly leaders
- Provides the accountability we need to grow
- Provides leaders to submit to (see Heb 13:17, 1 Tim 5:17, 1 Thess 5:12, 1 Pet 5:5)
- Helps us as elders know who we are accountable for (see Heb 13:17, Acts 20:28)

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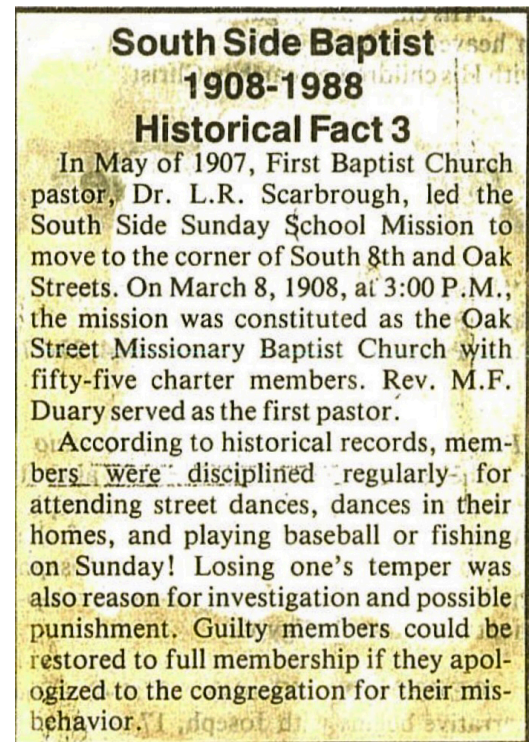
<sup>15</sup> Mark Dever, *Nine Marks*, 168.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>17</sup> Leeman, *Church Membership*, 64.

## Church Discipline

Although rarely practiced in American churches today, Baptist churches used to be characterized by regular church discipline. When we hear church discipline, we often think of people being excommunicated from the church. But biblically, church discipline is much broader than that. There is formative and corrective church discipline. Formative discipline is like eating right and exercising and corrective discipline is like surgery. Formative discipline includes preaching, teaching, discipling, small groups, worship, and personal prayer and Bible study. It includes all the ordinary means of grace that all believers should be involved with. Corrective discipline includes rebuke, admonition, and when necessary, excommunication. With the final step of excommunication, the church is withdrawing its affirmation of the person's faith. This could be called corrective discipleship.



## Why practice church discipline?

- The Lord Jesus commands us to practice church discipline (Matt 5:23-24, 7:1-5, 18:15-17)
- The Bible commands us to practice church discipline (Heb 12:1-14, 1 Cor 5:1-11, Gal 6:1, 2 Thess 3:6-15, 1 Tim 1:20, 5:19-20, Titus 3:9-11)
- Church discipline exposes sin
- Church discipline warns of coming judgment
- Church discipline is for our good
- Church discipline aims at restoration, repentance, and reconciliation
- Church discipline purifies the church
- Church discipline strengthens our corporate witness
- Church discipline demonstrates God-like love
- Church discipline brings God glory

*"When discipline leaves a church, Christ goes with it." John Dagg*

# Section 8: Areas to Serve

- \_\_\_ Elementary Kids Ministry - Josh Cornett (josh@ssbaptist.org)
  - \_\_\_ Classroom Teachers & Helpers (Sunday morning or Wednesday night)
  - \_\_\_ Substitutes
  - \_\_\_ Greeters
  - \_\_\_ VBS Team
  - \_\_\_ Camp Chaperones
  
- \_\_\_ Preschool Kids Ministry - Josh Cornett (josh@ssbaptist.org)
  - \_\_\_ Teachers, Helpers & Substitutes (Sunday or Wednesday)
  - \_\_\_ Nursery Helpers (Sunday morning or Wednesday night)
  - \_\_\_ Nursery for Special Events
  - \_\_\_ Greeters
  
- \_\_\_ Greeting Team - Taylor Routon (taylor@ssbaptist.org)
  - \_\_\_ Greeters
  - \_\_\_ Welcome Table
  - \_\_\_ Safety Team
  
- \_\_\_ Youth Ministry Team - Nathan McCravey (nathan@ssbaptist.org)
  - \_\_\_ Small Group Facilitators (Wednesday night or Sunday morning)
  - \_\_\_ Wednesday Night Meal Providers
  
- \_\_\_ College Student Ministry - Cody Bingham (cody@ssbaptist.org)
  - \_\_\_ Adopt-a-College Student
  - \_\_\_ Sunday Morning Small Group Host or Support Couple
  
- \_\_\_ Tech Team - Taylor Routon (taylor@ssbaptist.org)
  
- \_\_\_ Worship Team - Taylor Routon (taylor@ssbaptist.org)
  
- \_\_\_ Missions/Outreach Team - Josh Cornett (josh@ssbaptist.org)
  
- \_\_\_ Marriage Ministry - Ronny & Genienne Koehn (marriage@ssbaptist.org)
  
- \_\_\_ Church-wide Special Event Helpers/Coordinators - Sarah Mathis (sarah.mathis@ssbaptist.org)
  
- \_\_\_ Men's Ministry - Cody Bingham (cody@ssbaptist.org)
  - \_\_\_ Men's Breakfast Team
  - \_\_\_ Prayer Team
  
- \_\_\_ Women's Ministry - Andrea Richardson (womensministry@ssbaptist.org)
  - \_\_\_ Care Team
  - \_\_\_ Women's Events
  - \_\_\_ Retreat Team
  - \_\_\_ Discipleship/Small Group Bible Study Facilitator
  
- \_\_\_ Home Groups–Taylor Routon (taylor@ssbaptist.org)
  - \_\_\_ Host Homes
  - \_\_\_ Leaders
  
- \_\_\_ Other ideas for serving? Contact Blake White (blake@ssbaptist.org)

# Section 9: Responsibilities of Membership

## Responsibilities of Members

- Seek the Lord (Matt 6:33)
- Study the Word (John 17:17, 1 Pet 2:2)
- Attend Services (Heb 10:25, Luke 22:19)
- Make Disciples (Matt 28:18-20, 2 Tim 2:2)
- Love One Another (John 13:1-34)
- Get Plugged into a Small Group Environment
- Serve in the Church (Phil 2:3-4, Mark 10:35-45)
- Give Sacrificially (Prov 3:9, 2 Cor 8:9, 9:7)
- Pursue Unity (Eph 4:4-6)
- Be Missional (Acts 1:8, 2 Cor 5:14-21)
- Pray for each another (Eph 6:18)

*“Friend, by joining this church, you will become jointly responsible for whether or not this congregation continues to faithfully proclaim the gospel. That means you will become jointly responsible both for what this church teaches, as well as whether or not its members’ lives remain faithful. And one day you will stand before God and give an account for how you used this authority. Will you sit back and stay anonymous, doing little more than passively showing up for 120 minutes on Sundays? Or will you jump in with the hard and rewarding work of studying the gospel building relationships, and making disciples? We need more hands for the harvest, so we hope you’ll join us in that work.”<sup>18</sup>*

## Responsibilities to Members

- Prayer
- Protection (teaching, the appointment of Godly leaders)
- Care
- Biblical Teaching
- Prayerful Leadership
- Equipping
- Loving Discipline
- Setting Godly Examples (1 Tim 3, Titus 1, 1 Pet 5)
- Faithfully Stewardship of Resources

*“Though perfect churches there may be, Not one of them is known to me, And so we’ll work and pray and plan, To make our own the best we can.”*

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<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Leeman, *Understanding the Congregation’s Authority* (Nashville: B&H, 2016), 58.

# Section 10: Membership Covenant

A Covenant formalizes the responsibilities of a church member as described in the “one another” passages in Scripture. It helpfully summarizes the primary obligations of a church member and helps the members understand the importance of their role and job:

## **Membership Covenant Between \_\_\_\_\_ and the Body of Christ at SSBC**

Having been brought by the free grace of God to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to submit ourselves to His gracious Lordship, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully (affirm our) covenant with one another.

We worship Jesus in all of life. In all we do, we will aim to glorify and enjoy the God of our salvation, from whom and through whom and to whom are all things: to Him be the glory forever!

We are ruled by God’s Word. We will not forsake the gathering of ourselves together, but will prioritize corporate worship, treasuring our church’s weekly opportunity to sing the Word, pray the Word, hear the Word, and see the Word displayed in the ordinances.

We are disciples who make disciples. By grace, we commit to obey King Jesus and help move others from wherever they are to where the Lord wants them: submitting every area of their lives to His leadership.

We are in authentic community. We will work and pray for the unity of the church. We will walk together in Christian love, exercising an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonishing and encouraging one another as occasion may require.

We are committed to missional living. We will seek to proclaim and adorn the gospel of Jesus Christ before our family, friends, and neighbors. We will endeavor to bring up our children as well as any others under our care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

We serve the church. We commit to use our God-given gifts for the building up of the church. With humility and gentleness, patience and love, we will be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God in Christ has forgiven us. We will not neglect to pray for one another. We will carry each other’s burdens, rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep.

We give sacrificially. We will work together for the advancement of the gospel through South Side Baptist Church, as we prayerfully support its leadership and contribute cheerfully and generously to the work of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel both to our neighbors and the nations.

We will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible, unite with a like-minded church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

# Appendices

Appendix A - SSBC Constitution and Bylaws	41
Appendix B - Home Group Vision	53
Appendix C - Discipleship Groups	61
Appendix D - "One Another" Passages in Scripture	67
Appendix E - Ten Questions to Ask When Joining a Church	69
Appendix F - Why You Will Join the Wrong Church	73
Appendix G - Danvers Statement	77
Appendix H - Nashville Statement	81
Appendix I - Gospel Study	85





Appendix A

**SSBC Constitution and Bylaws**

# CONSTITUTION

## **PREAMBLE**

We declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern the body in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual church member and the freedom of action of this body in relation to other churches.

## **ARTICLE 1 - Name**

This body shall be known as the South Side Baptist Church (hereinafter - SSBC) of Abilene, Taylor County, Texas, with a main campus at 1425 South 7th Street, Abilene, Texas and ministries around the world.

## **ARTICLE 2 - Purpose**

We are worshipers of God saved by His grace through the substitutionary atoning death of Jesus Christ. We will glorify God by making disciples of all nations as we function as The Body of Christ.

