Membership Matters
A Six Week Introduction to the Doctrine, Vision & Ministry of Redeemer Church.
My Membership Process

Course

Our six week Membership Matters course is designed to help you discern God’s will concerning your place at Redeemer, as well as provide you with a scriptural basis upon which to make your commitment to membership. Check off each session once you have attended the class and completed the reading assignments for each session.

☐ Session 1 | Overview, Identity & Vision
☐ Session 2 | Our Doctrine
☐ Session 3 | Our Leadership
☐ Session 4 | Upreach: How We Worship
☐ Session 5 | Inreach: Ministry to “One Another”
☐ Session 6 | Outreach: Ministry to Neighbors & Nations

Care Group

While walking through the membership process, we also urge you to begin participating in the Care Group that meets in closest proximity to your household.

Covenant

Please submit the following forms, which can be provided to you upon request or found online at www.redeemerfortworth.org/membership.

☐ Covenant & Church Discipline Signature form. This ensures that you have read the Redeemer Church Covenant as well as the statement on church discipline, and are willing to make such a commitment.

☐ Membership Profile. This tool helps us get to know you better and come to understand your spiritual background more clearly.

Conversation

An elder will contact you to schedule an interview once your forms have been received. The purpose of this conversation is to afford you an opportunity to ask any questions of the church’s leadership that you might have, share any concerns, and allow us to hear you share (verbally) your personal testimony of faith in Jesus Christ. During this conversation, we will also have the opportunity to talk about baptism (believers’ baptism by immersion is required for membership).

Congregation

Each applicant is invited to briefly share their testimony of faith in Jesus Christ at a members’ meeting, providing the opportunity to our members to affirm your desire to join our church family.
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Session 1
Overview, Identity & Vision

Joining Redeemer Church

On this side of the cross and resurrection, the way Jesus Christ makes his heavenly authority visible on earth is through local churches filled with baptized believers submitting to his reign, walking in step with his commandments, and growing everyday in obedience to him (Matt 16:18-19; 18:15-20; 28:18-20). Local churches are God’s “object-lesson” of divine wisdom, his tangible reminder that through Christ’s death and resurrection God disarmed the rulers and authorities, he broke the power of sin, and he’s bringing all things in subjection to Christ (Eph 1:9-10, 20-21; 3:10-11; Col 3:15; Heb 2:14; cf. 1 Cor 15:24).

Therefore, it is incumbent upon the elders and membership of Redeemer Church to maintain the distinction between the world, whom we desire to experience the liberating power of the gospel, and those whose lives authenticate the liberating power of the gospel. Only the latter belong to the church and can truly bear the fruits of Christ’s kingdom, fruits such as repentance from sin, trust in Christ, a love for God’s word, and life in the Spirit. To help preserve this important distinction between the world and the church and to help disciple people in their relationship to Christ and his church, the following measures of care exist in the process of joining Redeemer Church.

1. Class

To become a member, one must complete all seven sessions of the Membership Matters class and read the Membership Matters material. You might very well ask, “Why a class?” We see the Membership Matters class serving three basic purposes: **discipleship, unity, and mission**.

**Discipleship**

Whether you just recently professed faith in Jesus Christ or have been walking with him for decades, our chief aim in Membership Matters is your discipleship. Our foremost desire is to equip you in submitting to the authority of Jesus Christ and treasuring the gospel that is “of first importance” (Matt 28:18-20; 1 Cor 15:1-4). In particular, we see this course teaching Jesus-followers to obey all that he has commanded in regard to the visible expression of
his kingdom on earth, the local church, and living with each other in it through the power of the gospel. Stated differently, no Christian can rightly say, “I don’t need other Christians,” or “I’m only a member of the universal church.” While the universal church exists, obeying all that Jesus commanded us includes all he commanded us through his apostles about the local church, like loving one another, gathering with one another regularly, submitting to one another in discipline, obeying particular leaders, correcting one another, bearing each others burdens, etc. (Matt 18:15-20; Gal 6:2; Eph 5:21; Heb 10:25; 13:17; 1 John 3:23). Our hope is that Membership Matters encourages your Christian growth, joy, and tangible obedience in all these areas related to the gospel and the local church who should authenticate the gospel with their living.

**Unity**

Moreover, by offering a common teaching from Scripture for all who pursue membership at Redeemer Church, we hope to preserve the unity of the Spirit. That does not mean Membership Matters is the only occasion on which we together seek unity; such active and intentional pursuit of unity should characterize the whole of our lives together (e.g., Acts 4:32; Eph 4:1-3; Phil 2:1-6; Col 3:14). Nevertheless, by instilling within all who enter our church the fundamentals of Christian living in community, we are all further equipped to respond in Christ-honoring ways when the world, our flesh, and the devil threaten our unity. Moreover, we hope the materials in this class will contribute to your discernment about whether to join Redeemer Church or seek membership at another faithful, gospel-preaching church. Always feel free to ask any pressing questions you may have during each class session.

**Mission**

Lastly, we want to ensure that all who join Redeemer Church are familiar with the various avenues for service and outreach to the world as well as the biblical passions driving them. Membership Matters should acquaint you with how the Bible presents God’s passion to make his name famous through his people and how we unite together to serve in contexts of local ministries and frontier missions (Hab 2:14; Rom 15:8-21; 16:25-27). Essentially, we want Membership Matters to help you make disciples of Jesus Christ alongside the other brothers and sisters at Redeemer (cf. Matt 28:18-20), which brings us to another measure of care within our fellowship.
2. Care Group

While walking through the membership process, we also urge you to begin participating in the Care Group that meets in closest proximity to your household. Alongside Corporate Worship and Members Meetings, the Care Group Ministry exists as one of the primary care structures within Redeemer Church to ensure your growth in treasuring Jesus Christ and regularly making him known to others. Proximity enables such care to occur more frequently as we see taking place in the early church (e.g., Acts 2:46-47; 20:20; Rom 12:13; 16:5). In fact, proximity makes it all the more possible for us to fulfill the “one-anthers” of Scripture such as exhorting one another every day (Heb 3:12-14), bearing one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2), and confessing our sins to and praying for one another (Jas 5:16). Proximity also serves evangelism efforts to a particular neighborhood or region a Care Group decides to target strategically (cf. 1 Cor 9:19-23). Should you decide to join Redeemer Church, we will make known to the body which Care Group is helping the church and its leadership keep watch over your soul.

