



Christian Fellowship Bible Church

Membership Packet

(Updated March 2023)

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CLASS #1: WHY JOIN A LOCAL CHURCH?

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

An Explanation from the Book of Ephesians

- Chapter 1: a beautiful description of our salvation
- Chapter 2a: how we're saved (Eph. 2:4)
- Chapter 2b-3: primary implication of our salvation (Eph. 3:6)

Why did God do all this? "...so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10-11)

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (Jn. 13:34-35)

A BIBLICAL CASE FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

How does the Bible call Christians to relate to one another within the local church?

Love One Another

- "Love the brotherhood." (1 Pet. 2:17)
- "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." (Gal. 6:10)
- "Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor...Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality...Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another." (Rom. 12:10, 13, 15-16)

Encourage One Another

- "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up..." (1 Thess. 5:11)
- "...consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Heb. 10:24-25)

Guard One Another

- “See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no ‘root of bitterness’ springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy...” (Heb. 12:15-16)
- “May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” (Rom. 15:5)
- “...Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.” (Gal. 5:13-15)

Obey Your Leaders

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

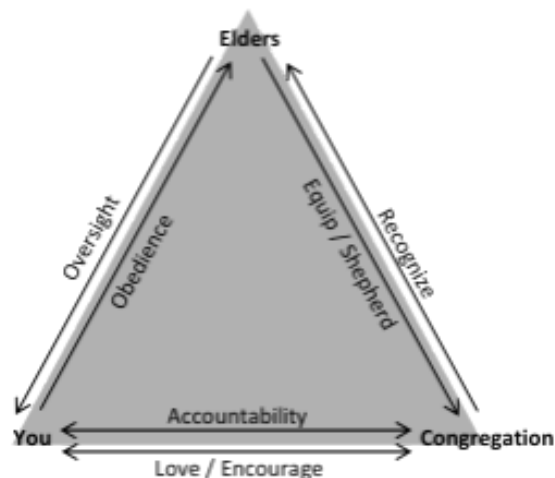
PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Putting these commands into practice requires three characteristics of our relationships in a local church:

1. Relationships that are committed.
2. Relationships with a defined group of people.
3. Relationships that give permission to speak hard words into your life.

Breadth and Depth of Commitment

- Breadth (loving those who are different from you)
- Depth (meaningful membership)



EXTRA READING FOR CLASS #1

HOW SHOULD WE DEFINE THE CHURCH?

Many people define the Church primarily by what she does and not by who she is. Unfortunately, this leads to an understanding of the Church that defines her not by God's work, but by man's work.

Another error is to define the Church by what God has done, and not also who He saved her to be and what He saved her to do. This leads to the idea that the Church is merely a confessional people, but not an obedient people who do what God commands and display what God is like.

Instead, we ought to define the Church in light of:

1. Who God is and what God has done (confessional)
2. Who He has made the Church to be (covenantal)
3. What He has saved and created her to do (commissional)

We are the Church because the Father has made us his children through the life and work of Jesus giving us new birth by His Spirit. Therefore, we have a new identity as children of God and our lives are marked by love and righteousness because we are His children who are deeply loved.

The local church is a group of God's people (who we are) saved by God's power (what He has done and is doing) for God's purposes (the good works He has created us in Jesus Christ to do).

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR A CHRISTIAN TO JOIN A CHURCH?

Every Christian should join a church because Scripture requires it. Granted, there is no direct command in Scripture that says, "Every Christian must join a local church," but two factors in Scripture indicate that every Christian should be a member of a local church:

1. As a public, earthly institution, Jesus established the church to mark out, affirm, and oversee those who profess to believe in Him (Matt. 16:18-19; 18:15-20). He wanted the world to know who belongs to Him and who doesn't. One way in which the world can see this is by looking at the members of His church. Jesus intends for His people to be marked out as a visible, public group. In other words, Christians are to join together in a local church.

2. Scripture commands Christians to submit to their leaders (1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17). The only way to do that is by committing to be members of their flock and saying, in effect, "I commit to listening to your teaching, following your direction, and to submitting to your leadership."

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

In addition to the New Testament's teaching that every Christian should submit to a local church and its leaders, there are many other reasons to join a church.

- **Assurance.** Membership is the church's way of affirming the validity of a profession of faith. The church looks at a person's life, hears their explanation of the gospel and how they came to believe it, and says, "You look like a Christian to us. So join us. Watch over our lives and we'll watch over yours." While membership in a church doesn't guarantee that someone is saved, it should assure true believers that their faith is genuine.
- **Evangelism.** We can preach the gospel to our community and the world much better together than we can apart. Furthermore, as we covenant with other Christians to love, encourage, and admonish one another, we display a living, breathing image of the gospel to the world.
- **Discernment.** As members of a church support and submit to its teaching, they collectively say, "This is the truth! World, pay attention!" Their unity in doing so helps to expose corruptions and imitations of the true gospel.
- **Edification.** When we join a local church, we let the pastors and other members of that church know that we intend to attend regularly, give faithfully, pray for the church, and serve the church as we have opportunity. We allow fellow believers to have greater expectations of us in these areas, and we hold them responsible in these ways as well. So join a church in order to build it up (Eph. 4:11-16).
- **Safety.** Being a church member means that a whole church full of people are committed to helping you live a life that's pleasing to God, even to the point of excluding you from the church if you stop repenting of sin. While this may sound harsh to some, to those of us who know the deceitfulness of sin, this is a comforting and encouraging reality (Heb. 3:12).
- **Exaltation.** We testify to the world about who God is and what He is like by how we love one another (Jn. 13:34-35). A persevering, accountable love is a beautiful picture of God's love. By committing to one another as members of the same church, we display the glory of God's love through our lives together, and so bring Him glory.

CLASS #2: STATEMENT OF FAITH

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Our deepest convictions affect every decision we make as a Church. While the Bible itself is our formal document of faith, the following statements are those biblical beliefs that most fundamentally define who we are:

We believe that the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is the infallible Word of God, verbally inspired by God and without error in the original manuscripts; and is the supreme standard and final authority for all conduct, faith, and doctrine (2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:16-21).