We will make disciples by: praying ( Matt. 9:38), being ministers of reconciliation (2Cor. 5:18-20), being Christ-like in word and action (Romans 8:29), intentionally influencing others to be disciples and disciple makers (Matt. 28:19-20), by reaching beyond our community through missions support and missions experiences, and by faithfully preaching all of God's Word. 2Timothy 4:1-2

We will function as a body by praying (Acts 2:42), holding to common guiding principles of a membership agreement (1Timothy 1:5; 1Timothy 4:7; 1Timothy 3:15), being involved in the family of South Side (Hebrews 10:25), worshipping together, celebrating the glory, activity, and love of God (John 4:23; 1Cor. 14:24-26), and serving in areas of ministry according to gifts, passions, and calling to the building up of the local body (Matt. 20:26-28; Eph. 4:12).

We are aligning our lives and the life of our body with truth. This is simple faith and obedience. This is our choice to glorify God and receive His blessings.

## **ARTICLE 3 - Our Beliefs**

This church subscribes to the doctrinal statements from the South Side Baptist Church Statement of Beliefs. We affirm the Holy Bible as the inspired Word of God (2Timothy 3:16), the basis for our beliefs, and the final authority for matters of faith and conduct. The Council of Elders of South Side Baptist Church is the final human interpreter of the Holy Bible and the Statement of Beliefs for South Side Baptist Church. The Council of Elders is authorized to state SSBC's position on matters of faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline. We voluntarily band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ personally committed to sharing the good news of salvation with all nations. The ordinances of the church are believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper.

#### **ARTICLE 4 - Church Member Agreement**

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and on the profession of our faith having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God and this assembly joyfully enter into relationship, as members of this local church, with one another as one body in Christ.

Each of us makes public this commitment by attending the membership classes and consenting to the following Member Agreement.

In response to God's love for me, I commit to:

- Be active in on-going discipleship opportunities and worship at SSBC. Romans 12:1-2; 2Peter 3:18; Matthew 28:19-20
- Be passionate in prayer for: my family, this fellowship, and the lost. 1Peter 4:7; Colossians 4:2
- Be faithful in my stewardship of God's gifts to me through regularly, cheerfully, and generously giving of my time, talents, and treasure to Christ at SSBC; 2Corinthians 9:6-7
- Be consistent in sharing my faith with those that don't know Jesus Christ. 1Peter 3:15; Matthew 28:19-20
- Be persistent in living my life in a way that others will see God dwelling in me. 1Peter 2:12-15; Matthew 5:14-16; Titus 2; 1 Peter 3:1-7; Ephesians 5:22-6:4
- Be active in supporting the leadership, fellowship, purpose, and beliefs of South Side Baptist Church. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Peter 5:5; Hebrews 10:23-25;
- I understand the seriousness of this relationship and what it means to be a member of South Side Baptist Church. My covenant is chiefly with God, and I ask South Side Baptist Church to help me be accountable to God in living out my covenant relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **ARTICLE 5 - Church Membership**

The membership of this Church shall consist of persons who confess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior, who have been baptized by immersion, and who have been received into its membership according to the By-Laws of this Church.

#### **ARTICLE 6 - Policy and Relationship**

The government of South Side shall be entrusted to its Elders, pastors, staff, Deacons, and membership. South Side is not subject to the control of any ecclesiastical body. It is autonomous. Insofar as it is practical and right, this church will cooperate with others of like faith and support the local association, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

# BYLAWS

## **ARTICLE 1 - Church Membership**

### Section 1 - General Procedure

Members shall consist of all who have met all qualifications for membership. Members shall also include the existing Members as of the most recent adoption of this Constitution and By-laws. South Side shall regularly maintain a membership role of the Members.

### Section 2 - Qualifications of Membership

1. A personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.
2. Baptism by immersion as a testimony of salvation.
3. Completion of South Side's membership classes.
4. Consent to abide by the membership agreement.

From time to time the Elders shall publish a list of new members for congregational approval. Approval shall be by a vote of the congregation at a meeting at least 2 weeks after the list has been published.

### Section 3 - Termination of Membership

Membership may be terminated in the following ways:

1. Death.
2. Written request by Member in good standing.
3. Evidence of Membership in another church.
4. Disciplinary separation (see section 5).

From time to time the Elders shall publish a list of members that have terminated - along with the reasons for their termination - for congregational approval. Approval shall be by a vote of the congregation at a meeting at least 2 weeks after the list has been published.

### Section 4 - Rights of Members

1. Every member of the Church, 18 years of age and older, is entitled to vote at all elections and on all questions submitted to the Church by the Elders, provided the member is present.
2. Every member of the Church, regardless of age, may participate in the ministries of this Church according to callings, interests, and gifting.
3. Members who move from this city to a location where there is no like-minded church in the place, or there are circumstances which render it inadvisable to change membership, may retain their Membership by way of written request of the Elders. After Elder approval, the member shall report to the Church as often as once a year at least, in person or by letter and by contribution. All such members who do not so report shall be subject to termination of Membership after appropriate efforts have been made to contact the member and remind them of their duties.
4. Members in good standing who desire to unite with another church may receive a certificate of character.

### Section 5 - Discipline

1. By applying for and accepting membership at SSBC, all members submit themselves to the care, correction, and discipline by the Elders and the congregation (Acts 20:28) and may not resign from Membership in an attempt to avoid such care, correction, and/or discipline. The goal of the care and correction by the Elders and the congregation is a growing faith in Jesus Christ for individual members and a healthy church membership. When the care and correction of the church is

ineffective towards a member of SSBC, then the Elders will lead the church in discipline of such member. When discipline becomes necessary, the goals of such discipline are loving restoration for the member and protection for the membership. When the discipline is ineffective then the Elders will lead the church in a process of separation.

2. Process of discipline and separation: The process shall follow that laid out in Scripture (Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1-2; Titus 3:10-11). The Elders shall oversee the process of separation and produce recommendations to the church for Separation of membership.
  - a. Separation of a member from membership may occur for the following causes:
    - Departure from his previously expressed agreement with "Statement of Basic Beliefs"
    - Conduct that demonstrates a continued unrepentant departure from biblical morality;
    - Other reasons as set forth in the Scriptures.
  - b. Church approval of recommendation by the Elders for separation of Membership:
    - Approval of the church shall mean that the Elder recommendation shall be presented to the church for vote at any called meeting of the church provided the recommendation has been presented by the Council of Elders in writing at a previous meeting no less than one week prior to the vote. Any church member may bring pertinent information to the discussion. Approval shall be by two-thirds vote of church members present and voting.
3. Restoration: Upon evidence of repentance and reformation, membership may be restored by a recommendation of the Elders and approval by two-thirds of the members present and voting at a church meeting.

## **ARTICLE 2 - Our Government**

### Section 1 - General Statement

This Church, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, voluntarily submits itself to a form of government that is in accordance with the Scriptures. The official offices of this Church, through which all of its powers are administered, are covered in subsequent sections of this document. These offices shall be occupied by men (adult genetic males), or women (adult genetic females) where specifically permitted, who are raised up by the Holy Spirit, called by the personal conviction of God, appointed by the Elders, and affirmed by the congregation. The responsibilities of these offices are also defined and described in subsequent sections of this document.

### Section 2 - Elders

In its operation in ministry, the Church will be governed by a group of godly men called Elders. These shall be men in whose lives the working of the Holy Spirit is evident, who have given a worthy witness of the authority of Christ in their lives and who have met the qualifications given in the Scriptures. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4)

*The Responsibilities of Elders.* The Elders' responsibilities include but are not limited to:

1. Exercising a shepherd's watch over the church, the flock of God. Acts 20:28; John 21:15-17; 1 Peter 5:1-3
2. Showing a consistent study and teaching of the Word of God. 1 Timothy 5:17; 3:2,
3. Encouraging others by sound doctrine and refuting in love, through biblical church discipline, those who oppose and contradict the Word of God. James 5:19-20; Galatians 6:1; Titus 1:9; Matt. 18:15-20
4. Giving diligent labor, caring leadership, exhortation, and guided counsel in the Word. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22; 2 Timothy 2:24-26
5. Praying for the sick. James 5:13-16

6. Overseeing the operations and ministries of the church. Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 5:17
7. Equipping the saints for the work of ministry. Ephesians 4:11-12

*Council of Elders.* The totality of active Elders shall constitute the Council of Elders, which is commissioned to oversee the Church under the Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 5:4). Except as specifically stated herein, the Council of Elders shall be the governing body of South Side Baptist Church. The Council of Elders shall prayerfully seek unanimous agreement in all matters since we believe the Holy Spirit guides with oneness of mind (Acts 15:1-29; Phil. 2:1-2).

1. The Senior Pastor acts as the Chairman of the Council of Elders. In case of the Chairman's inability to attend a meeting or to execute his duty, another of the Elders shall be appointed as interim Chairman.
2. The number of Elders shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and by the call and qualification of men in the Church.
3. If a Deacon is appointed as an Elder, he will no longer be considered a Deacon. He will not be required to fill the responsibilities of a Deacon but of an Elder.
4. In the case of a need for new Elders or for the substitution of existing Elders, the Chairman of the Council of Elders shall appoint a minimum of two Elders to serve with the Chairman as an Elder Nominations Team.
  - a. This Team shall guide the Elders in the selection of names of nominees from among Church members. Men who consider themselves to be qualified and who aspire to the office of Elder are encouraged to contact the Elder Nominations Team and ask to be considered. 1 Timothy 3:1-ff
  - b. After a period of prayer and unanimous agreement by the Elders, those men selected as potential candidates will be approached by the Elders. The potential candidates will be given adequate time to decide to enter the Elder process.
  - c. This Nominations Team is responsible for guiding all nominees through the Elder Candidate process.
  - d. The Elder process shall consist of the completion of the Elder candidate questionnaire, an interview by the Elder Nominations Team with the candidate and if married, his wife, completion of the study on Eldership, and attending select Elder meetings.
  - e. The process will take around 12 months with a section of the study on Eldership completed each month. Each Elder will lead sections of the study for each individual Elder candidate.
  - f. This Team shall inform the congregation of such nominations after the candidate and the Elders have decided to publicly announce the nomination. The congregation will be given a period of two weeks to respond in writing if there is any biblical basis for a nominee not to be appointed as an Elder.
  - g. In the event of such objection response from a member of the congregation, the Elder Nominations Team shall review the response with the writer of the response and, if necessary, with the nominee, in order to determine proper disposition of the issues raised by the writer.
  - h. Non-objection of a candidate shall serve as congregational approval of the candidate. After the review process completion and the resolution of any and all issues, the Elder Nominations Team shall proceed with the completion of the Elder candidate process followed by the congregational appointment of the nominees approved as Elders.
5. The Vocational Pastors of the church shall act as a part of the Council of Elders only after they have been nominated and have gone through the Elder selection process.