3. Covenant

Once finished with Membership Matters, a person must complete two forms expressing their willingness to join membership at Redeemer Church. The first is the “Church Covenant & Discipline” form, which ensures that the individual has read the Redeemer Church Covenant, the Redeemer Statement of Faith, and the Statement on Church Discipline, and is willing to commit to all in good conscience. The second is the “Membership Profile” form, which is simply a tool to help us know you better and come to understand your spiritual background more clearly. Both forms are available by request or accessible online at www.redeemerfortworth.org/membership.

4. Conversation

The purpose of this conversation is two-fold. First, the conversation provides a context for everyone desiring membership at Redeemer Church to ask any questions of the church’s leadership they may have, share any remaining concerns, and testify to the Lord’s saving grace in bringing them to faith in Jesus Christ. Second, the conversation provides a context for the elders to hear one’s profession of faith in Jesus Christ, ask questions that help discern one’s consideration for membership, and guide the potential member in the way that would be most beneficial for their own soul and the overall health of Redeemer Church.
5. Congregation

This is the last measure we take in the process of giving a charitable judgment regarding one joining membership at Redeemer Church. It provides the opportunity for the elders to recommend someone for covenant membership, for the congregation to hear their profession of faith in Jesus Christ, and for the members to affirm corporately one’s joining membership at Redeemer. Those still desiring membership will attend a members meeting to testify of the Lord’s redeeming work in their own lives and their desire to join and serve the Redeemer body. The elders will also express their recommendation for membership and allow sufficient time for members to express any Scriptural concerns should they have any. If no Scriptural concerns exist, the membership will vote to receive each candidate into membership and commit to serving alongside them in the love of Christ and strength of God’s Spirit (see Bylaws I.2).

So, those are the five measures of care for your own soul in the process of joining Redeemer Church: class, care group, covenant, conversation, and congregation. We do not view these five measures of care as one’s “entryway” into the kingdom of God. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ is the gateway into the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, true belief in and submission to the gospel of Jesus Christ is very tangible in its love for God, its devotion to the saints, and its zeal for mission. Thus, we want to do what we can up front to encourage all of his precious, blood-bought people into those wonderful graces and be discerning when others resist them, because ultimately the church is about displaying the glory of Christ and our identity in him.

Our Identity in Christ: Worshipers, Family & Missionaries

Every person has an identity. Your identity defines who you are, drives where you find your ultimate significance, and determines your life priorities. We will be the first to admit that while God created us to find our identity in him, all of us have sought to find our ultimate significance in things less satisfying than God himself, things like money, education, acceptance, or a job position, to name a few. However, because of what Jesus Christ has done for us, we have been fundamentally transformed such that our identity now and forever stands in who he is and what he has done through the gospel. The Bible often speaks of our new identity in Christ in three primary relationships: to God, to the church, and to the world.
God's Worshipers

In relation to God, we become his true worshipers when we embrace Jesus for salvation. Once we were spiritually dead and enjoyed our own sinful passions (Eph 2:1-3). We truly believed that the various idols we created and that the world offered us were worthy of all our worship (Rom 1:18-32). Fame, money, sex, power, self-esteem, all were more deserving of our attention and adoration than the infinitely glorious God of the universe. Our preference was that of sin and Satan himself to destroy the glory of God (Gen 3:1-7; Acts 26:18). But God showed us great love by sending his own Son, Jesus Christ, to take away our sins on the cross and destroy the devil’s works we once followed (1 John 2:2; 3:8). Moreover, God raised Jesus from the dead to give us his new life of holiness and righteousness, now delivered from the power of sin to pursue the glory of God in all we think, feel, say, and do (Rom 6:1-14; 12:1-3; 15:8-13).

God's Family

In relation to the church, we become God’s family. Before trusting in Christ, we did not belong to his family (Eph 2:11-13). Rather, we forsook his family as rebellious children (Luke 15:11-16). We preferred a lifestyle of malice and envy, being hated by others and hating one another (Tit 3:3). We alienated ourselves from God, spurning his many kindnesses, and like the rest of mankind we were content as children of his wrath (Eph 2:1-3). But God’s grace triumphed over our sinfulness. While we deserved eternal abandonment and separation from God, he graciously turned our hearts to himself through the gift of his Spirit (Ezek 36:24-27; Tit 3:4-8). Moreover, he adopted us through his own Son, Jesus Christ, and made us part of his family, his household, his inheritance forever (Gal 4:5). Because God first loved us, we now seek to love God and each other (1 John 4:19). As God forms his perfect love in us, our affections for each other grow and we delight in serving, supporting, and strengthening one another as brothers and sisters (Rom 12:5-16; Gal 6:1-6; Col 3:12-17).

God's Missionaries

In relation to the world, we become God’s missionaries or his “sent ones” when we submit ourselves to Jesus’ authority (Matt 28:18-20; John 20:21). Once we cared nothing for others around us (Rom 3:12-18; Tit 3:3). Even where our lives gave the appearance of serving others, our own selfish ends were motivating us. We thought nothing of our self-centered lifestyles and were blind to how sinful they truly were before God (Rom 8:7; 1 Cor 4:4). While God demanded love of neighbor, we preferred to use our neighbor; and for this rebellious
attitude we deserved eternal condemnation. But God did not leave us in our selfishness. He sent Jesus Christ into the dark and self-focused world to deliver us from our hell-deserving, selfish ambitions. Moreover, he also raised Jesus from the dead to make us a new people who gladly serve and lay down our lives for the eternal well-being of others in God (1 Cor 9:19-23; 10:31-33). Compelled by the love of Christ, now we go to our neighbors and the nations to declare the glory of God in the gospel (2 Cor 5:14-21).

Our Vision

Together, God is transforming us from being idolatrous and self-obsessed individuals to being a worshipping family of missionaries. Our vision then flows out of who God has made us to be in Christ. As God’s worshipers, family, and missionaries, we exist to equip God’s people [family] to delight in his glory [worshipers] and to declare his glory to our neighbors and the nations [missionaries]. Nothing gives us more joy than laboring in various ways to see God treasured in all his redeemed people, for this is where God has destined his world to arrive: “...the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb” (Rev 21:23).
Why is Doctrine Important?