We believe in one God eternally existent as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Gen. 1:1; Matt. 3:16-17; Jn. 1:1, 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Jn. 5:7-8).

We believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and His premillennial, personal return in power and glory (Isa. 7:14, Dan. 9:25-27; Matt. 1:18-25; 28:6-7; Lk. 1:35, Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Heb. 12:2; Rev. 20:1-6).

We believe that man was created in the image of God, but by willful transgression became sinful and is justly under the condemnation and wrath of Almighty God (Rom. 3:23; 6:23).

We believe that the only salvation from this guilt and condemnation is through faith in the righteousness and atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ and that this salvation is the free gift of God's love and grace (Jn. 3:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Col. 2:6).

We believe in the personality of the Holy Spirit and that His ministry is to reveal Christ to men, to convict of sin, to regenerate repentant sinners and by His presence and power, to sanctify the lives of the redeemed (Jn. 14:16-17; 16:7-11; Rom. 8:14-16, 26-27; Eph. 1:13-14; Heb. 9:14).

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the ordinances of baptism and communion; that baptism is only to be administered upon profession of faith, by immersion, thereby declaring our faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior; that communion is only for believers, is to be preceded by faithful self-examination and is in remembrance of the Lord's death until He comes (Matt. 3:16; Jn. 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:36-39; 1 Cor. 11:23-28).

We believe in the everlasting bliss of the saved and the everlasting suffering of the lost (Mal. 3:18; Matt. 25:34-41; Rom. 6:17-23; Rev. 20:14-15).

We believe in the real spiritual unity of all believers in the Church which is the body of Christ, associated by covenant of faith and fellowship of the gospel for the purpose of worship, service, and the spread of the Gospel to all the world (Acts 2:41-42, 20:17-28; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:11-13).

We believe in the necessity of maintaining, according to the Word of God, the purity of the Church in doctrine and life (Psa. 119:9; Eph. 6:24-27; 1 Tim. 5:22).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These are core values that represent what we believe about ourselves and the church. They represent how we will interact with each other to accomplish the CFBC Mission Statement and our CFBC Vision. These likewise answer the question: "Why are we doing what we are doing?"

1. We believe the Bible to be the final authority for faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:16-21).
2. We believe service to Christ merits excellence in everything we do (Ecc. 9:10; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; Col. 3:17).
3. We believe that both corporate and individual encounters with God are vital (Psa. 12:21, 63:1-2; Jn. 4).
4. We believe all people have worth and value to God and therefore, to us (Matt. 18:14; Lk. 5:30-32).
5. We believe in the development of our God-given gifts and talents for service to God (Rom. 12; Eph. 4; 2 Tim. 1:6-7).
6. We believe that the family is God's primary unit for the ministry and therefore, the family should be nurtured (Psa. 128; Eph. 6:1-6).

EXTRA READING FOR CLASS #2

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL? by Greg Gilbert

What exactly do Christians mean when they talk about the “gospel of Jesus Christ”? Since the word “gospel” means “good news,” when Christians talk about the gospel, they’re simply telling the *good news* about Jesus! But it’s not just any good news; it *demand*s a response! It’s a message from God saying, “Good news! Here is how you can be saved from my judgment!” That’s an announcement you can’t afford to ignore.

So, what is the good news about Jesus Christ?

Since the earliest Christians announced the *good news* about Jesus, it has been organized around these questions...

1. *Who made us, and to whom are we accountable?*
2. *What is our problem?*
3. *What is God’s solution to our problem?*
4. *How can I be included in his solution?*

Christians through the centuries have answered those questions with the same truth from the Bible.

1. *We are accountable to God.*
2. *Our problem is our sin against him.*
3. *God’s solution is salvation through Jesus Christ.*
4. *We come to be included in that salvation by faith and repentance.*

Let’s summarize those points like this: God, Mankind, Jesus Christ, and Our Response.

God

The first thing to know about the *good news* of Jesus is that “in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). Everything starts from that point, so if you get that point wrong then everything else that follows will be wrong. Because God created everything—including us—he has the right to tell us how to live. You have to understand that in order to understand the *good news* about Jesus.

How would you describe God's character? Loving and good? Compassionate and forgiving? All true. God describes himself as "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." Then God adds, "but who will by no means clear the guilty" (Ex. 34:6-7). That explodes about 90 percent of what people today *think* they know about God. This loving God does not leave the guilty unpunished. To understand just how glorious and life-giving the gospel of Jesus Christ is, we have to understand that God is also holy and righteous. He is determined never to ignore or tolerate sin. Including ours!

Mankind

When God created the first human beings—Adam and Eve, he intended for them to live under his righteous rule in perfect joy—obeying him and living in fellowship with him. When Adam disobeyed God, and ate the one fruit that God had told him not to eat, that fellowship with God was broken. Moreover, Adam and Eve had declared rebellion against God. They were denying his authority over their lives.

It's not just Adam and Eve who are guilty of sin. The Bible says "*all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...none is righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:23, 10). Yet, we often think of our sins as not much more than violations of some heavenly traffic law. So we wonder why God gets so upset about them. But sin is much more than that. It's the rejection of God himself and his right to exercise authority over those to whom he gives life.

Once you understand sin in that light, you begin to understand why "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). That's not just physical death, but spiritual death, a forceful separating of our sinful, rebellious selves from the presence of God forever. The Bible teaches that the final destiny for unbelieving sinners is eternal, active judgment in a place called "hell."

This is the Bible's sobering verdict: "It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Every one of us will be held accountable to God. The Bible warns that "whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (Jn. 3:18).

But...

Jesus Christ

The word "Christ" means "anointed one," referring to anointing a king with oil when he is crowned. So, when we say "Jesus *Christ*," we're saying that Jesus is a King!