*Accountability.* The Council of Elders is a self-disciplining body with members accountable to one another (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Timothy 5:19-20). Each Elder is under the oversight of the Council of Elders and subject to both formative and corrective discipline as are all members of the Church.

*Tenure of Service.* No limit is placed upon the time that an Elder may serve. The emphasis is that each Elder serve and not just attend meetings. Each must be active in ministry to remain an Elder.

1. Voluntary Removal. An Elder may of his own initiative, disqualify himself from the role of Elder if he feels he is no longer spiritually qualified or is unable to serve.
2. Involuntary Removal / Grievance. (1 Timothy 5:19-20) Any member of the church may bring written Scriptural reasons for removal of an Elder. If reasons are substantiated by two or more witnesses, Elders may be removed from office by a unanimous decision of the other active Elders. Removal shall be based upon being spiritually unqualified or unable to serve. If the grievance still exists after the board of Elders has made its decision, then the witnesses may ask for the decision to be presented to the church body. Such request must be made in written form and signed by two or more members who are not related to each other and who are then in good standing. No later than 10 days after such a request is received, the Elders will announce at a regular church meeting the date and time of the business meeting where the issue will be on the agenda. The Elder will be removed from office by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at the business meeting.
3. Leave of Absence. An Elder may request a temporary leave of absence due to circumstances that hinder his ability to fulfill his role. The duration of the leave of absence shall be agreed upon by the Board of Elders.
4. In the event that a Vocational Pastor who is also an Elder ceases to be employed by South Side Baptist Church, his position as an Elder on the Elder Council may likewise be terminated by unanimous decision of the other active Elders.

### Section 3 - Vocational Pastors and Ministry Leaders

*Definition.* Vocational Pastors are men, who in response to God's call, have devoted their vocational lives to the ministry of the Word and prayer in the service of the church of Jesus Christ. Vocational Ministry Leaders are the ministry leaders of the Church who serve the Church and receive some type of support for their service. Both Vocational Pastors and Vocational Ministry Leaders are supported financially by the Church in return for their vocational labors. 1 Corinthians 9:14

*Duties.* Vocational Pastors and Ministry Leaders shall perform the duties determined by the Council of Elders. The duties shall be in writing at the time of the call to service. Vocational Pastors shall have all the biblical qualifications of an Elder. Vocational Pastors are not necessarily called to serve as members of the Council of Elders.

*Senior Pastor.* The Senior Pastor is responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament church. The Senior Pastor will lead the Council of Elders, the congregation, the ministries, the Deacons, and the church staff to perform their tasks. Whenever a vacancy occurs, the Elders shall seek out a suitable pastor with the assistance of a pastor search team appointed by the Elders from the membership of the church. Candidates determined by the search team to be qualified and willing to serve will be recommended to the Council of Elders. The Elders' unanimous recommendation will constitute a nomination. The election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week's public notice has been given to the Church membership. The election of a Senior Pastor shall be by secret ballot, with an affirmation vote of 85% of those Members present and voting.

The interim chairman of the Council of Elders will continue to act as chair for six months after the new Senior Pastor is affirmed by the church. The purpose is to allow the new Senior Pastor to acclimate to his role as an Elder and as Chairman of the Council of Elders and to become thoroughly acquainted with the Elder process and the currently serving Elders. This six month period can be shortened or extended as the Senior Pastor and the Council of Elders think it is wise.

*Pastors and Ministry Leaders.* The Elders shall seek out suitable pastors and ministry leaders for positions necessary for fulfilling the ministries of the Church. The Elders will appoint a pastor search team from the membership as necessary to assist in the process of seeking out suitable pastors and ministry leaders. Candidates determined by the search team to be qualified and willing to serve will be recommended to the Council of Elders. A unanimous vote for the candidate by the Elders will constitute his appointment to the position of pastor/ministry leader.

Termination by the Church.

1. By resignation. The question of terminating a Pastor or Ministry Leader shall be considered by the Elders upon receipt of the Pastor's or Leader's resignation.
2. Other reasons for termination - Grievance. Where a grievance exists against a Pastor or Ministry Leader, either due to his preaching or teaching contrary to the beliefs of the Church or to alleged conduct on his part unfitting a Pastor or Ministry Leader, such grievance may be brought before the Council of Elders by any two witnesses. If the Council (absent the Pastor or Ministry Leader being investigated), after thorough investigation and consideration, believes the grievance to be true and substantial, then the Council of Elders will correct the Pastor or Ministry Leader in such manner as it deems appropriate - up to and including removal from office and termination of employment. In the case of the termination of a Senior Pastor, the Council of Elders must publish at a church meeting a written recommendation explaining the reasons for the termination. Then at a subsequent meeting the church members will be given opportunity to discuss and affirm the recommendation of the Elders. Affirmation shall be by a secret ballot vote. If three-fourths of the members present and voting agree with the recommendation of the Elders then such recommendation is affirmed.
3. Upon termination of a Pastor who served on the Elder Council, his role as an Elder on the Elder Council may likewise be terminated. If the direction of the ministries of the church, financial status of the church, or other unforeseen issues require termination, then the employment of the Pastor or Ministry Leader may be discontinued upon the recommendation of the Council of Elders. In this event, the Council of Elders will decide whether or not to recommend termination of the Pastor or Ministry Leader's Eldership. If the recommendation is to terminate the Elder, then the regular process for terminating an Elder (see above) must be followed.

#### Section 4 - Deacons

Composition, Tenure of Service, and Calling. The number of Deacons shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and by the call and qualification of men in the church. No limit is placed upon the time that a Deacon may serve. Once a man is appointed as a Deacon, then he will remain a Deacon until he dies or is removed from office. A Deacon may of his own initiative disqualify himself from the role of Deacon if he feels he is no longer spiritually qualified or is unable to serve. Any Deacon may also be involuntarily removed due to church discipline. A Deacon may also request a temporary leave of absence due to circumstances that hinder his ability to fulfill his role. The duration of the leave of absence shall be agreed upon by the Deacons. All Deacons shall be appointed by the Elders and affirmed by the church using a process similar to that of approving Elders.



*Qualifications.* Deacons shall be qualified for the office as specified in the Bible. Relevant texts include 1 Timothy 3:8-12.

*Responsibilities.* The Deacons shall advise and be ready to assist the Elders in any service that shall support and promote the ministry of the Word, new and existing ministries of the Church, and the care for the members of the congregation. Their responsibilities may include:

1. Administering a fund to assist the poor and needy and otherwise providing aid in times of crisis or distress;
2. Assisting in administering the ordinances of the Gospel;
3. Assisting at fellowship gatherings of the church;
4. Assisting in caring for and maintaining the Church properties;
5. Serving the membership of this church.

*Accountability.* Each Deacon is under the oversight of the Council of Elders and subject to both formative and corrective discipline as are all members of the Church.

*Organization.* The Deacons shall organize themselves however they determine to best achieve the mission of the church. The Council of Elders may select either an Elder or a Deacon to act as chairman of the Council of Deacons. The Elders or the Deacons may designate any specific Deacon or group of Deacons to specialize in some particular function. Meetings of the Council of Deacons, or subcommittees thereof shall be held as needed to best fulfill the responsibilities of the Deacons.

*Nomination.* A Deacon Nominations Team shall be selected by the Deacons as needed. Currently active Elders and Deacons are eligible to serve on the Deacon Nominations Team. The Nominations Team shall give the church membership an opportunity to nominate prospective Deacons. All nominees shall be reviewed and approved by the Council of Elders before the nominees are presented to the Nominations Team. Any man previously serving as a Deacon in another fellowship who desires to continue his service as a Deacon must be nominated and approved by the same process as all other candidates. The Nominations Team shall use the Deacon Candidate Questionnaire to screen for men who meet the stated biblical qualifications. Men who meet the qualifications will be interviewed with their wives by one or more members of the Nomination Team. The interview will contain the following:

- An explanation of the Deacon selection process.
- Discussion concerning Scriptures relating to qualifications of Deacons.
- Discussion related to the Deacon Candidate Questionnaire.
- A request for the man and his wife to pray and seek God's will concerning Deacon service.

Candidates determined by the team to be qualified and willing to serve will be recommended to Council of Elders. Upon their preliminary approval by the Elders, the candidates will begin the Deacon candidate process. This process will include training in the biblical role of a new testament Deacon. Once the candidates complete the process, the Council of Elders shall inform the congregation of the identities of such candidates and allow the congregation a period of two weeks to respond in writing if there is any biblical basis for a candidate not to be appointed as a Deacon. In the event of such response from a member of the congregation, the Elders and the Deacon Nominations Team shall review the response with the writer of the response and, if necessary, with the candidate in order to determine proper disposition of the issues raised by the writer. Non-objection of a candidate shall serve as congregational approval of the candidate. After the review process completion and the resolution of any and all issues, the Council of Elders shall proceed with the congregational appointment of the candidates approved as Deacons. A unanimous vote for the candidate by the Elders will constitute his appointment to the position of Deacon.

## Section 5 - Ministry Teams

There will be two types of Ministry Teams. Service Ministry Teams will serve the church in areas that need continuity from year to year. Project Ministry Teams will serve the church to accomplish a specific task. When that task is completed the Project Ministry Team will be abolished. Ministry Team plans and recommendations will be reviewed and implemented as approved by the Council of Elders. Every Ministry Team shall report to and receive direction from the applicable pastor, ministry leader, or the Elder Council.

## Section 6 - Support Staff

Non-ministerial staff members shall be employed as the Elders determine the need for their services. The Elders shall have the authority to employ and to terminate services of non-ministerial and support staff members.

## **ARTICLE 3 - Church Finances**

### Section 1 – General

No method of raising funds shall be entertained which is in conflict with the Scriptural ideals of the Church. All funds donated shall pass through the Church Financial Secretary in order that due record may be made. The Financial Secretary will assist the Elders and the Stewardship Ministry Team in accounting for funds donated.

### Section 2 – Contributions

It is understood that membership in this church involves financial obligations to support the Church and its causes with regular and proportionate giving. Each member shall be encouraged in Scriptural giving, with tithing as the ideal minimum.