As we stated in Session 1, the first and most important consideration when choosing a church is it’s doctrinal beliefs. We must be personally convinced that a church’s beliefs are biblical. That is why doctrine is such a high priority at Redeemer Church. We are convinced that what an individual believes determines how that person lives their life. Despite popular notions that theology has nothing to do with daily Christian living, we hold tenaciously to the belief that our understanding of God is the most practical element of our daily walk with Him.

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, What comes into your mind when you think about God? we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man.”
- A.W. Tozer, Knowledge of the Holy

The purpose of this session is to introduce to you the theological moorings that anchor us as a church body and work their way out in daily living. Because the biblical content of our faith is so vast, there is simply no possible way to go into depth about every doctrine we hold to in one session. To make the best use of our time together, we will approach this session as a discussion of several distinctives that make up “Our Theological Identity.”

Our Theological Distinctives

As a church, we value the truth. God calls us to uphold his truth and conform ourselves to it in word and deed (1 Tim 3:15). We are to follow the pattern of the sound words of the apostles, discerning between empty philosophy and faithfulness to Scripture (Eph 4:11-16; Col 2:8; 2 Tim 1:17; 1 John 4:1-5). God’s truth did not always characterize us. With the rest of humanity, we, too, morally opposed the truth about God (Rom 1:18). Only by a work of divine grace do we now embrace and celebrate the truth that is in Jesus Christ and that reveals him unto us for salvation (John 14:6; 1...
Cor 2:6-16; 2 Tim 2:25). We still may not know God’s truth exhaustively due to our own sin and human limitations, but we do know God’s truth sufficiently for salvation and life with God. The following distinctives help summarize some of our own commitments as a church to upholding and practicing God’s truth. These distinctives should also assist our guests and inquirers as they learn more about us. A more detailed articulation of our beliefs appears in the “Statement of Faith” of our Constitution and Bylaws.

**Evangelical**

To be an evangelical church first and foremost means that we strive to be faithful to and centered upon the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as God has revealed it in Holy Scripture (Rom 1:1-7; 1 Cor 15:3-4). God saved us through the gospel; he continues to transform us by the same gospel; and he means for the gospel to set the priorities of all we are both in confession and in practice (1 Cor 9:19-23; 15:1-2; Col 1:23). Historically speaking, this also means we uphold the essential truths of the Christian faith—such as the existence of the triune God, the complete deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, his virgin conception, his incarnation as the eternal Son of God, the pervasive sinfulness of all humanity, Christ’s substitutionary death as the only way of salvation, his physical resurrection, his sure and bodily return, salvation by God’s grace alone through faith in Christ alone, and the infallibility and divine authority of the Bible—and seek to walk humbly in accordance with them.

**Reformed**

To be Reformed means that we stand with those saints throughout church history who joyfully affirm that God, the world’s Creator and King, is at the center of the gospel. The Bible reveals that God designs, preordains, creates, and controls everything to achieve his eternal purpose in Jesus Christ, so that he may receive all praise (Rom 16:25-27; Eph 1:9-10; 2 Tim 1:9). That is especially true in how God saves us: in our natural state, fallen people lack all power to believe the gospel; in love, God freely and unconditionally chose to redeem a countless multitude of sinners through Christ; with unwavering devotion, Christ died as an atoning substitute for their sins, securing them for eternal glory; and with unconquerable power, the Holy Spirit ensures that all of these so chosen not only believe the gospel, but also persevere till appearing before the presence of God’s glory with great joy. In short, being Reformed means being thoroughly God-centered in our view of God’s world and his purpose in grace, so that our hearts cannot help but worship, “To God alone be the glory!”
Evangelistic

To be evangelistic means that we, as missionaries, are constrained by the love of Jesus Christ to extend the free offer of salvation to all people without distinction ( Isa 45:22; Matt 28:18-20; Acts 10:43; 17:30; 1 Cor 1:18-25). God’s love indiscriminately offers to all peoples Christ in all his saving power through the gospel; and people must believe the gospel in order to be saved (John 3:16-21). Christian proclamation is God’s chosen means by which sinners hear the gospel (Luke 24:47; Rom 10:14-15; 15:20-21). Therefore, we plead with sinners to acknowledge God’s love for them in Christ so that they may not perish and we pray they will respond in repentance and faith (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 14:21; 1 Cor 15:1-2). God’s sovereignty over everything, even salvation, does not compromise but compels our devotion to primary evangelism and discipleship, since his gracious will ensures that rebels will believe (John 10:16; Acts 13:48; 18:9; 2 Tim 2:10; Rev 5:9-10).

Baptist

To be a Baptist church refers to our convictions about what the Scriptures teach on the nature, practice, and priorities of a local church (also known as our “ecclesiology”). At the very least, that means we affirm the autonomy of the local church, maintain regenerate church membership, enjoy the priesthood of all believers, and celebrate the two ordinances of Believers’ Baptism and the Lord’s Supper (see our Statement of Faith and BF&M 2000). We also see the Great Commission as a cooperative effort, and so we partner with other SBC churches for mission through the Cooperative Program, the IMB, and the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. Being a Baptist certainly does not mean that we alone have the edge on truth, but it is our humble contribution to practicing only what will promote further gospel faithfulness.

Elder-Led

To be an elder-led church refers to how we practice church leadership. Subjecting ourselves to the Scriptures, our conviction is that each local church recognized, affirmed, and submitted to the leadership of biblically qualified elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Eph 4:11-16; 1 Tim 3:1-7; 5:17-21; Tit 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:1-4; Jas 5:14; Heb 13:7, 17). These elders provide the spiritual oversight of the congregation through prayerful submission to God’s word which expresses itself in the regular discipleship, leadership, protection, and care of God’s flock. In addition to corporate worship and personal meetings, the elders also lead the church in monthly members’ meetings in which the congregation is able to interact with the elders regarding the work of
ministry and the life of the church. Thus, we practice congregational involvement under the spiritual care of elders (e.g., Acts 15:2-6, 22; 1 Tim 5:19-20; cf. Matt 18:17).

Covenantal

To be covenantal has to do with how we understand the function of the biblical covenants in bringing coherence and cohesion to the overall storyline of Scripture, defining and guaranteeing God’s relationship with man, and directing its Christ-centered focus. We believe that through the series of interrelated covenants God has revealed his purpose and will for mankind and all things. From Adam to the present day and into eternity, all who are truly God’s people receive forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation only on the basis of Jesus’ perfect righteousness, received only through faith in him. This unified, Christocentric, covenantal understanding of Scripture stands in intentional contrast to any system that would teach that God’s people in any previous era were to be saved by works.