When Jesus began his public ministry, he told the people, "The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the good news!" Centuries before, God had promised that he would come as a great King to rescue his people from their sins. And here was Jesus saying, "The kingdom of God is *here...now! I am that great King!*"

Eventually Jesus's followers realized that his mission was to bring sinful people into that kingdom. Jesus came to die in their place, to take the punishment they deserved for their rebellion against God. As Jesus died on a cross, the awful weight of all our sins fell on *his* shoulders. The sentence of death God had pronounced against rebellious sinners struck. And Jesus died. For you and me!

But the story doesn't end there. Jesus the Crucified is no longer dead. The Bible tells us that he rose from the grave. He is not just King Jesus the Crucified, but King Jesus the Crucified and Resurrected! Jesus's rising from the grave was God's way of saying, "What Jesus claimed about who he is and what he came to do is true!"

Our Response

What does God expect us to do with the information that Jesus died in our place so we can be saved from God's righteous wrath against our sins? He expects us to respond with repentance and faith.

To repent of our sins means to turn away from our rebellion against God. Repentance doesn't mean we'll bring an immediate end to our sinning. It does mean, though, that we'll never again live at peace with our sins.

Not only that, but we also turn to God in faith. Faith is reliance. It's a promise-founded trust in the risen Jesus to save you from your sins. "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned...He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree...the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God" (Jn. 3:17-18; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18).

If God is ever to count us righteous, he'll have to do it on the basis of someone else's record, someone who's qualified to stand in as our substitute. And that's what happens when a person is saved by Jesus: All our sins are credited to Jesus who took the punishment for them, and the perfect righteousness of Jesus is then credited to us when we place our trust in what he has done for us! That's what faith means—to rely on Jesus, to trust in him alone to stand in our place and win a righteous verdict from God!

Do you believe that you have rebelled against God and deserve his wrath? That Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died the death that you deserve for your sins? That he rose from the grave and lives to stand in your place as your Substitute and Savior? If that is your heartfelt conviction, you can tell him in words like these...

Jesus, I know I can't save myself, and I know you have promised to save those who repent and put their faith in you alone. I trust you to forgive my sins and give me eternal life. Thank you for dying in my place to make my salvation possible!

If you've done that, then a whole life of getting to know Jesus lies ahead, *beginning right now!* There's much more to learn from the Spirit of God who comes to live in all those who put their trust in King Jesus!

CFBC STATEMENT ON MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY

Marriage

The Scripture teaches that marriage was given by God as part of His common grace and that it has no meaning other than as He has provided (Gen. 2:18-24). The Scripture teaches that marriage is subject to the curse of the Fall but that believers, living in obedience to the Scripture and under the control of the Holy Spirit, can begin to experience peaceful, productive, and fulfilled marriage as intended by God (Gen. 3:16; 1 Pet. 3:7).

The Scripture teaches that the marriages of believers are to illustrate the loving relationship of Christ and His church, with the husband loving his wife as Christ loves the church and the wife responding to her husband's loving leadership as the church responds to Christ (Eph. 5:18-33).

The Scripture teaches that as believers' marriages are to illustrate Christ's relationship with His church, believers should choose to marry those who share their faith and regenerate life (2 Cor. 6:14).

The Scripture teaches that the term "marriage" has only one meaning and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen. 2:23-24).

The Scripture teaches that marriage is always a public, formal, and officially recognized covenant between a man and a woman. The Scripture teaches that without such a covenant, which may include a "common law marriage," where valid in specific cases under pertinent law, prolonged conjugal cohabitation does not establish, and is not equivalent to, marriage (Jn. 4:18). The Scripture teaches that where no such covenant exists, or can be discerned, between cohabitating couples prior to coming to faith in Christ, family units should be preserved to the extent possible and, if otherwise appropriate, solemnization encouraged. The Scripture teaches that where a valid marriage has been established prior to faith in Christ, the couple should remain married (1 Cor. 7:24).

Divorce and Remarriage

The Scripture teaches that God hates divorce, permitting it only where there has been unrepentant sexual sin (Mal. 2:14-16; Matt. 5:32; 19:9) or desertion by an unbeliever (1 Cor. 7:12-15). The Scripture teaches that remarriage is permitted to a faithful partner, but only when the divorce was on biblical grounds.

Sexuality

The Scripture teaches that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. The Scripture teaches that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman (Heb. 13:4).

The Scripture teaches that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pedophilia, pornography, any attempt to change one's sex or disagreement with one's biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God (Lev. 18:1-30; Matt. 5:28; Rom. 1:26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:1-8).

The Scripture teaches that homosexuality, in particular, is subject to God's wrath of abandonment, is a matter of choice and not inherited status, and epitomizes man's ungrateful rebellion against God (Rom. 1:18-28).

The Scripture teaches that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture or the doctrines of the church. The Scripture teaches that the faithful proclamation of the Scripture, including the call to repentance, does not constitute hate speech, or hateful and harassing behavior, but is instead a fundamental part of the church's loving mission to the world (Matt. 18:16-20; 2 Cor. 5:11-20; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 4:1-2).

The Scripture teaches that God offers redemption and forgiveness to all who confess and forsake their sin, including sexual sin, seeking his mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. The Scripture teaches that His forgiveness is total and complete (Psa. 103:11-12; 130:3-4; Isa. 43:25; 44:22; Jn. 5:24; Col. 2:13-14) and that God imputes the full righteousness of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21) to the believing sinner. The Scripture teaches that the forgiven sinner has been cleansed from the guilt of sin, set apart unto God, or made holy, and justified before Him (1 Cor. 6:9-11). The Scripture teaches that any man or woman who has received that forgiveness is "in Christ" and is a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17).

CLASS #3: CHURCH COVENANT AND MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The Christian life is fundamentally relational in nature and relationships require commitment to flourish. Our Church Covenant is the commitment we make to one another within our church (Heb. 10:23-24).

COVENANT PROPER

Trusting that we have been brought by the Spirit of God to repent and believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and 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, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We engage, through the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit, to work and pray in unity and in the bond of peace; to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of the church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and private devotions; to disciple our children in the fear of God; to seek the salvation of our family and friends; to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lust; and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation to lead a holy life.

We will seek by divine aid to be just in our dealings; to avoid all gossip, excessive anger; to abstain from drunkenness and other intoxicating substances; and to flee sexual immorality.

We engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to rejoice at each other's happiness; to weep with those who weep; to be slow to take offense but ready for reconciliation and, mindful of the rules of Savior, secure it without delay; to faithfully admonish one another as occasion require; to not neglect to meet together as we see the Day drawing near.

We moreover engage that when we remove from the place, we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and principle of God's Word.

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

CHURCH COVENANT BIBLE REFERENCES

Church Defined

1. Salvation and baptism (Matt. 28:19-20; Jn. 1:11-12)
2. Grace-driven transformation (Rom. 12)
3. To carry my membership when I move and remain active in church work wherever I live (Acts 11:19-21; 18:24-28)

Duties to the Church

1. To walk together in Christian love (Jn. 13:34-35)
2. To strive for the advancement of the church and promote its prosperity and spirituality (Phil 1:27)
3. To sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrine (Matt. 18:15-17; 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 5, 11:23-31; Heb. 10:22-25; 1 Tim. 3).
4. To give it sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin (Matt. 15:13ff; Mk. 3:31-35)
5. To contribute cheerfully and regularly (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:6-7)

Duties of Personal Living

1. To maintain family and secret devotions (1 Thess. 5:17-18)
2. To religiously educate the children (Deut. 6:4-7; 2 Tim. 3:15)
3. To love our neighbors (Mk. 12:31)
4. To win the lost (Psa. 126:5-6; Prov. 11:30; Matt. 4:19; Acts 1:8)
5. To walk circumspectly in the world and be just in our dealing, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment (Eph 5:15; Phil. 2:14-15; 1 Pet. 2:11-12)
6. To avoid gossip and excessive anger (Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; Jms. 3:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:21)
7. To use our influence to combat the abuse of drugs, alcohol, and the spread of pornography and other practices which lead to moral and spiritual decay (Eph. 5:15; Heb. 2:15)
8. To be zealous in our efforts for Christ (Tit. 2:14)

Duties to Fellow Members

1. To watch over one another in love (1 Pet. 1:22)
2. To pray for one another (Jms. 5:16)
3. To aid in sickness and distress (Gal. 6:2; Jms. 2:14-17)
4. To cultivate sympathy and courtesy (1 Pet. 3:8)
5. To restore through discipline (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5)
6. To be slow to take offense, always ready for reconciliation (Eph. 4:30-32)

MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

There is more to being a Christian than having your name on a church roster. Some regard membership in the church like membership at a country club. However, because we are serious about our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ, we have expectations of our members to help us accomplish that mission.

1. To be responsible for their own spiritual growth through personal and corporate study of the Bible and prayer (Lk. 18:1; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 4:7).
2. To regularly come for weekly corporate worship and fellowship (Heb. 10:24-25). To get involved in the lives of the brethren by obeying the "one anothers" in the Bible (Jn. 13:34; Rom. 12:10; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 4:2, 32, 5:21; Phil. 2:3-4; Col. 3:13). To love and show hospitality to others, especially to the brethren (Heb. 13:1-3; 1 Pet. 4:8-9).
3. To be actively involved in the life of the church through the exercise of their spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-7). To participate in the edification of the church (Eph. 4:16). To support the various ministries of the church through prayer, service, and financial contributions (2 Cor. 8:1-6; 9:6-14; 2 Thess. 3:1-2).
4. To be involved in the church's evangelistic efforts through personal evangelism, missions work (or the support of missionaries in the field), and various kinds of outreaches (Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3).
5. To submit to the leaders (pastors and deacons) of the church in matters of policy and discipline (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Heb. 13:17).

EXTRA READING FOR CLASS #3

7 THINGS YOUR CHURCH NEEDS FROM YOU by Tim Challies (<https://www.challies.com>)

Not too long ago I had the opportunity to speak to a gathering of young adults from several churches across our city. I chose to speak about how any Christian (not only young adults) can make a church better and stronger. Here are some of the things I came up with: 7 things your church needs from you.

Your church needs you to...

...Be Humble

There is no character quality more important than humility. While humility does not come naturally to any of us, it can be learned, because here's the thing: Humility isn't a feeling or an attitude—it's an action. If you want to learn humility, you need to act humble. Here are 3 quick tips on becoming humble:

- Find mature Christians who exemplify humility and spend time around them. Learn from them and learn to be like them.
- Volunteer for the lowliest of tasks. Don't ask to be in the public eye when you serve, but be content to stay in the back. Find joy in doing the lowliest jobs and do them when and where only Jesus will see.
- Get to know Jesus. It was Jesus who said, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." (Matthew 23:12). And it was Jesus who humbled himself the deepest and was exalted the highest.

...Prioritize Church

Every church has people who make the public gatherings of the church a low priority. These are the people who only come to church when it is convenient and who use any excuse to miss a day or miss a service. Every church desperately needs people who will make the public gatherings a top priority. Today is the day to begin elevating the importance of church in your life.

Let me give you two reasons:

- First, you need your church. God made you part of your church for your own good. You cannot do life on your own. You aren't strong enough, you aren't wise enough, you aren't mature enough, you aren't godly enough. Without the beautifully ordinary means of grace you encounter in the church, you won't make it. Without the support of your brothers and sisters, you won't make it.
- Second, your church needs you. God made you part of your church for the good of others. 1 Peter 4 says, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." God has gifted you to be part of your church, and those gifts are to be used for the good of other people. So prioritize church as an expression of generosity toward others.

...Consider Giving God a Day

Why don't you consider setting aside an entire day of the week and dedicating it to the Lord in a special way? We believe that the Old Testament law has been fulfilled in Christ, though there is some disagreement among Christians about the implications. But even if you believe that the Sabbath command is no longer binding on us, there is still value in learning from it.

It completely changes Sunday when you give the entire day to the Lord and his people. Now you're not having to decide whether to take that class or join that club that meets Sunday afternoon.

You're not skipping church during exam time because you've got studying to do. You're not leaving early to get home before the football game starts. Instead, you're leaving behind all the cares of life, and even many of the joys of life, and dedicating an entire day to worship, to fellowship, and to serving others.