Special offerings may be sought by the Church, or by any of its ministries, with the approval of the Elders. This shall not preclude individuals from making special offerings or designated gifts at any time as the Spirit of God may move them.

Designated funds will be received according to the applicable section of the SSBC policy and procedures manual. Fundraising - The normal practice of financial operations of the church is for members to give their tithes and offerings through the general budget of the church. The Stewardship Team and the Elders must approve all fundraising events. Contribution credit will not be given for items purchased at a fund raising event.

- Emergency or Reserve Funds - The goal of the church will be to maintain two months of reserve funds to be used in the case of emergency for temporary budget shortfall.

### Section 3 – Financial Planning

The financial planning of the Church shall be accomplished through annual budgets. The Church, upon recommendation of the Stewardship Ministry Team and the Elders, shall affirm annual budgets. Matters involving staff compensation shall be the responsibility of the non-vocational members of the Elders.

### Section 4 – Accounts

The Financial Secretary, according to the purposes for which contributions are designated, shall account for financial receipts from all sources. The financial records of the church shall be reviewed annually by an independent CPA. At their discretion, the Stewardship Team may review the financial records of the church. Every five years the church shall perform a full audit of all financial records. An outside audit shall be performed when the Council of Elders deems it appropriate.

### Section 5 – Indebtedness

The Church shall not make a practice of incurring debt. Notes or contracts whereby the credit of the Church is pledged shall be made only by recommendation of the Council of Elders and approval of the Church. Approval of the church shall mean that the issue in question shall be presented to the church for affirmation at any called meeting of the church provided the issue has been presented by the Council of Elders in writing at a previous meeting. Approval shall be by two-thirds vote of church members present and voting.

### Section 6 – Authority to Bind the Church

The Elders are the only officers who have authority, in accordance with these By-Laws, the Church Constitution, and any applicable laws, to execute legal documents relating to real estate, church property, and church finances. A minimum of two Elders is required to execute any legal documents. Any such action will be directed by the unanimous decision of the Elder Council, except as otherwise noted in this document.

### Section 7 – Property and Liability Insurance

The church will insure the church property at the fair market value. There shall be a review of the church's current property and liability insurance coverage and a safety inspection of the church property at intervals determined by the Elders.

## **ARTICLE 4 - Church Ordinances**

### Section 1 - Baptism

This Church shall receive for baptism by immersion any person who has believed upon Jesus as Savior and who indicates a surrender to follow Christ as Lord. The candidate for baptism shall be counseled by a pastor or Elder prior to being baptized.

### Section 2 - Lord's Supper

The Church shall observe the Lord's Supper as scheduled by the Senior Pastor and/or Elders. The Elders and Deacons shall oversee the Lord's Supper, the Deacons being responsible for the physical preparation. Anyone who professes Jesus Christ as Savior in like faith may share in this ordinance with the members of this Church.

## **ARTICLE 5 - Church Meetings**

### Section 1 - Worship Services

Public services for worship shall be held on the Lord's Day. Other services may be appointed as the advancement of the work of the Church may require. Prayer, praise, preaching, instruction, and evangelism shall be among the ingredients of these services.

### Section 2 - Ministry Celebration and Other Church Business

The church may conduct called meetings to consider matters of special nature and significance as the Elders deem necessary. These called meetings require one-week notice that includes the subject, date, time and place. Notice must be given in such a manner that all members have a reasonable opportunity to know of the meeting.

From time to time the pastors or Elders may conduct special services to celebrate or commemorate certain ministries or events.

#### **ARTICLE 6 - Ministries**

We believe each and every believer stands equal before God and each is equipped and called to serve in some form of ministry. We equate membership with a commitment to ministry and service. South Side, therefore, will create an environment that encourages, enables, and empowers believers to minister according to their God-given talents, passions, abilities, and gifts. The creation of new ministries shall occur under the direction and leadership of the Elders.

#### **ARTICLE 7 - Amendments**

##### Constitution and By-laws Revision

Changes in the constitution and bylaws may be made by approval of the church at any called meeting of the church provided amendments have been presented and provided by the Council of Elders in writing at a previous meeting. Approval of the church shall mean that the issue in question shall be presented to the church for affirmation at any called meeting of the church provided the issue has been presented by the Council of Elders in writing at a previous meeting. Any member may present pertinent information for discussion at the meeting. Affirmation shall be by two-thirds vote of church members present and voting.

Appendix B

**Home Group Vision**

## Home Groups at South Side

The mission of Home Groups at South Side is to connect people in community, to invest in their spiritual growth, encourage them to serve others, and multiply disciple-makers. It is both a “connection” strategy as well as a “discipleship” strategy. We do want to find places for newcomers to connect, closing the back door, so to speak. But we see groups primarily as a discipleship strategy. Discipleship is taking people from where they are and helping them get where King Jesus wants them, increasingly submitting all of life to his good and gracious rule so that Jesus becomes central in everything. Jesus commanded each believer to make disciples and teach them to observe everything Jesus commanded, part of which was to make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). So, we want to make disciples who make disciples.

## Why Home Groups?

Three main reasons: Jesus, community, and mission. First, *Jesus*. It is all about him. We are not just a social club and not merely a mission group but the blood-bought people of Jesus, sent on mission to spread his glory. We have been gripped by Jesus, who calls us into community and sends us out on mission. We want to see people come to know Jesus and go deeper with Jesus.

Second, *community*. We in the West tend to think in individual terms, but the purpose of the cross and resurrection was to create a *people* on mission, not just a bunch of isolated individuals. Think about the 50-something “one another’s” in the New Testament. We are called to love one another, outdo one another in honor, confess our sins to one another, bear one another’s burdens, serve one another, be kind to one another, encourage one another, be hospitable to one another, and on and on. They are everywhere in Scripture! Obviously, we cannot obey most of these commands on Sunday mornings. God had more in mind for his bride, the church, when He sent His Son to die for her than merely an hour on Sundays. To be faithful to Jesus and his body, we must have smaller contexts in which to do life together. For full-orbed New Testament community, we must value circles and not just rows.

Read the description of the first Christians in Acts 2:42-47:

*“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”*

The early church was devoted to Scripture, to sharing life together, to eating together, and to praying. They were on mission together in the everyday stuff of life. And they were *devoted* to these things. They had to say no to what is ultimately trivial in order to say yes to that which is ultimate. They were committed to intentionally Christian relationships.

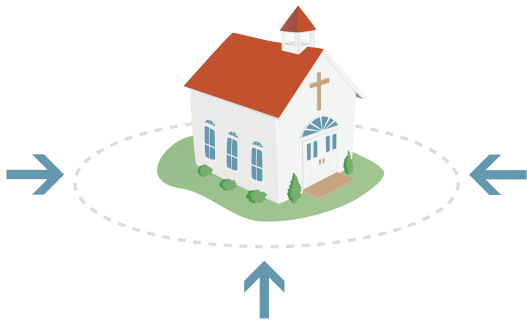
Third, *mission*. In Acts 1, Jesus tells his disciples, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Witnessing to the truth of Jesus is not just something we *do* on occasion. It is who we *are*. It is our identity. We *are* witnesses. True community comes from being on mission together. We don’t have Acts 2 community without Acts 1 mission. The reason groups get static and stale is due to lack of outward focus. Think about it.

Have you ever been on a mission trip? Don't you go deep with that group in a short amount of time? You go deep in community when you are on mission together. Mission is fundamental to who we are as Christians. This is because God is a missionary God. He is the sending God. He sends the Son and the Son sends the Spirit and the Spirit sends the church. If you are a Christian, you are an everyday informal missionary. You are all called to ministry (Eph 4:11-13). God funds some of his missionaries through the military, construction companies, hospitals, and schools. He funds his ambassadors to Abilene through numerous means. We want you to see Abilene, TX as the mission field God has called you to and groups as the engine for community and mission locally.

## What is the Church?

One of the reasons we do not value Home Groups as we ought is because our view of the church is off. Many of us operate as if the church is a building. The church is not a what, but a who, contrary to the way we speak. We speak of "going to church," but the church is not a building; the church is not an event; the church is not an institution with a mortgage. The church is the forgiven people of God sent on mission together for the glory of Christ. One of my favorite definitions of the church is "God's family of missionary servants sent to make disciples who make disciples."

## WHAT IS THE CHURCH?



## Who?

Home Group leadership is a frontline leadership role. We are looking for people who lead self, lead others, and mobilize. A person who leads self is someone who first and foremost loves Jesus and loves people. They walk with the Lord. They are constantly turning from sin and to the Lord. They understand the gospel. They love the Word and are growing in their understanding and application of it. They desire to help others grow and are competent to prayerfully speak the Word to others. They will be committed to SSBC as well, as members who keep the covenant, attend training events, connect with the pastors or elders when contacted, and reads resources when given them. We want folks to take ownership as a Home Group leader.

To lead others is to care for the people in your group. Pray for them regularly. Connect with them frequently. This role is more than the f-word: facilitator. You are a shepherd to this group. However, we do not expect

the leader to do everything! Delegate according to gifts. Identify and empower the body of Christ. Appoint others to lead point on things like social events, service projects, meals, childcare, prayer, etc. Care for you group by coming to meeting prepared!

A mobilizer is one who grows the group. One who is constant looking outward. Find local service opportunities. A leader will be expected to identify and empower an apprentice. An apprentice is the person or couple who will be the leader of the next group when the current group grows to 6 couples and becomes time to multiply. The process is selection, expectation, preparation, then graduation.

## 5 Steps of Home Group Apprenticeship:

I do. You watch. We talk

I do. You help. We talk.

You do. I help. We talk.

You do. I watch. We talk.

You do. Someone else watches.

Success is an outward focus. We are blessed to be a blessing. Again, true community will not happen if we are not on mission together.

That's the call: Lead self, lead others, and mobilize. If you are intimidated, don't be. You have the Spirit of God. You have the Word of God. You will have support from pastors and elders, always an email or call away. God wants you off the sidelines and in the game. We ought to fear inactivity more than we fear mistakes. Step out and take a risk for the kingdom. You will grow in the process. God has always used ordinary people who are available to Him. This is work that matters. "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Cor 15:58).

## Elements of a Home Group

The five main elements of a Home Group are prayer, study, play, serve, and multiply.