Our Theological Distinctives & Requirements of Church Membership

We affirm these distinctives as important in the sense of being profitable and health-producing for Christians to believe. We are further convinced that as one comes to appreciate these beliefs, he/she will grow to love and honor the Lord Jesus Christ more fully and understand more richly what it means to live by his grace.

Acceptance of all these distinctives, however, is not required for membership in Redeemer Church. One can join and be a participating member of the church without holding to any but the evangelical distinctives mentioned in the first section of this session.

It is our absolute and unwavering conviction that to be strong in truth without being gentle in manner is unbiblical. It is also our profound conviction that to be gentle in manner while not adhering to scriptural truth is also unbiblical. By God’s grace, we desire to be both as we press on in the Lord’s glorious design for Redeemer Church to be used “to equip God’s people to delight in his glory and declare that glory to our neighbors and the nations!”
Session 3
Our Leadership

Part and parcel to God’s design in building the church and equipping her members is providing exemplary leadership through whom he administers his own shepherdly care. While the risen Jesus Christ is the chief Shepherd of the church, he enjoys administering his care to the church through qualified men whom he so gifts, equips, and appoints (Matt 16:18; Acts 20:28-35; Eph 4:1-16; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 1-4). The Lord uses these leaders to press the truth and grace of his character into the life of the congregation. Insofar as these appointed men look like Christ and follow him, the congregation will benefit. Health and fruitfulness flow from churches who understand the strategic significance of church leadership and whose leadership reflect the faithfulness of the One who leads his people beside still waters (Ps 23:1-6).

Introducing Biblical Eldership

The role of such leadership in the church belongs to the elders. In the New Testament, each local church recognized, affirmed, and submitted to the leadership of biblically qualified elders. Elders provide the spiritual oversight of the congregation through prayerful submission to God’s word which expresses itself in the regular discipleship, leadership, protection, and care of God’s flock (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Eph 4:11-16; 1 Tim 3:1-7; 5:17-21; Tit 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:1-4; Jas 5:14; Heb 13:7, 17). The New Testament also speaks of the office of deacons, but rather than providing the primary spiritual oversight of the congregation, deacons assist the elders with any service that will support and promote the ministry of the Word, new and existing ministries of the church, and/or the care for her members (Rom 16:1-2; 1 Tim 3:8-13; cf. Acts 6:1-6). Since our aim in Session 3 is acquainting you with our leadership, we will address the office of eldership.

1. "Elder", "pastor" and "overseer" are interchangeable terms.

   The New Testament uses various words to refer to those entrusted with the primary spiritual oversight of a local church: “elder,” “pastor/shepherd,” and “overseer.” The use of the different words
suggests not a distinction of office, but a distinction of function within the same office. We might say that “elder” is a primary descriptor of the leadership office while “overseer” and “pastor/shepherd” further describe the functions within that office.

“Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him... Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for [lit., “to shepherd”] the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:17, 28).

“This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you... For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach...” (Titus 1:5, 7).

“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly...” (1 Pet 5:1-2).

2. The paradigm is a plurality of elders for each local church.

As the apostles fulfill the Great Commission in spreading the gospel and planting churches, they established not just one pastor to lead a local church but a plurality of pastors, or elders, within each local church (e.g., Acts 14:23; 20:17; Tit 1:5). All of these men so appointed to the office of elder were equal in governing authority and provided the spiritual oversight of the entire congregation. While many congregations function with a single “senior pastor” model of church leadership, Redeemer functions with a plurality of pastors, some being employed by the church while others receive their compensation through means outside the church (cf. 1 Cor 9:1-18; 1 Tim 5:17). Those employed by the church are normally freed up to devote themselves further to the regular preaching ministries within the church (1 Tim 5:17-18).

3. The office of elder belongs to male leaders.

Because of God’s good and wise designs in the created order and because of God’s desire to provide utmost care and protection and prosperity for women in their unique, complementary role alongside men, he has restricted the office of elder to male leaders (Gen 1:27; 2:18, 22; 1 Tim 2:11-3:5; cf. 1 Cor 11:2-11; 14:33-35; Eph 5:22-33; Tit 2:3-5).
4. The office of elder belongs to qualified leaders.

The New Testament has not left the church without help in discerning which men they should recognize and appoint to serve as elders. Indeed, it has even provided very practical insight for recognizing the particular grace of God given to the men God desires to shepherd his people. This grace includes a brother’s compulsion, his character, and his competency.

a. Compulsion. While Christ is the one who gives elders to the church (Eph 4:11), he does not do so apart from their aspiration to oversee God’s people (1 Tim 3:1). When the Spirit gifts and appoints someone to lead the church (Acts 20:28), he does not do so apart from giving them zeal to carry out their leadership (Rom 12:8). Elders are not to shepherd the flock under compulsion, but willingly as God would have them (1 Pet 5:2). Thus, an elder should indicate a response to God’s working in his life by expressing a Spirit-wrought desire to shepherd God’s people.

b. Character. An elder will also possess a flavorful lifestyle before God and others that consistently bears witness to the transforming power of the gospel. As outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-3, he will exemplify a life that is devoted to Jesus Christ and that brings no disrepute upon the gospel, his family, or the church. We should not expect perfection in the qualities listed, but evidence of God’s grace working in the brother an exemplary and imitable life in godliness mandated of all Christians. The Lord grants these necessary qualities even before one begins shepherding and does so in order to help his people identify his appointed men for pastoral leadership (1 Tim 5:22-25; Tit 1:5-9; cf. Acts 14:23).

c. Competency. While most of the entries in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-3 consist of qualities in godliness mandated of all Christians elsewhere in the New Testament, two additional entries exist that are unique to elders: the requirement that an overseer be “able to teach” (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:9) and the requirement that an overseer “not be a recent convert” (1 Tim 3:6). Being “able to teach” means an elder must demonstrate that he possesses both the requisite knowledge and the ability to communicate it to others (1 Tim 3:2; 4:16; 5:17; 2 Tim 2:2, 24; Tit 1:9; 2:1; Jas 3:1). Not being a recent convert means an elder must have proved his commitment to Christ and the church over time (1 Tim 3:6; cf. 1 Cor 4:2; 2 Tim 2:2; Heb 5:12-13).