...Live Like a Christian All Week Long

It is easy enough to be a Christian at church, but then you get home. But then you go to work. But then you go to school. And then you're surrounded by people acting ungodly, and even worse, you're left alone with your own thoughts and your own desires. Yet your church needs you to live like a Christian all week long.

Each of us faces different challenges and different temptations. But one key to living like a Christian all week long is spending time in Word and prayer every day. Make this a priority no matter how busy you are and no matter how crazy life seems. Make this something you do no matter how badly you've sinned and how little you feel like doing it. Pray day-by-day not only for yourself, but for your church. Take that membership directory and pray through it from A to Z, and then start over. Make your devotional life something you do not just for the good of yourself, but for the good of others.

...Get to know People Not Like You

Churches are involuntary communities—we don't get to pick who comes to them, God does. So what we have to do is learn to live with these people and learn to love these people, even when they are very different from us. "For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." If your church is divided so that all the young adults hang out together and all the older folk hang out together, or if all the people with accents hang out together and all the people without accents hang out together, that makes a statement about the gospel—that the gospel is not big enough and powerful enough to really make people love one another even though they are different.

So commit to get to know people not like you. There is no reason you shouldn't be able to say that some of your best and closest relationships are with people who are very different from you.

...Learn Generosity

Few things reveal the heart better than money. Money has an amazing way of displaying what you really believe and what you really value. No matter who and what stage of life you are at, there is no better time than now to learn to be generous with your money. Here's what the Bible says: "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." You must give, and you must learn to do it cheerfully.

Here are just 2 quick tips:

- Remember that it's not your money. The money belongs to God—he just gives it to you to manage it. And he means for you to manage it well and to his glory.
- Give to the Lord first. I know people who say they can't give to the church, and yet they've got a new cell phone and are carrying a cup of Starbucks into church every week. That doesn't compute. Learn to give the first and best of your money to the Lord. The harder that seems, the more you need to do it.

...Be a Great Church Member

Make yourself invaluable to your church, and do this by serving other people. I love reading about Dorcas, the woman Peter raised from the dead who was described as being "full of good works and acts of charity" (see Acts 9). "When Peter arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with him." Dorcas was a great church member. She loved people so much, and did so much good to them, that the whole community mourned when she died.

Would that be you? Would the people of your church weep as they remember you for all the good you did to others? Find the place you can serve your church, and serve there without fail, without excuse, without requiring praise and accolades. Do it for the good of others and the glory of God.

SIMPLIFY FAMILY WORSHIP by Donald Whitney

A man who is like a spiritual father to me began what he called a “family altar” with his wife before they were married, and has faithfully continued the practice through the arrival of children and grandchildren for more than fifty years. Sadly, it seems that few men among even the best evangelical churches today could speak of daily family worship in their home. In the minds of some, active church involvement eliminates the need for family worship. For others, Bible reading, prayer, and singing praises together as a family have been crowded out by the television, the Internet, and a non-stop schedule that makes even meals together a rarity.

But the father (and in his absence, the mother) of the family has the responsibility from God to provide spiritual leadership for his household. As He did with Abraham, the Lord wants every father to “command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord” (Gen. 18:19). Each one should raise his children “in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Every husband should love his wife as Christ loves His bride—the church—and follow Christ’s example of washing his wife with “the washing of water by the word” of God (Eph. 5:26).

While it isn’t the only way, the simplest method of applying all these texts in a steady, practical way is through daily family worship. This is how generations of Christians have understood them. For instance, both Baptists and Presbyterians in the 1600s saw this biblical teaching, and incorporated identical language about the expectation of family worship into the most influential confessional statements in their respective histories. To this day, many churches still maintain (at least officially) that, “God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and truth; as in private families daily.”

Somehow, though, many men have gotten the idea that family worship is complicated, or that it requires time-consuming preparation. But it need not require any more preparation than your personal worship of God. And the entire experience can be reduced to three simple elements: read, pray, sing.

Read. The centerpiece of family worship is the Bible. Read a passage of appropriate length for your family, making any impromptu comments that come to mind. Those with younger children should emphasize the narrative portions of Scripture, and possibly the Proverbs. Eventually, most seem to work up to about a chapter a day, reading consecutively through a particular book of the Bible. I recommend that you ask a few questions to determine comprehension, or just ask the children to repeat what they remember.

Pray. Let the words of the passage you read suggest matter for prayer. The husband/father should pray, and perhaps one or all the rest of the family members. Most days this will be brief.

Sing. Use a hymnal and sing a cappella, or sing along to a recording, or let a family musician lead the way. Sing as little as one verse, or for as long as the family enjoys it.

Any order of “read, pray, sing” is fine. It doesn’t have to be long to be effective. Be patient with the interest and attention span of the younger ones. Remember that you’re not only fulfilling a responsibility to God by leading family worship, you’re also introducing your children to Him. In these moments together, your children can see your love for God and for His Word, and some of the most teachable moments of their childhood will occur. So start family worship in your home today. It doesn’t matter when you have worship. For some, early morning is best. For others, it’s mealtime, and for still others, it’s bedtime. Just start. Whether you’ve been married fifty years or newly engaged, just start. Keep it simply, and keep it up.

WORSHIPING GOD TOGETHER THROUGH SONG by Matt Merker (*for Capitol Hill Baptist Church*)

One of the greatest privileges we have as a congregation is to praise God together in song. Because music is such a powerful vehicle for glorifying God and encouraging one another, our desire is to approach worship through song with deliberate thought and care. Here are five main considerations that give shape to our use of music in the services of CHBC.