With prayer, we want to be praying God-centered prayers. Prayer time can easily become a time for "organ recitals": Lord, please heal Bertha's bladder, Helen's hip, and John's joint pain. Have you ever noticed that such prayers are almost completely absent in the prayers of the first Christians? Take a look at the content of the prayers in Philippians 1:9-11, Ephesians 3:14-21, or Colossians 1:9-12, for example. We also want you to be praying weekly for those the group members know that do not follow Jesus. As with everything, an outward focus! If no one knows a non-Christian, you can pray for opportunities to get to know some.

We will also study the Word together. We grow by the Word (John 17, 1 Pet 2.2). Most groups will go deeper into the text from the sermon. This will cause you to pay closer attention to the sermon and dig deeper into the Text. The leader always grows more than those they are leading! For book and DVD study options, we have a list of several gospel-centered resources below and at [ssbaptist.org/hg-resources](http://ssbaptist.org/hg-resources).



We also want your group to “play” from time to time. Have fun, throw parties, go eat, etc. Find what sociologists call “3rd places” to frequent. Those local places that are not work and not home. They are neutral and natural places to hang out. Be intentional when you do so. Invite people in. Increasingly today, people want to “belong before they believe.” Home Groups could be that avenue.

Home Groups will also serve others. Maybe you start with a goal of your group demonstrating the good news of Jesus once a semester. Jesus Himself did not come to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45). Seek to be a blessing to the neighborhood the group meets in. Send a care package to one of our missionaries. See how you can serve our local Pregnancy Resource Center. Adopt a street near our building or your house and pray and serve that street. Serve in the nursery on a rotation as a Home Group.

Finally, we want groups to multiply. At SSBC, you will hear 2 Timothy 2:2 often. Therein lies the 2/2/2 principle. It reads, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.” There are four generation in one verse: Paul - Timothy - reliable people - others. This must be our heartbeat. Our lifeblood. We don’t “split”, we multiply. If you have an open group, and it exceeds 6 couples, it is time to start talking about multiplication.

**Meeting Logistics:** Around 90 minutes: 20 talk, updates, refreshments, 30-40 discussion, 30 prayer. The monthly rhythm is meet first three and spend the fourth Sunday with family, but we are flexible for what works best for you. Be sure to take breaks for holidays and summer to stay refreshed. I repeat: we are flexible with what works for you.

# Home Group Resources

## Key Leader Resources:

*Rock Solid* by Archer and Thornborough  
*Discipling* by Mark Dever  
*Total Church* by Chester and Timmis  
*You Can Change* by Tim Chester  
*The ESV Study Bible*  
*NIV Zondervan Study Bible*  
See TVC HG Guide

## For Use in Groups:

### SPIRITUAL GROWTH

*Living the Cross Centered Life* by CJ Mahaney  
*Gospel Revolution DVD* by J.D. Greear  
*Echoes of the Reformation DVD*  
*Total Church* by Chester and Timmis  
*You Can Change* by Tim Chester  
*Saturate* by Jeff Vanderstelt  
*Gospel Centered Life* by Chester and Timmis (workbook)  
*Prodigal God* by Tim Keller  
*The Prodigal God DVD* study by Tim Keller  
*When People are Big and God is Small* by Ed Welch  
*Counterfeit Gods* by Tim Keller  
*Humility* by CJ Mahaney  
*Gospel in Life DVD* by Tim Keller  
*Don't Waste Your Life* book with study guide OR DVD by John Piper  
*The Pleasures of God DVD* by John Piper  
*Radical* Book OR Workbook and DVD by David Platt

### PRAYER

*Prayer* by Tim Keller  
*A Praying Life* by Paul Miller

### BIBLE

*True Story of the World* by Goheen and Bartholomew  
*The Gospel of Luke DVD* by D.A. Carson  
*Praying with Paul DVD* by D.A. Carson  
*The Whole Bible in 16 Verses* by Christopher Bruno  
*Christian Beliefs: 20 Basics* by Wayne Grudem  
*Dug Down Deep* by Josh Harris  
*The God Who is There DVD* by DA Carson

## MISSION

*Saturate Workbook* by Jeff Vanderstelt

*Life on Mission* with discussion Q's by Dustin Willis and Aaron Coe

*Field Guide for Everyday Mission* by Ben Connelly

*Life on Mission* by Aaron Coe (6 weeks w/discussion Q's)

*Tangible Kingdom* by Halter

*Master Plan Summary Article* by Bill Glad

*Let the Nations be Glad DVD* by John Piper

*The Reason for God DVD* by Tim Keller

## MARRIAGE & FAMILY

*Real Marriage DVD* by Mark and Grace Driscoll

*The Meaning of Marriage DVD* or book by Tim and Kathy Keller

*What Did You Expect DVD* by Paul David Tripp

*Ready to Launch DVD* by J.D. Greear

## GENEROSITY

*The Treasure Principle* by Randy Alcorn

*Don't Waste Your Life* with study guide and DVD by John Piper

## CHURCH HISTORY

*The History of Christianity DVD* by Timothy George

## INTRODUCTION TO THE FAITH

*Basic Christianity* by John Stott (w/discussion Q's)

*Reason for God* by Tim Keller (book and/or DVD study)

*What is the Gospel* by Greg Gilbert

## Leading Challenging People

Scenarios (common sense, but a certain skill):

Talkative Tommy: likes to answer every question, even when you say Jill, what do you think? Try calling on another person. You can help them by saying, "how about someone who has not had a chance to share yet". Most self-aware folks will realize, but not always! May have to pull Tommy aside and ask him to hold back some of his insight so others can contribute. They almost always get it.

Tangential Tommy (apologies if your name is Tommy): He likes to chase the rabbits. You'll be talking about Judges and he wants to debate predestination. You can redirect by saying things like "That is an interesting study for another time". "Lets stay to the topic at hand and come back to that if we have time." Redirect

Timid Tommy: usually faithful, helpful, and on time but never speaks up. Seek to draw her out. Timid Tommy, you have any thoughts on that? How does this passage apply to your current week, etc? You want to make sure you communicate that every person in there feels valued.

Totally Off Tommy: not afraid to speak up but often in left field. "Thanks for that input Totally Off Tommy, does anyone else have any thoughts or understand this passage differently?" "I am glad you mentioned that, let me reword the question. Rephrase if wrong, gently speak the truth, don't ignore if wrong, and black/white.

Ticked Off Tommy: loves to argue. Loves to be the "devils advocate," You could say, "Hey ticked off Tommy, Satan has a sufficient amount of advocates and needs no more." Genuine questions are one thing, but some groups end up with a person who wants to be right. Just move on. Say something like "Well, we are not agreeing on this one, any other thoughts?" Always good reason to dive back into Scripture.

## HG Coaches/Elders

### Expectations:

- Keep Jesus central in your own life.
- Prioritize meeting with SSBC pastor or elder and read any resources given.
- Commit to a one-year renewable term as coach.
- Attend training events for groups.

**C**are for 1-3 group leaders. Pray for them and be available.

**O**bserve their lives and leadership. Develop them as believers and leaders.

**A**ppreciate them frequently. Email, text, call. Help them own the fact that this work matters!

**C**hallenge them in their personal growth and shepherding of their group. Feed resources.

**H**uddle with your leaders at least twice a semester. Let them rub shoulders and encourage one another.

### Key Questions to Ask Every Meeting:

How are you doing?

What are you celebrating?

What challenges are you facing?

What are you doing about those challenges?

How Can I Help?

How Can I Pray?

## Appendix C

# Discipleship Groups

# D Group Manual

## Vision<sup>19</sup>

Disciple-making lies at the heart of what King Jesus calls his church to. We rightly call it “The Great Commission” (Matt 28:18-20). The main imperative is “make disciples.” Going, baptizing, and teaching are participles modifying the main verb “make disciples.” This command is for all disciples, not just pastors or missionaries. Ephesians teaches us that pastors are given in order to equip the saints – that is, all Christians – for the work of ministry, which is building up the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-16). If you are a Christian, you are called to be a disciple, and by definition a disciple is one who makes disciples. We teach others what Jesus commanded, the heart of which is the call to make disciples.

Disciple-making is simply helping others follow Jesus. We help others go from wherever they are to where Jesus wants them, which is increasingly submitting every area of our lives to his gracious Lordship. We share our faith and share our lives. The main way we accomplish this at South Side is through D-Groups (Discipleship Groups).

## What is a D-Group?

A D-Group is 3-5 men or women who commit to grow spiritually together by meeting weekly for 3-18 months with the goal of multiplying when each person replicates the group by inviting others to take the same discipleship journey with them once they are finished.

The goal is to help one another follow Jesus, to build a culture of one on one discipleship in the church, to work towards meaningful church membership, to hold one another accountable, to encourage our hearts, and to build deep Christian friendships. Ultimately, the goal is to become more like Jesus for the glory of God.

Meeting Template Example:

- Catch up on life – 15 minutes
- Discuss Book or Bible – 30 minutes
- Prayer Requests and Prayer – 15 minutes

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<sup>19</sup> This manual is dependent on Robby Gallaty, *Growing Up* (Nashville: B&H, 2013), Jonathan Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine* (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2009), and Colin Marshall and Tony Payne’s *The Vine Project* (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2016). For a message on the importance of disciple-making in the local church, click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYZMTVPZGIU>