When the church recognizes the grace of God working the above qualifications into a brother, they should take full responsibility in confirming that work for the overall health of the church and the ongoing service of the gospel’s advance to the world.
The Nature of Biblical Eldership

When we discuss the nature of biblical eldership, we are seeking to answer the question, “What should Jesus Christ’s care for you look like when it comes through elders?” The Scriptures indicate that the nature of eldership consists of leading, feeding, protecting, and caring for the local church over whom God has appointed the particular brothers.

1. Elders lead the church.

To begin, elders lead the church. Paul explains to Timothy that an elder “must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?” (1 Tim 3:4-5). Hebrews 13:17 says to “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.” The assumption behind these passages, and others like them, is that elders bear the primary responsibility in leading, managing, and overseeing God’s people (e.g., Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17; 1 Pet 5:1-2). Such leadership entails preaching the gospel, clarifying vision, giving direction, stewarding resources, correcting sin, guiding sheep, setting goals, and promoting spiritual health, all of which stem from a sound and consistent application of the Scriptures.

Such leadership comes to the church through avenues like corporate worship, elders meetings, personal meetings, and other specialized teaching. The elders also lead the church in monthly members’ meetings in which the congregation is able to interact with the elders regarding the work of ministry and the life of the church. Thus, we are not strictly an “elder-rule” church or a “congregational-rule” church. Rather, we practice congregational involvement under the spiritual care of elders (e.g., Acts 15:2-6, 22; 1 Tim 5:19-20; cf. Matt 18:17).

2. Elders feed the church.

The best leadership for the church are elders who continually allow God’s word to govern the church in her beliefs, worship, fellowship, longings, activities, goals, and overall well-being. Whether praying, singing, teaching, counseling, writing, or discerning, the Scriptures keep God’s word central to the life of a congregation (Rom 10:17; 1 Cor 15:2; Col 1:25; 3:16; 1 Tim 4:13, 16; 2 Tim 3:15-17; Heb 13:7; 1 Pet 1:23). This is why elders must understand the Scriptures and be skilled in teaching them to the church (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:9). As elders feed or
nourish the congregation with the truth of God’s word, the people follow the voice of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and conform their lives to his lordship. In this sense, elders are to be exemplary disciple-makers, equipping the saints with the word to perform the work of ministry (Matt 28:18-20; Eph 4:11-13; 2 Tim 2:2).

3. Elders protect the church.

Just as elders feed the church with God’s word, so also elders protect the church by God’s word. Based on their prayerful attention to God’s word, elders purge the church from and call her attention to whatever contradicts God’s word and may bring harm to the church’s overall well-being (Acts 20:28-32; 2 Tim 4:3; Tit 1:9; cf. Rom 16:17). Such protection reaches beyond the preservation of sound doctrine to include caring well for the people themselves. In fact, sound doctrine in the heart will lead to sound practices in the church, such as upholding justice in relationships, determining consequences for sinful practices, protecting the most vulnerable, and promoting transparency and forthrightness in leading people to walk in truth.

"A pastor needs two voices, one for gathering sheep and the other for driving away wolves and thieves. The Scripture supplies him with the means for doing both.”
- John Piper

4. Elders care for the church.

Finally, elders care for the church by responding to practical needs among the congregation. In Acts 20:35, Paul exhorted the elders saying, “In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” And James 5:14 exhorts the church like so: “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” In both cases, the Bible envisions elders who care for God’s flock, helping the weak in their midst through servitude and prayer. Some of this care must certainly be distributed for other saints to handle (e.g., Acts 6:1-7; Gal 6:2; Eph 4:11-13; 1 Tim 3:8-13), but elders must lead in exemplifying such care, so that others might imitate them. In doing so, they also display the generosity of Christ himself towards his church and help the congregation grow in active care for one another.

"Pastoral care is the loving concern of Christ for his flock which he shows them by providing underships whose duty is to equip the saints to minister care to each other.
- John Piper
Responding to Biblical Eldership

The Bible implies that every believer knows which elders he/she is directly accountable to obey under the Lord and that elders know which saints are directly under their pastoral care and which are not (Acts 14:23; 15:22; 20:28; Phil 1:1; Tit 1:5; 1 Pet 5:2-3). Insofar as these appointed men follow Jesus Christ and extend his shepherdly care, members of a local church should submit to the elders God has placed over them in particular (Heb 13:17; cf. 1 Thess 5:12-13; Jas 5:14; 1 Pet 5:5). But what does such submission to one’s elders include?

1. Acknowledge your placement by the Lord.

First of all, it means we acknowledge that the Lord places Christians under the care of specific elders for their eternal good in Christ. Heb 13:17 says, “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.” In other words, God designed healthy submission to your elders to be for your spiritual advantage. Elders should provide regular oversight of your soul through the word of God—all the while remembering that “whoever would be first among you must be slave of all” (Mark 10:43-45)—and it does you well to follow their direction and leadership. Ask yourself these questions?

How do I evaluate my response to the leadership? Is it with patience?

Do I gladly support and follow the elders God has given me?

Do I offer disgruntled obedience to their leadership while criticizing?

Do I bypass the elders God has given me to gossip to others?

Do I joyfully attend the pastoral care structures such as Sunday morning worship, care groups, and members meetings?
2. Call attention to what honors Christ.

To clarify, biblical submission does not mean blind obedience, passivity, resignation, being a ‘yes’-man, or even a doormat to the wishes of overbearing elders. Rather, **submission to elders always functions in relation to what honors the authority of Christ.** Jesus Christ has unlimited authority, and we must submit to him first and at all costs. Elders have limited authority, and we submit to them insofar as they represent Jesus Christ faithfully. In fact, the Scriptures acknowledge ways in which even the elders may need confrontation by the church (1 Tim 5:19-23; cf. Matt 18:15-20). Moreover, the Scriptures assume that the congregation recognizes, appoints, and evaluates elders, so that they all remain undivided in their devotion to the Lord and his work (1 Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:5-6). Thus, healthy submission also means giving input whenever it will benefit the elder in particular and the church as a whole to follow Christ more closely.

3. Serve the church with willingness and zeal.

A third way submission to elders expresses itself is through your willing and zealous participation in the life of the church. The elders do not teach merely to fill our heads with knowledge. Rather, they equip the saints “for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12). Their oversight has a particular aim and should result in very tangible acts of service that strengthens the church and advances the gospel. Hence, Hebrews 13:7 commands us to remember our leaders, “consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.” Hearing without imitating shows little desire to follow the will of Christ being explained and applied by the elders for your particular context and community.