1. **We strive to exalt biblical truth in music that leads to an appropriate emotional response.** Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” God created music as a medium that stirs great emotion in the human heart. Our goal is to harness this power responsibly by using music to highlight and celebrate biblical truth. We recognize that music can make people feel certain emotions regardless of the lyrics’ message, so we’re careful both to pick songs that have profound biblical content and to avoid over-emotionalizing our music. The emotion in worship should be a response to the truth of who God is and what he has done.
2. **We strive to cultivate rich congregational singing.** When John views God’s throne room in Revelation 5-7, the whole gathered congregation joins their voices together to praise the Lamb. Our goal is for singing to be a participatory experience, not an observational experience. Paul tells the Ephesians to address “one another in psalms and hymn and spiritual songs” (Eph. 5:19), which reminds us that although our worship through song is primarily God-oriented, it also has a secondary purpose of encouraging one another. For this reason, we print the music for many of our songs to make the melodies (and harmonies) easier to learn, we have plain rather than overwhelming musical instrumentation, and we avoid performances and “special music” in our services.
3. **We strive to use a simple musical style that promotes unity.** Our prayer is that CHBC would be a community of faith that includes people from all backgrounds and cultures, united in our trust in Jesus Christ. When it comes to worshiping God, the style of music we use is extremely unimportant in a theological sense. Therefore, our hope is that by using a simple style with minimal arrangement and instrumentation, a diverse group of people with varying musical tastes would be able to sing together and enjoy unity around the lyrical content of the songs. The musical style may not be everyone’s favorite, but that means worship through song is an opportunity for all of us to sacrifice our personal preferences for the sake of the whole congregation.

4. **We strive to appreciate God-honoring music from all eras.** In our services, our aim is to incorporate not the “best of the ‘80s, ‘90s, and today,” but the best from all periods of Christian history from which we have music—including today. Singing edifying hymns from long ago is one way that we appreciate the witness of our brothers and sisters from past centuries who have persevered in the faith.
5. **We strive to reflect the full spectrum of the Christian experience in our music.** Our goal is to sing music that captures the whole array of the Christian life—from the sorrow we have over our sin to the joy of our redemption in Christ, and from the happy expectancy of heaven to the pain of trials and persecution. We see this variety of expression conveyed wonderfully throughout the Psalms. Some of the slower, minor key songs we sing at CHBC may be new to you, but we pray that these hymns would become helpful companions to you during times of suffering as they have for so many of us.

CLASS #4: MISSION, VISION, AND LIFE OF CFBC

MISSION STATEMENT

Our purpose is to glorify God by leading men and women to the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We then bring them up into spiritual maturity by caring for them, nurturing them in the Word of God, strengthening their fellowship with Christ and with one another, and helping them grow in their faith and love.

OUR VISION

Our vision for Christian Fellowship Bible Church is to become a healthy church that is characterized by both qualitative and quantitative growth. By God's grace, we envision her to grow as a strong community of faith with servant-members, who will reach the world for Christ by communicating the gospel visually through the lives of each member and verbally through the clear and honest presentation of the Word of God, leading people to become more like Christ.

LIFE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Regular Gatherings

1. Sunday School
2. Sunday Morning Service
3. Monthly Prayer Meeting (1st Sunday)
4. Quarterly Members Meetings
5. Small Groups (Youth, BBS, Men's & Women's Fellowships)

Leadership

Pastors (elders) are biblically qualified men, recognized by the congregation, that exercise oversight for the local church. They lead the church through the preaching/teaching of the Word and through shepherding. At CFBC, we believe that having a plurality of elders is both wise and in accord with the New Testament pattern.

- Alex Hong, Staff Elder
- Kristopher Saliba, Staff Elder
- Nelson Alura, Lay Elder
- Francis Constante, Lay Elder

Deacons are biblically qualified servants, recognized by the congregation, that aim to uphold the unity and administration of the church. They pay attention to the physical or logistical needs of the church so that the elders can concentrate on spiritual leadership.

- Alvine Castro
- Tony Ormeo
- Levi Rivera
- Fidel Tumbos
- Joey Uy

GETTING CONNECTED AT CFBC

As a member of our local church, we want you to experience the love of God through the body of Christ. Jesus said the world will know that we are his disciples by our love for one another (Jn. 13:34-35). Love should be tangible and evident in every Christian life. And the local church should be one of the means where we receive and show love towards one another. We want you to develop meaningful relationships at our church, to grow spiritually, and to become more like Christ. But what does that actually look like in practice?

Here are a few practical ideas:

Arriving Early

You will encourage your fellow members when you arrive early on Sunday morning ready to encourage others and worship God. Come early to Sunday School to be taught and equipped in your faith. During the Sunday Service, be eager and attentive to sing God's praise, listen to His Word, and participate in worship for the spread of the gospel.

Stay for Lunch After Service

A "potluck" lunch has been part of our church's tradition ever since its inception! Be intentional about eating with other members, especially ones you don't know. Be intentional about doing good spiritually by discussing how they are doing, how they were encouraged by the service, or how God has been working in their life the past week.

Join a Small/Fellowship Group

Small groups are mid-week fellowships designed to create meaningful relationships among church members and also be an avenue to invite and introduce others to the faith. We have different groups that meet at various times and locations throughout the week. Small groups are more intimate than the Sunday gathering, but we desire that people would be encouraged by the church and by God's Word throughout the week as well.

Offer and Accept Hospitality

Hospitality literally means "love of strangers." We hope that members will reach out to other members by opening their homes and seeing Christianity lived out in everyday life. You can schedule a meal or some other type of outing with another church member. This will give you an opportunity to get to know others in the church in a more meaningful way.

Participate in a Discipling Relationship

Discipleship is doing spiritual good to another person by Word and prayer in the context of a loving relationship. We want friendships centered on Christ and the gospel. Be intentional about meeting with another member to read and study Scripture, or read a good Christian book, or talk about Sunday's sermon, or encourage one another in the promises of God, or pray for one another. All Christians are disciples and all Christians should be involved in discipling or being disciplined by another Christian.

Serving in An Organized Ministry

We are blessed to have many different ministries in our church; everything from children's to music to facilities to administration. Contact one of the church leaders to find out ways you can get involved and participate.

We desire that each member of CFBC experiences rich fellowship and receives encouragement through meaningful relationships. We not only desire that you receive encouragement, but also desire that you give encouragement as you continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Don't be afraid to talk to one of your pastors if you are not sure where to begin. We pray that you will glorify God as you participate in the life of our local church as we seek to "lead people to Christ and grow people to be like Christ."