## Books to Use in D-Groups<sup>20</sup>

- The Bible. See *One to One Bible Reading* by David Helm (75 pgs) - helpful book with tips for one to one Bible reading
- *What is a Healthy Church?* by Mark Dever (124 pgs) - covers essentials of what a church should be about.
- *Asking the Right Questions: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Applying the Bible* by Matthew Harmon (120 pgs) - really helpful tool that focuses on the centrality of Christ in understanding and applying Scripture.
- *God's Big Picture* by Vaughan Roberts (158 pgs) - short overview of the big picture of the whole Bible and how it fits together.
- *The Walk* by Stephen Stallman (197 pgs) - one of the most helpful books for believers, new and old.
- *The Cross-Centered Life* by C.J. Mahaney (85 pgs) - helps us keep the main thing the main thing.
- *Rock Solid: 12 Gospel Truths to Live By* edited by Archer and Thornborough (147 pgs) - a short, accessible look at key theological truths. Has section for Bible study, application, and history in roughly 10 pages a chapter.
- *Total Church* by Chester and Timmis (207 pgs) - my favorite book on ministry, but really just a book on the Christian life.
- *Knowing God* by JI Packer (279 pgs) - modern day classic. Devotional theology.
- *Desiring God* by John Piper (288 pgs) - another modern classic on God's glory and our joy.
- *You Can Change* by Tim Chester (179 pgs) - book on sanctification with a focus on the gospel and the heart.
- *Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart* by JD Greear (112 pgs) - great treatment of the gospel, assurance, and perseverance.
- *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* by JI Packer (126 pgs) - gospel, character of God, evangelism.
- *Eve in Exile* by Rebekah Merkle (208 pgs) - biblical femininity.
- *Christian Beliefs* by Wayne Grudem (137 pgs) - a short systematic theology.
- *Heaven is a Place on Earth* by Michael Wittmer (221 pgs) - an application of the Christian worldview.
- *Basic Christianity* by John Stott (168 pgs) - great for all, but especially new believers or unbelievers.
- *Prodigal God* by Tim Keller (133 pgs) - devotional look at the prodigal Son.
- *Fear Not* by Ligon Duncan (94 pgs) - a look at the gospel, death, and heaven. A practical eschatology.
- *The Discipline of Grace* by Jerry Bridges (242 pgs) - devotional book on the centrality of grace.
- *Family Shepherds* by Voddie Baucham (171 pgs) - subtitle nails it: calling and equipping men to lead their homes.
- *Humility* by CJ Mahaney (170 pgs) - practical theology with a view to enlarging God and minimizing us.
- *Bible Doctrine* by Wayne Grudem (450 pgs) - abridgement of his *Systematic Theology*.
- *Disciplines of a Godly Man* by Kent Hughes (229 pgs) - key disciplines for Godly men.
- *Disciplines of a Godly Woman* by Barbara Hughes (272 pgs) - key disciplines for Godly women.
- *Feminine Appeal* by Caroline Mahaney (192 pgs) - great book on biblical femininity.
- *Shepherding a Child's Heart* (210 pgs) by Ted Tripp - best book on parenting available (key for little years).
- *The Holiness of God* by RC Sproul (216 pgs) - Modern classic on a key attribute of our great God.
- *The Whole Story of the Bible in 16 Verses* by Chris Bruno (112 pgs) - looks at key trees with the forest in view.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://ssbaptist.org/resources/recommended-reading>

## Tips for Reading and Discussion

If reading through a book, you can ask questions such as:

- Was there anything insightful, new, unclear, challenging, convicting, disagreements, applications from the chapter you read?
- Were there any key verses unpacked that we could read together?
- What were the top three most impactful truths?

If reading through a book of the Bible together, the following three methods can be used as tools to help you prayerfully engage the Word of God together:

### *The Swedish Method:*

Read 5-10 verses beforehand or while together and note 1-3 light bulbs, question marks, crosses, and arrows. A light bulb is for insights. Question marks are for confusions or questions. A cross is for how the passage points or relates to Jesus. An arrow is how we can apply the passage to our lives.

### *The COMA Method:*

COMA stands for context, observation, meaning, and application. Start with the context and note the immediate and surrounding context. Make several observations about the passage. What do you see? What stands out? What is the meaning of the passage? Then how can we apply it to our lives.

**OIA:** OIA stands for observation, interpretation, and application.

*Observation* - What does it say?

Who wrote it and why (author, purpose, situation)?

What is the context (immediate -before and after, book, epoch, canon)?

What are the key words?

Who/What/When/Where/Why?

*Interpretation* - What does it mean?

What are the sections/subsections?

Are there any connecting words?

What is the main point(s)?

Anything unclear?

Key cross-references?

Are there any Old Testament quotations?

How does this passage relate to Jesus?

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about people?

What do we learn about relating to God?

What do we learn about relating to people?

*Application* - What does it mean to me?

What does God want me to understand and believe?

What does God want me to desire?

Do I need to change my attitude?

What does God want me to do?

Head, Hands, Heart



*"Imagine if all Christians, as a normal part of their discipleship, were caught up in a web of regular Bible reading - not only digging into the word privately, but reading it with their children before bed, with their spouse over breakfast, with a non-Christian colleague at work once a week over lunch, with a new Christian for follow-up once a fortnight for mutual encouragement, and with a mature Christian friend once a month for mutual encouragement. It would be a chaotic web of personal relationships, prayer and Bible reading - more of a movement than a program - but at another level it would be profoundly simple and within reach of all. It's an exciting thought!"<sup>21</sup>*

## D-Group Sample Covenant

I commit to do my best to meet the following expectations:

1. I commit to attend the weekly D-Group meetings
2. I commit to prioritize the work we will do together
3. I commit to confidentiality, transparency, and honesty among the group
4. I commit to pray for those in my group regularly
5. I will begin praying about those with whom I will lead in the next D-Group.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>21</sup> Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine* (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2009), 57.

## Testimony Questions

Use these to get to know each other at the beginning of your group:

1. How did God save you?
2. What kind of home did you grow up in?
3. The closest I have felt to God in my life was \_\_\_\_\_?
4. If I could change one incident in my life, it would be \_\_\_\_\_? Why?
5. One incident which I am incredibly grateful for is \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The turning point in my relationship with God was \_\_\_\_\_.

## Accountability Questions

1. How was your week?
2. Were you in the Word and prayer?
3. Are you pursuing a non-Christian?
4. Have you spent quality time with the fam?
5. How is your battle with sin?

## Life Plan<sup>22</sup>

1. Reflect on what you think your eulogy would say if you died today. Then write what you want your eulogy to say. How do you want to be remembered? The goal of this life plan is to narrow the gap between current reality and preferred future.
2. Life Verse:
3. Mission Statement:
4. Determine how many “life accounts” you have (God, self, wife, kids, church, work, finances, friendships), then fill out the following for each:
  - Purpose for this account
  - Supporting Scripture
  - Envisioned Future
  - Current Reality
  - My Plan (be specific)

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<sup>22</sup> See Michael Hyatt and Daniel Harkavy, *Living Forward* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016).

## Appendix D

# “One Another” Passages in Scripture

## "One Another" Passages

1. Be at peace with one another (Mark 9:50)
2. Love one another (John 13:34)
3. Be joined to one another (Rom 12:5)
4. Be devoted to one another (Rom 12:10)
5. Honor one another (Rom 12:10)
6. Rejoice with one another (Rom 12:15)
7. Weep with one another (Rom 12:15)
8. Live in harmony with one another (Rom 12:16)
9. Accept one another (Rom 15:7)
10. Counsel one another (Rom 15:14)
11. Greet one another (Rom 16:16)
12. Agree with each other (1 Cor 1:10)
13. Wait for one another (1 Cor 11:33)
14. Care for one another (1 Cor 12:25)
15. Serve one another (Gal 5:13)
16. Carry one another's burdens (Gal 6:2)
17. Be kind to one another (Eph 4:32)
18. Forgive one another (Eph 4:32)
19. Submit to one another (Eph 5:21)
20. Bear with one another (Col 3:13)
21. Teach, admonish each other (Col 3:16)
22. Encourage one another (1 Thess 5:11)
23. Build up one another (1 Thess 5:11)
24. Spur one another on (Heb 10:24)
25. Offer hospitality to one another (1 Pet 4:9)
26. Minister gifts to one another (1 Pet 4:10)
27. Be humble toward one another (1 Pet 5:5)
28. Confess your sins to one another (James 5:16)
29. Pray for one another (James 5:16)
30. Fellowship with one another (1 John 1:7)

## Appendix E

# Ten Questions to Ask When Joining a Church

# Ten Questions to Ask Before Joining a Church

What should you look for in a church? Ask yourself the following questions:

## 1. Is this a church where God's Word is faithfully taught?

The Bible is the source of Christian authority (2 Timothy 3:16); therefore, the Bible is the source of the church's authority. You should look for a church that is Bible saturated. The Bible should actually be read in worship; the preacher should actually preach a message taken from a text of Scripture. This is why at High Pointe we are committed to expositional preaching. An expositional preacher brings forth a message from a particular text of Scripture, tells the congregation what that text originally meant and how it applies to life today. In other words, expositional preaching exposes and applies the Word of God to the people of God.

## 2. Is this a church where sound doctrine matters?

In Acts 2:42, the Bible notes that those who responded to the gospel message in faith devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching. Though many people fear the word doctrine, it simply means teaching. A church committed to sound doctrine will tell the people what the Bible "teaches" about a particular subject - in a humble manner. We further believe that a church committed to a sound doctrine will also distinguish between the core doctrines of Christianity and those which are not essential. In other words, it will not hold all doctrines at the same level. For example, a church should fight for and defend the doctrine of the deity of Christ, but it should be gracious and generous when it comes to an individual's view concerning the timing of the return of Christ (i.e. millennial views). For this reason, at High Pointe we distinguish between Core Beliefs (the essential doctrines of the Christian faith), Characteristic Beliefs (the doctrines that characterize our fellowship - i.e., believers baptism by immersion), and Charity Beliefs (those beliefs with which Christians within our fellowship are free to differ).

## 3. Is this a church in which the gospel is cherished and clearly proclaimed?

A gospel church must be driven by the gospel message, for the Bible reminds us in Romans 1:16, that we are not to be ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation. Mark Dever has succinctly summarized four aspects of the gospel in his book, *The Deliberate Church*. This simple summary allows us to see essence of the gospel; God (God created all things for His glory); Man (rebelled against God's rule); Christ (came to redeem a rebellious humanity); Response (this gospel requires a faith response). This very gospel is weaved throughout the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation; therefore, it should be evident throughout the church's proclamation and present in its mission and methods.

## 4. Is this a church committed to reaching non-Christians with the gospel?

The church's mission is stated in all four gospels (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-47; John 20:31) and Acts 1:8. If the gospel is the power of God for salvation, then a church that is gospel-driven, will seek to take this gospel to the ends of the earth in order that salvation may come to the nations. The lack of desire to reach unbelievers with the gospel is a direct violation of the Lord's command to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20)

## 5. Is this a church whose leaders are characterized by humility and integrity?

If the leaders of a church are not themselves transformed by the gospel they proclaim, then there is little hope for its members. As the leaders go, so goes the church. In 1 Timothy 3, the Bible lists qualification for its leaders (elders and deacons). It is interesting to note that the primary emphasis is on character. A church's leadership should be characterized by personal holiness, family leadership, sound doctrine, and love for those whom they lead, just to name a few characteristics. Church leaders are not required to be perfect, but they are required to be humble men who are growing to grace, knowledge and love of Christ.