"[The pastor] doesn't monopolize ministry; be multiplies ministries."
- John Stott

4. Honor your elders.

Lastly, submission will also include honor, not just in the sense of respect (1 Thess 5:12-13), but also in the sense of material support (Gal 6:6; 1 Tim 5:17; cf. 1 Cor 9:1-18). Some elders may serve the church while receiving compensation from outside, but the Scriptures exhort the church to support those elders who toil in preaching and teaching (1 Tim 5:17-18).
“We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.” (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13 ESV)

“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.”” (1 Tim 5:17–18 ESV)

The point is not to support them with extravagance, but to support them sufficiently for the regular study and teaching of the word of God. After all, it is the ongoing ministry of the word that grows the church (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:7; 12:24; 13:38-39; 19:19-20).
Session 4  
Upreach  
As God's Worshipers  

Ten Principles That Guide Us on Sunday Morning  

Why Ten Principles?  

1. To establish a unified vision and understanding of best congregational worship practices.  
2. To help preserve unity and thus, the testimony and mission of the church. When disagreement occurs, to have a list of agreed upon biblical informed principles from which to evaluate our practices.  

1. We will seek to be God-centered, understanding that God’s glory is his highest purpose in all things.  

We will seek to make God central in our minds’ attention and our hearts’ affections. We will seek to exalt him by delighting in his glory (Isaiah 48:9-11; 26:8).  

The Scriptures teach us that everything God does is first motivated by his desire to display and preserve his glory. This great truth calls us from a self-centered, secular mindset to embrace a God-centered, biblical worldview that sees everything in light of the reality that our sovereign Lord is working all things out for the purpose of magnifying his glory.  

- God chose his people for his glory - Ephesians 1:4-6, 11-12  
- God created us for his glory - Isaiah 43:6-7  
- God called Israel for his glory - Jeremiah 13:11  
- God rescued Israel from Egypt for his glory - Psalm 106:7-8  
- God raised Pharaoh up to show his own power and glorify his name - Romans 9:17  
- God defeated Pharaoh at the Red Sea to show his glory - Exodus 14:4, 17-18  
- God spared Israel in the wilderness for the glory of his name - Ezekiel 20:14  
- God gave Israel victory in Canaan for the glory of his name - 2 Samuel 7:23  
- God did not cast away his people for the glory of his name - 1 Samuel 12:20-22
God restored Israel from exile for the glory of his name - Ezekiel 36:22-23, 32
Jesus sought the glory of his Father in all he did - John 7:18
Jesus told us to do good works so that God gets glory - Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12
Jesus said that he answers prayer so that the Father will be glorified - John 14:13
God forgives sins for his own sake - Isaiah 43:25; Psalm 25:11
Jesus receives us into his fellowship for the glory of the Father - Romans 15:7
God instructs us to do everything for his glory - 1 Corinthians 10:31; 6:20
Jesus will fill us with fruits of righteousness for God’s glory - Philippians 1:11
All are under judgment for dishonoring God’s glory - Romans 1:21-25; 3:23
Jesus is coming again for the glory of his Father - 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10
Jesus prayed for us, that we would see and enjoy his glory - John 17:24
Even in wrath, God’s aim is to make known the wealth of his glory - Romans 9:22-23
God’s plan is to fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory - Habakkuk 2:14
Everything that happens will resound to God’s glory - Romans 11:36
In the New Jerusalem the glory of God replaces the sun - Revelation 21:23

(Excerpted from Let the Nations Be Glad: the Supremacy of God in Missions by John Piper)

God’s primary purpose for all that he does is to bring about his own pleasure; that is, the display and protection of his own magnificence for his glory and our good. God’s foundational motivation for saving us is for his glory. His unconditional, unexplainable, immeasurable, and incomprehensible love for us is first motivated by his desire to glorify himself.

“The great end of God’s works, which is so variously expressed in Scripture, is indeed but ONE; and this one end is most properly and comprehensively called, THE GLORY OF GOD.”
- Jonathan Edwards

Isaiah 46:9-10 - “I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.’”

Common Objection to the God-Centeredness of God:

Some, upon hearing of the God-centeredness of God for the first time, will often object to this notion on the basis that we are taught by the Scriptures that self-exaltation is wrong. Therefore, surely God cannot be given to self-exaltation.

“To what end or purpose does God uphold all things? It is to the praise of his glory. This is a difficult concept to embrace in full measure because it suggests a kind of self-centeredness in God, and we are taught to see self-centeredness as sin. Indeed, to be self-centered is a sin
for any creature. We mortals are called to be God-centered in our thinking. For creatures, God-centeredness is a virtue, and self-centeredness a vice. But for God, self-centeredness is pure virtue because it is also God-centeredness. For us to be God-centered is to fix our attention upon the most perfect Being. So it is for God himself… God’s upholding of his creation reflects upon his own glory, and that glory is not a divine vice but is the highest possible good. If God were centered on something less than himself, that focus would reflect a defect in himself and render him less than God and unworthy of our worship.”

-R.C. Sproul

For God, self-exaltation is love because it brings about the highest possible good: his glory for our eternal enjoyment!

**His Glory and Our Joy**

Our souls were made to stand in awe of something. For all eternity, the redeemed will gaze into the perfection of God’s holiness and be filled with joy unspeakable.

The Scriptures teach us that everything God does is first motivated by his desire to display and preserve his glory. In doing so, he loves us infinitely by giving us the greatest gift possible. Jesus Christ died and rose again to preserve the glory of God’s righteousness and to demonstrate the glory of God’s graciousness, thus redeeming us into his kingdom where we can know and enjoy his glory for all eternity.

**2. We will seek to worship in “spirit and in truth.”**

We understand worship to involve the Spirit-stirred affections of the heart, the devotion of the mind, and the submission of our wills and the giving of our bodies to God according to the truth of God.

*John 4:23-24* - “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

**In spirit** - worship that flows out of a new life in Christ (a new spirit given birth by the Holy Spirit), which involves our whole being - mind, heart, will and physical bodies (Philippians 3:3; Ephesians 5:18-20; Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Romans 12:1-2).

**In truth** - we will seek to be Bible-saturated and doctrinally sound, giving Scripture prominence in worship as the basis of our response. We will read Scripture publicly and corporately and sing songs that reflect the truth of Scripture (1 Timothy 4:13). All music will be examined for doctrinal correctness.
Worship in Spirit

John 3:5-8 - "Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.’"