EXTRA READING FOR CLASS #4

CFBC PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

Exalt God

The chief end of God is to preserve and display His infinite and awesome greatness, namely, His glory (Isa. 48:11). God created all things and all things exist through Him and for Him (Rom. 11:36). God's supreme purpose is to manifest His glory. The Scriptures teach us that God alone is to be the object of our worship. This demands that we have a high view of God; one which views Him as holy, righteous, and true.

At CFBC, the glory of God is both the motivation and goal of our ministry. When contemplating any aspect of ministry, the most pressing question must be, "Will this glorify God?" His glory will be the deciding factor for which ministry activities and programs are done and how they are done. This is our definition of a God-centered local church ministry (Psa. 95:6-7).

Edify the Saints

Believers are called to edify one another (Jude 1:20). "To edify" means "to encourage" and/or "to build up". Therefore, our local church ministry will have an eye toward building up the believer in the Christian faith (Col. 1:28-29). Love, unity, and maturity within the body of Christ are practically manifested through the obedience of the "one another" commands found in the New Testament.

At CFBC, we encourage active participants within our local church. Leadership has the responsibility of equipping members of the congregation to discover and utilize their spiritual gifts for the mutual building up of one another (Eph. 4:11-16). Our prayer is for CFBC to be a community of believers where each individual member is faithfully serving the Lord by ministering to the rest.

Evangelize the Lost

Every believer is to bear witness concerning the salvation that can only be found in Christ. The proclamation of the Gospel is fundamental to the salvation of the lost (Rom. 10:14). Therefore, the local church should look to ensure that the Gospel is faithfully communicated to the unconverted in an effort to make disciples of the nations (Matt. 28:19-20).

God's purpose in the salvation of each believer is so that they might be to the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:5-6). While recognizing that unbelievers cannot be saved apart from receiving the Gospel in faith, Scripture also emphasizes that believers are to live holy and godly lives before an unbelieving world (1 Pet. 2:11-12).

CFBC CHURCH HISTORY

Christian Fellowship Bible Church was born out of a Bible Study group in the West Covina and Rowland Heights areas between 1985 and 1986 by visiting pastors and Bible teachers. As a result of a series of Bible Studies conducted by the Rev. Antonio F. Ormeo, a need to organize a church was felt.

On the evening of April 2, 1986, the first meeting to plan, organize, and establish CFBC was held at Ed & Lilia Soledad's residence in Rowland Heights, CA. In attendance were Pastor Moises de Guzman, Romy Ignacio, Pablo Florentino, Edwin Soledad, and Lilia Soledad. At this time, Pastor de Guzman accepted the call to be the pastor of the proposed church. The name "Christian Fellowship Bible Church (CFBC)" was selected that night.

It was evident that God was at work in this body of believers when the first Worship Service took place on Sunday, April 6, 1986. The service was held at the back of a jewelry store owned by Lilia Soledad at 1559 East Amar Road, West Covina, and 14 adults and 2 children attended. The first tithes and offerings were collected, totaling \$71.76. A few months later, the jewelry store moved to a smaller retail shop, leaving the church to occupy the whole space.

The first baptism was held on May 18, 1986, with 7 persons following the Lord in the waters of baptism. The church was officially incorporated in California on July 21, 1986 and the Federal IRS Official Exemption was approved on April 3, 1987. Pastor de Guzman prepared the necessary church documents, the Church Constitution, and other paperwork for the IRS.

The first group of deacons were installed during the First Anniversary Worship Service, which included Filomeno Pumaren, Benny Matthysen, Teodorico Tumbos, and Edwin Soledad. The installation was conducted by Pastor Roem Agustin.

Unfortunately, in June 1987, Pastor de Guzman fell gravely ill. By October, he had to leave the church for health reasons. During this time, Rev. Antonio Ormeo and Pastor Nene Ramientos provided valuable assistance in pastoral services and Bible studies.

Having grown larger in number, the church moved to a larger space in the same retail center in October 1987; a move made by faith, as tithes and offerings were still not high enough for the rental fee.

On January 1, 1989, a pastoral call was extended to Pastor T. Ormeo, which he gladly accepted. The church then had a regular pastor after 14 months without one.

The church moved to Oswalt Elementary School in Walnut, CA in 1998, which provided more sanctuary space, some classrooms for children, and covered dining space. Oswalt would become the church's worship center for 10 years until moving to Sonrise Christian School in 2008.

At this time, CFBC fervently sought a place or building to purchase for a more permanent House of Worship. Numerous places were seen and carefully considered. CFBC prayed and waited for God's plan.

In God's providence, a commercial property at 1773 W. San Bernardino Road, West Covina, was purchased in late 2009, and the space was renovated into an eating hall, offices, and sanctuary.

In 2011, Alex Hong became a pastoral intern to help serve alongside Pastor Ed; and in October 2014, after he completed his seminary education at the Master's Seminary, a pastoral call was extended to be an Assistant Pastor to CFBC.

Due to growing health complications, the Lord called our beloved Pastor Edwin Ormeo home on April 30, 2017 after five decades of faithful gospel ministry. Before his passing, the leadership agreed that having a plurality of pastors was biblical and it would ensure the future of the church.

On May 14, 2017, CFBC elected its first lay pastor, Nelson Alura, to serve with Pastor Alex. Two years later, the Church would nominate and elect Francis Constante in April 2019 to serve CFBC as its second lay pastor. In August 2020, a pastoral call was extended to Pastor Kristopher Saliba to meet the growing demands of the ministry.

The Lord continues to be good and faithful as the church continues to grow numerically and spiritually through the faithful and consecutive exposition of God's Word, which has defined the success of CFBC since its very beginning.

CFBC continues to seek to pass the gospel to the next generation as we continue to "lead people to know Christ and grow people to be like Christ".