## 6. Is this a church where people strive to live by God's Word?

Churches may be driven by a variety of factors: purpose, programs, tradition, etc. A gospel driven church, however, will be driven by the gospel, God's Word. Yet, something else must be said. As the Bible reminds us in James 1:22, we must be doers of the Word and not hearers only, lest we deceive ourselves. The Bible should be transforming God's people, and God's people should desire to be transformed by God's Word. This transformation will be evident in all areas of the life of both individual Christians and the church.

## 7. Is this a church where I can find and cultivate godly relationships?

Consider the fact that we were created for relationship (Genesis 2:18-25); we were never meant to live in isolation. It is the same with the Christian life; it is not good that we be alone. The Christian life is a life lived in relationship. When we look at Acts 2, we notice that the believers in the early church were devoted to one another. They shared their abundance with those who had needs. They even sold their possessions and gave from the proceeds to those who lacked. Further, consider all of the "one-another" passages in Scripture. A church should have a place where the one-another passages are being lived out.

## 8. Is this a church where members are challenged to serve?

One of the clear messages of Scripture is that life is not about us. Our devotion to Christ inevitably leads to a devotion to others in Christian love. Jesus Himself did not come to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). Christians have been gifted by the Holy Spirit of God for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7). Therefore, as each of us has a gift, we should use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace (1 Peter 4:10).

## 9. Is this a church that is willing to kick me out?

This question may alarm some at first, however, when we consider the fact that the church represents Christ to our world, then we begin to understand some of the implications of an unholy church. After all, Christ Himself is purifying the church (Ephesians 5: 26-27). Consequently, if we were to allow ungodliness to be rampant in the church, the witness of the gospel in that church would lose power. For this and various other reasons, the Bible gives Christians guidance on how to confront sin both individually (Matthew 18) and corporately (1 Corinthians 5).

## 10. Is this a church I'm willing to join "as is" with enthusiasm and faith in God?

You don't join a church to "fix it." This would be the ultimate display of arrogance! You join a church on order to covenant with a local body of believers to accomplish the mission Christ has given it - to see all peoples become whole-hearted followers of Christ. Are you able to support enthusiastically the church faith and practices? Its leaders? Its ministries? Can you be excited about joining this church "as is" and participating in its ministries? If so, then sign up, roll up your sleeves and become part of a covenant community that seeks to do all things to the glory of God in Christ.



## Appendix F

# Why You Will Join the Wrong Church

# “Why You Will Join the Wrong Church”

by Sam Emadi from 9 Marks Ministries<sup>23</sup>

The most read *New York Times* article from 2016 had nothing to do with politics, culture wars, or comic book movies. Instead, the most-read article of 2016 was all about commitment.

The piece, titled “Why You Will Marry the Wrong Person,” was written by Alain de Botton. In it, de Botton takes shots at our culture’s idea that the ultimate foundation for commitment in marriage is romantic affection, that feeling of compatibility that means the other person will finally fulfill my needs and make me truly happy.

We all know this is misguided, so much so that de Botton predicts every married person will eventually find inadequacies so severe in their spouse that it will prompt them to ask, “Did I marry the wrong person?” He humorously notes, the relational arc of a marriage leans away from idealistic romantic sizzle as “maddening children . . . kill the passion from which they emerged.”

## CHURCH AND OUR CULTURE

As I read de Botton’s article, I couldn’t help but see how much of our culture’s view of love and commitment mirrors how many Christians view church membership. Many Christians’ broken relationships with their churches resemble patterns of the divorce culture and its attendant assumptions about authority, love, and compatibility.

Almost every Christian knows what it’s like to question whether they joined the “right church.” After an initial “honeymoon stage,” we begin to see our church’s problems with greater clarity than we see its strengths. The sermons start to seem too intellectual, or not intellectual enough. The church begins budgeting for ministries that don’t seem deserving of the dollar figure on the spreadsheet. The small groups don’t meet our needs in the ways we’d hoped.

More personally, the needs of other church members begin to encroach increasingly on our own personal freedoms. Some members sin against us—even without knowing just how deeply we’ve been wounded. Without even realizing it’s happening, we begin to wonder whether our local assembly is the “right” place for us. Of course, we remind ourselves that there’s no such thing as a perfect church—something we’ve even told our fellow church members. And yet, we can’t help but grapple with the nagging question: “Did I join the wrong church?”

## “DID I JOIN THE WRONG CHURCH?”

The problem with this question is that it assumes church life shouldn’t be hard. It assumes the “honeymoon stage” should continue in perpetuity or that something has gone awry if we experience significant disappointment or hurt from our relationships with other members or the church’s leadership.

But these assumptions reveal a deep and unthinking commitment to consumerism: only if the perks of membership outweigh its inconveniences will we think it’s worth it to stick it out. Regrettably, many Christians seem trapped in a perpetual cycle of this type of cost-benefit analysis.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.9marks.org/article/why-you-will-join-the-wrong-church/>

I've found that Christians most often push eject on their membership not because they're upset at the church's budget or because they disagree on matters of polity. Instead, Christians leave their churches for the same reason people leave their marriages: a lack of relational depth and affection. In other words, many Christians leave their churches because they just don't seem compatible with the church or because the relationships leave them feeling a little dry.

Personal relationships, however, were never meant to serve as the foundation for our sense of church commitment. If we pursue relationships as the foundation of our belonging, we're more likely to be inescapably trapped in the consumerism and "met-needs" mentality at the heart of our divorce culture. However, instead of valuing consumerism, the Bible roots our membership in the idea of a covenant, which offers an infinitely superior alternative.

## COVENANT PRECEDES COMMUNITY

Tim Keller notes in his book on marriage that a covenant "creates a particular kind of bond . . . a relationship far more intimate and personal than a merely legal, business relationship. Yet at the same time, it is far more durable, binding, and unconditional than one based on mere feeling and affection. A covenant relationship is a stunning blend of law and love."

When the Bible speaks about the church, it refers to it as a covenant community. Church members aren't just part of a shared interest group. They're covenanted to one another by a sacred promise to oversee one another's membership in the kingdom and faithfulness to King Jesus (Matt. 18:15-20). The New Testament unfolds the details of that sacred promise: We regularly gather together (Heb. 10:24-25), bear one another's burdens and sorrows (Gal. 6:2), encourage one another (Heb. 3:12-14), pray for one another (Jas. 5:16), and forgive one another (Col. 3:13). Many churches helpfully formalize these biblical instructions into a church covenant, a set of promises members make to one another when they enter into membership.

These covenant obligations are the foundations of our church commitment and should function as the backbone to church life. Covenant precedes community. We might even say covenant creates community. The covenant promises members make to one another blossom into the life-giving relationships our hearts crave.

Rooting commitment in our covenant promises doesn't mean that church relationships are nothing but soulless duty. Instead, covenant commitments are the food that nourishes our relationships with other members. The more we hold ourselves to our covenant promises, the more our relationships blossom and endure through seasons of difficulty. Again, as de Botton perceptively notes in his article, "Compatibility is an achievement of love, it must not be its precondition." The world argues that affection is pre-requisite to commitment. But the biblical picture is actually quite the opposite: commitment and service create affection.

I'm amazed at how this principle works out even in my own life. A few years ago, after a couple in our church had a baby, my wife and I signed up through the church's member care ministry to bring them a meal. Our act of service, however, wasn't rooted in a pre-existing relationship with this couple. In fact, we barely knew them. We simply wanted to be faithful to our covenant promises to "bear one another's burdens." Yet that service, rooted in our covenant commitment, ultimately blossomed into a sweet friendship between our two families. We weren't expecting a relationship to bloom, but that's what happens when you hold yourself to covenant promises, even with people you barely know.

## COVENANTS CARRY YOU THROUGH SUFFERING

The reason God roots the most important relationships in the world—like marriage and church membership—in covenants is to ensure they endure through fire. Have you ever noticed how traditional marriage vows were designed to ensure couples prepare to love one another well in the midst of suffering? Couples pledge themselves to one another even in “poverty” and “sickness” until parted by death.

This same expectation of future trials also marks the promises church members make to one another. We pledge to “bear one another’s burdens,” (Gal. 6:2) and patiently bear with and forgive the sins of our brothers and sisters who wrong us (Col. 3:13; Eph. 4:32). If we make our covenant commitments the ground of our life and relationships in the church, we come to expect the rough patches and prepare to face them with godliness.

While our affections for our church and its members can be fickle, easily dissipating as soon as circumstances shift unfavorably, our covenant commitments never fade. As Keller notes, covenants are by their very nature oriented toward the future. They “are not a declaration of present love but a mutually binding promise of future love.” In some sense, the whole point of a covenant is to pledge our love and fidelity for the rough times ahead. Thus, covenants carry us through suffering. Once more, de Botton incisively notes, “Choosing whom to commit ourselves to is merely a case of identifying which particular variety of suffering we would most like to sacrifice ourselves for.”

## FOR YOUR OWN GOOD, STICK WITH THE “WRONG” CHURCH

Joining a church, like seeking a spouse, is daunting. Loving others makes us vulnerable and committing ourselves to a church immerses us in the needs of other sinners. Eventually, every congregation will find a way to get under our skin, frustrate us, or even wound us—and we will do the same to them.

Our relationships will ebb and flow, as will our affection for the church. But the solution is not always looking for a better fit. Instead, we renew our passion and reignite our sense of belonging by holding ourselves to our membership covenant—sacred promises that bind even the “wrong” people together.

Appendix G

**Danvers Statement**

# The Danvers Statement

The Danvers Statement summarizes the need for the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) and serves as an overview of our core beliefs. This statement was prepared by several evangelical leaders at a CBMW meeting in Danvers, Massachusetts, in December of 1987. It was first published in final form by the CBMW in Wheaton, Illinois in November of 1988.

## Rationale

We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:

1. The widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
2. the tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;
3. the increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
4. the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
5. the growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
6. the upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;
7. the emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness;
8. the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts;
9. the consequent threat to Biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;
10. and behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical Biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

## Purposes

Recognizing our own abiding sinfulness and fallibility, and acknowledging the genuine evangelical standing of many who do not agree with all of our convictions, nevertheless, moved by the preceding observations and by the hope that the noble Biblical vision of sexual complementarity may yet win the mind and heart of Christ's church, we engage to pursue the following purposes:

1. To study and set forth the Biblical view of the relationship between men and women, especially in the home and in the church.
2. To promote the publication of scholarly and popular materials representing this view.
3. To encourage the confidence of lay people to study and understand for themselves the teaching of Scripture, especially on the issue of relationships between men and women.
4. To encourage the considered and sensitive application of this Biblical view in the appropriate spheres of life.
5. And thereby
  - to bring healing to persons and relationships injured by an inadequate grasp of God's will concerning manhood and womanhood,
  - to help both men and women realize their full ministry potential through a true understanding and practice of their God-given roles,
  - and to promote the spread of the gospel among all peoples by fostering a Biblical wholeness in relationships that will attract a fractured world.