“In John 3:6 Jesus connects God’s Spirit and our spirit in a remarkable way. He says, ‘That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’ In other words, until the Holy Spirit quickens our spirit with the flame of life, our spirit is so dead and unresponsive it does not even qualify as spirit. Only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. So when Jesus says that true worshipers worship the Father “in spirit” He must have meant that true worship comes only from spirits made alive and sensitive by the quickening of the Spirit of God.”
- John Piper

Paul writes that it is believers who are the true circumcision - who have circumcised hearts/ regeneration by the Holy Spirit - who, therefore, worship by the Holy Spirit of God. We who have this circumcision - this regeneration by the Spirit - now worship by this Spirit.

Philippians 3:3 - "For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.”

To worship “in spirit” means communion with God that flows out of a new life in Christ - a new spirit given birth by the Holy Spirit (John 3:6). This new life in God involves our whole being - our intelligence, our emotions, and our volition (our mind, heart and will). The opposite of worship in spirit would be religious attempts to get to God apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

Worship in Truth:

1. Worship is born out of the truth about God and the truth about ourselves. When God awakens a person to the realities of himself, worship is the natural response. God’s revelation of truth brings worship into being. The regenerate spirit’s response to truth is worship.

2. The truth of God also upholds and fuels worship:
   Good doctrine fuels genuine worship.
   Skewed doctrine distracts and diminishes worship.
   False doctrine destroys worship of the true God.
3. **Worship is also filled with the truth** – it’s made up of truth. The content of our praise is declaring back to God the truth about him. Our adoration is gazing into the beauty and perfection of the truth of God. This is why Scripture is so important in worship. Paul instructed Timothy to devote himself to the public reading of Scripture (1 Tim 4:13).

3. **We will seek to hold worship as our highest calling, understanding the supremacy of worship in the believer’s life and in the mission of the church.**

Worship is the **fuel and goal of all other ministries**. Worship is the purpose for which we evangelize and do missions and the purpose for which we encourage and build each other up in the faith. Worship is the eternal purpose of the Church (Revelation 14:6-7; Psalm 96:3).

**The Priority of Worship is Evident in the Scriptures**

1. **The priority of worship is evident considering the priority of the purposes of God** that center on the demonstration and preservation of his own name’s sake (see Guiding Principle #1).

2. **The priority of worship is evident in the Great Commandment**, which puts the love of God above all else. Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment” (Matthew 22:37-38).

3. **The priority of worship is evident in the biblical expressions of God’s Covenant with his people.** “You shall be my people” and “I will be your God” (i.e., “I will be your object of worship”). Such language is repeated over and over throughout the Scriptures.

4. **The priority of worship is evident in the Ten Commandments.** The first four of the Ten Commandments have to do with worship (Exodus 20:2-3; Deuteronomy 5:6-8).

5. **Worship was the central issue in the constant pleas of the prophets to the people of Israel:** “Repent, return to the worship of the one true God!” This message appears throughout the Old Testament (e.g., Amos 5; Malachi 1).

   Jeremiah 15:19 – “Therefore thus says the LORD: ‘If you return, I will restore you, and you shall stand before me.’”

   Ezekiel 14:6 - “Thus says the Lord GOD: Repent and turn away from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations.”
6. The priority of worship is evident in the biblical revelation of heaven. Each time the Bible opens a window into heaven, we see worship taking place. Worship is and will be for all eternity the central activity around God’s throne. Worship is the central issue in the Book of Revelation. All redemptive history comes to its consummation in the act of worship. It is the “eternal finish” to all things. When teaching and evangelism end, worship continues. It is the only eternal activity of the church.

Worship is a Priority in the Mission of the Church

If to worship God is the highest calling of the Scriptures, then it is also our highest calling and the priority of all ministries of the church. Although the priorities of the Church are all intertwined, worship stands as the apex from which those priorities derive their true motivation and purpose.

“Yes, worship of the loving God is man’s whole reason for existence. That is why we are born and that is why we are born again from above. That is why we were created and that is why we have been recreated. That is why there was a genesis at the beginning, and that is why there is a regenesis, called regeneration. That is also why there is a church. The Christian church exists to worship God first of all. Everything else must come second or third or fourth or fifth...”

- A.W. Tozer

Worship is the fuel and goal of missions & evangelism (outreach).

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. Worship is the fuel and goal of missions. It’s the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white-hot enjoyment of God’s glory. Worship is the fuel of missions. Passion for God in worship precedes the offer of God in preaching. Where passion for God is weak, zeal for missions will be weak. Missions begins and ends in worship.”

- John Piper

The Fuel - The best and most sustainable fuel for the church in her mission to take the gospel to the lost is a thirst to see God glorified among all people. A passion for God’s glory more rightly motivates followers of Christ to go to the nations than mere sympathy for the plight of the lost.

Psalm 67:4 - "Let the nations be glad and sing for joy..."

The Goal: The ultimate goal of all missionary or evangelistic endeavor is to make more worshipers. Worship is seen not as a means to an end, but as the end itself. We exist to glorify God by enjoying him forever. The Great Commission is then, in the ultimate sense, merely
the involvement of Christ’s Church in bringing the nations to join in
the worship of God!

Simply stated: we engage in missions to make more worshipers, and
worship motivates our mission.

2. Worship is the fuel and goal of all “one another” ministries of nurture
and discipleship (inreach).

The Fuel: We also believe that the primary impetus to motivate God’s
people for ministry to one another is when they are equipped by God’s
Word to delight in the fullness of his glorious presence. Tasting the
glory of God produces more thirst for knowing God and for seeing
others more fully know God (cf., Exodus 33:9-18 - Moses is in the tent
of meeting, speaking to the LORD face to face, as a man speaks with
his friend. Then Moses says, “Now show me your glory”). Our own
passion for God naturally spills over to build up one another in their
knowledge of him.

The Goal: The final goal of all inreach ministry is to equip others to
more fully delight in God’s glory and make better worshipers.

Simply stated: we equip one another to make better worshipers, and better
worship motivates the equipping of others.

4. We will seek to incorporate both
revelation and response.

Theology precedes doxology. All true worship begins with God. He is the
Alpha point. An examination of biblical worship reveals a common
pattern seen throughout the scriptures - God reveals and man responds.