HOW MUCH SHOULD WE GIVE? by Jamie Dunlop

In the Old Testament, God commanded his people to pay ten percent of their income to support the Levites—the religious teachers of the day. And there was not just one tithe but three, averaging roughly 23% of their annual income—in addition to the temple tax and voluntary offerings. Today, we have received so much more blessing in Christ than those Old Testament saints could ever have imagined. Giving for the Christian is a wonderful opportunity to take the temporal money that God has given us and invest it in returns that are eternal. It is an opportunity to loose the chains that money can wrap around our hearts by making it clear that God is sufficient, and though he may use my money, I don't ultimately need it. But to really understand how much we should give, we need to carefully examine what the Scriptures say about giving.

Giving in the New Testament

Many Christians assume that their responsibility starts and ends with a gift of 10% to a favorite charity—though few do even this. But this is far from an accurate picture of Biblical giving. 10% of our income may well be a good starting point. After all, Abraham tithed to the high priest Melchizedek hundreds of years before the tithe was required by the law that was eventually fulfilled in Christ. And Jesus nowhere tells us not to tithe. But it's notable that in all the instructions to the churches in the New Testament, the tithe is absent. Instead, we see Paul instructing each Christian to give “in keeping with his income” (1 Cor. 16:2)—in other words, give as much as he is able. And he writes to the churches in Galatia, “Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches” (Gal. 6:6). All good things—not just 10% of what God has given us.

And yet it's clear that there are a few things we do with our money that are more important than giving to the church. If one were to give so much that he was unable to provide for his family's basic needs, the apostle Paul would say “he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim. 5:8).

Ultimately, money is but one of many stewardships God has given to us. So along with our time and our abilities and our relationships, we should take our money and make “the best use of the time” (Eph. 5:16) for the glory of God. Start at giving 10% of your income (or less if Biblical constraints such as 1 Tim. 5:16 so require) and see every dollar as an opportunity to bring glory to God. Would your next dollar better serve God if given to the church, or used to hire a babysitter so you can disciple a younger Christian? Would your next dollar better serve God if given to the church or used to take your family on vacation to enjoy God’s good gift of creation (1 Tim. 6:17) and build into those relationships (Eph. 6:4). These are the kind of questions you’ll need to answer as you determine how much to give. If you have no income, your goal should be to give of what you do have (money, time, relationships, etc.) so that the first day you have an income it is second-nature to give some of it as well.

Some Practical Considerations

1. Give to your local church first. A good application of Galatians 6:6 (cited above) is that since your local church is your primary source of teaching, it should be the primary recipient of your giving.
2. Give regularly and deliberately. Paul told the Corinthians to set aside money on the first day of every week (1 Cor. 16:2). Giving to the church should not be a spontaneous decision. Instead (ideally with your budget in hand), carefully consider how much giving will enable the best use of your money.
3. Give sacrificially and cheerfully. God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7) and he calls all of us to take up our cross and follow him (Lk. 9:23). So, use your giving to make possible a life lived in sacrificial obedience, knowing that whatever you give up pales in comparison to what you are receiving in Christ.
4. Seek wise counsel. We should not give to impress others (Matt. 6:2). And yet we are foolish to make decisions about money alone (Prov. 15:22; 1 Tim. 6:10). Be transparent with at least someone at your church about your whole life—including how much and where you give.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE AND THE LOVE OF GOD by Jonathan Leeman

Do the words “church discipline” seem like they don’t belong together, like “painful friendship” or “conditional grace”? In fact, church discipline builds healthy churches and vibrant gospel witnesses.

What is Church Discipline?

Broadly, church discipline is one part of the discipleship process. As in many areas of life, Christian discipleship involves both instruction and discipline, just like soccer practice or math class.

Narrowly, church discipline is correcting sin. It begins with private warnings. It ends, when necessary, with removing someone from church membership and participation in the Lord’s Table. The person will generally be free to attend public gatherings, but he or she is no longer a member. The church will no longer publicly affirm the person’s profession of faith.

A number of sins might call for loving warnings in private. But formal public discipline typically occurs only in cases of sin that meet three further criteria. A sin must be outward—it can be seen or heard (unlike, say, pride). It must be serious—serious enough to discredit the person’s verbal profession to be following Jesus. And it must be unrepentant—the person has typically been confronted but refuses to let go of the sin.

Is Discipline Biblical?

Church discipline first shows up in Matthew 18, where Jesus says concerning the person in unrepentant sin, “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (v. 17). That is, treat him as outside the covenant community. The person has proven uncorrectable. His life does not match his Christian profession.

Another well-known passage on discipline, 1 Corinthians 5, helps us to see the purpose of discipline. First, discipline exposes. Sin, like cancer, loves to hide. Discipline exposes the cancer so that it might be cut out (see 1 Cor. 5:2). Second, discipline warns. A church does not enact God's judgment through discipline. Rather, it stages a small play that pictures the great judgment to come (v. 5). Third, discipline saves. Churches pursue it when they see a member taking the path toward death, and none of their arm-waving causes him or her to stop. It's the device of last resort (v. 5). Fourth, discipline protects. Just as cancer spreads from cell to another, so sin quickly spreads from one person to another (v. 6). Fifth, discipline preserves the church's witness. Strange to say, it serves non-Christians because it keeps churches distinct and attractive (see v. 1). After all, churches are to be salt and light. "But if salt has lost its taste..." Jesus said, "It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet" (Matt. 5:13).

Is Discipline Really Loving?

Church discipline at its core is about love. The Lord disciplines those he loves (Heb. 12:6). The same is true for us.

The problem is, many people today have a sentimentalized view of love: love as being made to feel special. Or a romanticized view of love: love as being allowed to express yourself without correction. Or a consumeristic view: love as finding the perfect fit. In the popular mind, love has little to do with truth and holiness and authority.

But that's not love in the Bible. Love in the Bible is holy. It makes demands. It yields obedience. It doesn't delight in evil but rejoices in the truth (1 Cor. 13:6). Jesus tells us that if we keep his commandments, we will abide in his love (Jn. 15:10). And John says that if we keep God's word, God's love will be perfected in us (1 Jn. 2:5). How do church members help one another abide in Christ's love and show the world what God's love is like? Through helping one another obey and keep his word. Through instruction and discipline.