## Affirmations

Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).
3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9).
4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:1-7, 12, 16).
  1. In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
  2. In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15).

6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
  1. In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7).
  2. In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission-domestic, religious, or civil-ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet 3:1-2).
8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor 12:7-21).
10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.



Appendix H

# Nashville Statement

# Nashville Statement

## Preamble

Evangelical Christians at the dawn of the twenty-first century find themselves living in a period of historic transition. As Western culture has become increasingly post-Christian, it has embarked upon a massive revision of what it means to be a human being. By and large the spirit of our age no longer discerns or delights in the beauty of God's design for human life. Many deny that God created human beings for his glory, and that his good purposes for us include our personal and physical design as male and female. It is common to think that human identity as male and female is not part of God's beautiful plan, but is, rather, an expression of an individual's autonomous preferences. The pathway to full and lasting joy through God's good design for his creatures is thus replaced by the path of shortsighted alternatives that, sooner or later, ruin human life and dishonor God.

This secular spirit of our age presents a great challenge to the Christian church. Will the church of the Lord Jesus Christ lose her biblical conviction, clarity, and courage, and blend into the spirit of the age? Or will she hold fast to the word of life, draw courage from Jesus, and unashamedly proclaim his way as the way of life? Will she maintain her clear, counter-cultural witness to a world that seems bent on ruin?

We are persuaded that faithfulness in our generation means declaring once again the true story of the world and of our place in it—particularly as male and female. Christian Scripture teaches that there is but one God who alone is Creator and Lord of all. To him alone, every person owes gladhearted thanksgiving, heart-felt praise, and total allegiance. This is the path not only of glorifying God, but of knowing ourselves. To forget our Creator is to forget who we are, for he made us for himself. And we cannot know ourselves truly without truly knowing him who made us. We did not make ourselves. We are not our own. Our true identity, as male and female persons, is given by God. It is not only foolish, but hopeless, to try to make ourselves what God did not create us to be.

We believe that God's design for his creation and his way of salvation serve to bring him the greatest glory and bring us the greatest good. God's good plan provides us with the greatest freedom. Jesus said he came that we might have life and have it in overflowing measure. He is for us and not against us. Therefore, in the hope of serving Christ's church and witnessing publicly to the good purposes of God for human sexuality revealed in Christian Scripture, we offer the following affirmations and denials.

## Article 1

WE AFFIRM that God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and his bride the church. WE DENY that God has designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship. We also deny that marriage is a mere human contract rather than a covenant made before God.

## Article 2

WE AFFIRM that God's revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage.

WE DENY that any affections, desires, or commitments ever justify sexual intercourse before or outside marriage; nor do they justify any form of sexual immorality.

### **Article 3**

WE AFFIRM that God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in his own image, equal before God as persons, and distinct as male and female.

WE DENY that the divinely ordained differences between male and female render them unequal in dignity or worth.

### **Article 4**

WE AFFIRM that divinely ordained differences between male and female reflect God's original creation design and are meant for human good and human flourishing.

WE DENY that such differences are a result of the Fall or are a tragedy to be overcome.

### **Article 5**

WE AFFIRM that the differences between male and female reproductive structures are integral to God's design for self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that physical anomalies or psychological conditions nullify the God-appointed link between biological sex and self-conception as male or female.

### **Article 6**

WE AFFIRM that those born with a physical disorder of sex development are created in the image of God and have dignity and worth equal to all other image-bearers. They are acknowledged by our Lord Jesus in his words about "eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb." With all others they are welcome as faithful followers of Jesus Christ and should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known.

WE DENY that ambiguities related to a person's biological sex render one incapable of living a fruitful life in joyful obedience to Christ.

### **Article 7**

WE AFFIRM that self-conception as male or female should be defined by God's holy purposes in creation and redemption as revealed in Scripture.

WE DENY that adopting a homosexual or transgender self-conception is consistent with God's holy purposes in creation and redemption.

### **Article 8**

WE AFFIRM that people who experience sexual attraction for the same sex may live a rich and fruitful life pleasing to God through faith in Jesus Christ, as they, like all Christians, walk in purity of life.

WE DENY that sexual attraction for the same sex is part of the natural goodness of God's original creation, or that it puts a person outside the hope of the gospel.

### **Article 9**

WE AFFIRM that sin distorts sexual desires by directing them away from the marriage covenant and toward sexual immorality— a distortion that includes both heterosexual and homosexual immorality.

WE DENY that an enduring pattern of desire for sexual immorality justifies sexually immoral behavior.

## Article 10

WE AFFIRM that it is sinful to approve of homosexual immorality or transgenderism and that such approval constitutes an essential departure from Christian faithfulness and witness.

WE DENY that the approval of homosexual immorality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.

## Article 11

WE AFFIRM our duty to speak the truth in love at all times, including when we speak to or about one another as male or female.

WE DENY any obligation to speak in such ways that dishonor God's design of his imagebearers as male and female.

## Article 12

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ is insufficient to forgive all sexual sins and to give power for holiness to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin.

## Article 13

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ enables sinners to forsake transgender selfconceptions and by divine forbearance to accept the God-ordained link between one's biological sex and one's self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ sanctions self-conceptions that are at odds with God's revealed will.

## Article 14

WE AFFIRM that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners and that through Christ's death and resurrection forgiveness of sins and eternal life are available to every person who repents of sin and trusts in Christ alone as Savior, Lord, and supreme treasure.

WE DENY that the Lord's arm is too short to save or that any sinner is beyond his reach.

## Scripture References\*

Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-24; Ex. 20:14; 20:17; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Dt. 5:18, 21; 22:5; Jdg. 19:22; 2 Sam. 11:1-12:15; Job 31:1; Ps. 51:1-19; Prov. 5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27; Isa. 59:1; Mal. 2:14; Matt. 5:27-30; 19:4-6, 8-9, 12; Acts 15:20, 29; Rom. 1:26-27; 1:32; 1 Cor. 6:9-11, 18-20; 7:1-7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 5:24; Eph. 4:15, 20-24; 5:31-32; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; 1 Tim. 1:9-10, 15; 2 Tim. 2:22; Titus 2:11-12; Heb. 13:4; Jas. 1:14-15; 1 Pet. 2:11; Jude 7

\* Scripture texts are not a part of the original document but have been added subsequently for reference

Appendix I

# Gospel Study

# GOSPEL STUDY

## Introduction

At South Side, we believe the gospel is the most important news in the world, something we talk about often. The following study is a summary of the good news and will help you understand:

1. WHO GOD IS
2. WHO WE ARE
3. WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE
4. OUR RESPONSE

Please read all the verses and respond to each question. To begin, think about and answer the following questions:

1. How confident are you that you have been saved by Jesus Christ? Circle one:

0% - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 - 100%

2. If you are not confident in your faith in Jesus, briefly explain why you are not sure.

3. If you are confident in your faith in Jesus, please explain why/how you are confident.

# WHO GOD IS

## Introduction

In order to fully understand the good news, we must understand who God is. Respond to the following questions based on the truths found in these verses.

- Genesis 1:1
- Psalm 7:11
- Exodus 34:5-7
- Isaiah 6:3

How would you describe God's character from these verses?

## SUMMARY

God is the holy and righteous creator to whom we are accountable.

# WHO WE ARE

## Introduction

Human beings are the glory and garbage of the world. We are created in God's image, but we have all rebelled against our creator.

- Isaiah 59:1-2
- Romans 1:18-23
- Romans 3:23
- Hebrews 9:27

How would you describe who we are from these verses?

## SUMMARY

God is our holy and righteous creator to whom we are accountable. We are sinful and therefore separated from God. Sin, which separates us from God, is our fundamental problem.



# WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE

## Introduction

Christianity is cross-centered. Read the following verses about God's work in Christ for us.

- Romans 5:8
- Romans 6:23
- Galatians 3:13
- 1 Peter 3:18
- Titus 3:3-7
- John 3:16
- 2 Corinthians 5:21

In your own words, describe what Christ has done for us according to these passages?

## SUMMARY

God is our holy and righteous creator to whom we are accountable. We are sinful and therefore separated from God. Sin, which separates us from God, is our fundamental problem. That's the bad news. But in love, God sent his son to deal with our sin. The cross is God's solution to our problem. Jesus lived the life we should have lived and died the death we deserved to die. That's the good news, the gospel!

# OUR RESPONSE

## Introduction

- Mark 1:15
- Romans 5:1
- Romans 10:9-10
- John 3:36
- Ephesians 2:8-9

According to these passages, how must we respond?

## SUMMARY

How can we be included in God's solution to our problem? Through faith and repentance. Faith is believing that Jesus is who he said he is. It is trusting in his finished work on the cross on our behalf. Faith is reliance. Repentance is acting on that belief. It is turning from our sins to God. It does not mean we stop sinning entirely, but we are no longer okay with our sin. Once we trust in Christ, we begin the life-long journey of following Jesus and loving one another.

## POST-STUDY REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

1. God is our holy, loving, righteous creator.
2. Due to sin, we are separated from Him and deserve condemnation.
3. In love, God has sent his son to save us from our sin.
4. Through faith and repentance, we are forgiven of all our sins.

Have you put your faith in Christ alone for salvation?                      Yes                      No

If you responded “no,” do you want to put your faith in Christ?                      Yes                      No

If you have not trusted Christ, but see your sin and need for a Savior, you can pray something like this:

*“Dear Jesus, I acknowledge that I am a sinner. I know I cannot save myself. I know that you promise to save those who trust in you and turn from their sins. I trust you to forgive me of my sins and give me eternal life. I ask you to be my Lord and Savior and commit to following you. Thank you for dying in my place! Amen.”*

For further study, see Greg Gilbert’s *What is the Gospel?*, J.D. Greear’s *Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart*, and J.I. Packer’s *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*.

## COMPLETE FAITH STORY

On the following page, please share how and when you came to faith in Jesus Christ.

## **FAITH STORY**

Please share about your life before Christ, how and when you came to trust in Christ as Lord and Savior, and how you are growing in your faith now.