As God reveals his power and greatness, we respond in wonder and humility.
As God reveals his holiness, we respond in confession and contrition.
As God reveals his provision and grace, we respond in love and thanksgiving.
As God reveals his purpose and plans, we respond in commitment and
petition.

True worship is initiated by God who created us, revealed himself to us,
and redeemed us. True worship is never man’s attempt to get to God but
rather a humble response to God’s initiative. God grants new spiritual life
and we respond to him as living, worshiping creatures.

1 Peter 1:3 - “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!
According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a
living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

In practice, this principle means that planned corporate worship services
will begin with a Godward focus rather than an introspective or man-
centered focus.
5. We will seek to sing with congregational priority and unity.

The New Testament word, “leitourgia,” (used to describe worship) means “work of the people.” The early Church understood worship to be a communal event in light of the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer. Every believer freely and enthusiastically participated in worship before the Lord (1 Peter 2:9). Therefore, we will seek to be congregational rather than leader/performer-driven in worship. We believe that any worship service whereby a worship leader, musical ensemble, soloist, etc. is given prominence over a congregation’s expression, is not biblical leitourgia.

1 Peter 2:9 - “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

We desire to have a congregation characterized by energetic, whole-hearted, going-for-broke singing for the glory of God. Any individual’s lack of refined singing ability is irrelevant. God has designed the human voice (no matter how bad) to blend with others and produce (when done in spirit and truth) a glorious sound, pleasing to God.

Romans 15:5-6 - “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.”

Singing brings unity to the corporate worship experience unlike any other outward expression of worship. Singing provides a congregationally unifying language. In congregational singing, a diverse group of people all worship using the same words, to the same tune, at the same time, to the same God. It is singing that will ultimately unite the most diverse congregation ever assembled. The great multitude of God’s elect from every nation, tribe, people and language will one day stand before the throne and in front of the Lamb and sing...

Revelation 7:10-12 - “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb! And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.’”

“If any will not sing, it shows that they do not believe!”
- Martin Luther
Congregational Priority and Worship Leadership

The worship leadership at Redeemer Church is committed to this simple principle during corporate worship times: lead as little as possible; only as much as is necessary. The chief role of the musicians, choir, and other platform singers is to support, accompany, and encourage the congregation’s voice above their own.

6. We will seek to worship God both for his transcendence and His immanence.

God is worthy to be worshiped as the great King upon his throne in Heaven, as well as the Savior who intimately meets with his children (Isaiah 55:6, 8-9; Matthew 26:26-30; Revelation 3:20; Psalm 47; Revelation 7:9-12; Philippians 2:5-11).

Isaiah 55:6, 8-9 - "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; ... For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

In seeking to have a more full and balanced view of God, we need to understand his transcendence and his immanence. God is beyond our grasp and comprehension as the one who has revealed himself in all holiness, might, majesty, mystery, authority, splendor, honor and glory. God has also condescended and made himself accessible to those whom he loves.

"Thou art beyond the grasp of my understanding, but not beyond that of my love."

- Puritan prayer, The Valley of Vision

Two major paradigms for worship are found in the Bible: worship at the throne of God (Revelation 7:9-12) and worship at the table of God (Revelation 3:20). It is, therefore, fitting to worship God as he has revealed himself in Scripture. He is to be worshiped as the great King upon his throne in Heaven, as well as the Savior who intimately meets with his children.

Characteristics of Throne Worship:

Throne worship is preoccupied with the transcendent attributes of God: his holiness, might, majesty, mystery, authority, splendor, honor, and glory.

In throne worship, every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus is Lord and exalts him as King.

In throne worship, we celebrate his victory.

In throne worship, we approach God as one would approach a King.
Characteristics of Table Worship:

Table worship is preoccupied with the immanent attributes of God: his love, faithfulness, compassion, mercy, grace, forgiveness, patience, and his giving himself to us through Christ.

In table worship, believers enjoy sweet communion with their Lord. In table worship, we approach God as one would approach a friend.

7. We will seek to blend modern and historical songs of worship.

We will seek to mine from history the very best of hymnody and couple these with the most passionate, new God-centered songs of worship from our generation (Matthew 13:52).

The Lord has spoken to every generation of believers through different means, mediums, and styles. Therefore, to seek to reduce the worship of God to one particular mode, style, or means within a music tradition would be tantamount to saying that God has only spoken within one historical period throughout the vast array of redemptive history.

Matthew 13:52 - “And [Jesus] said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.’”

Singing songs and hymns from history helps us honor the Lord for his faithfulness in communicating his glorious truths to generation after generation of his children. Singing good songs from our present generation helps our thoughts in worship from becoming stale and, therefore, aids us in worshiping God with fresh affection.

8. We will seek to lead with undistracting excellence.

“We will try to sing and play and pray and preach in such a way that people’s attention will not be diverted from the substance by shoddy ministry nor by excessive finesse, elegance, or refinement. Natural, undistracting excellence will let the truth and beauty of God shine through. Sound system, music playing... all undistracting from the aim of thinking about God. Avoid the flair of words and chords that draw attention mainly to the performance and style and not the substance”

- John Piper, from “Gravity and Gladness on Sunday Morning: the Pursuit of God in Corporate Worship”.

We will seek excellence in all we do for the purpose of drawing attention to the supreme excellencies of God (Psalm 33:3; John 3:30).
9. We will value form and freedom in worship.

Form is very much a part of the created order. Without form we have chaos. We have natural inclination built into us that enjoys order. Order is the foundation of all beauty and God is perfectly beautiful. Form and order are also necessary for maximum corporate unity in worship. Form (planned order) in worship helps us worship together with common words, common prayers, and common expressions of worship. Songs, prayers, sitting, standing, kneeling, listening, (etc.) are all forms. The limitation of form is that all forms have the potential of becoming stale when we practice the forms void of Spirit-led affections. Forms in themselves are not worship.

Freedom in worship means that we are not locked into doing things exactly as planned. God is not contained in our prepackaged prayers and songs. He is a “tenting God” and should be sought as one who exists outside of the forms to which we often get accustomed. Embracing freedom in worship allows us to be flexible and not become too rigid in the way we do things. The limitation of freedom is that too much freedom in worship actually works against itself. Ultimate freedom (every person doing what they want) leads to chaos and breaks down congregational unity in worship.

1 Corinthians 14:33 - ‘For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.’

Appropriate amounts of planning frees people to engage in worship together. Because we are human, forms are necessary in worship. Genuine inward spiritual realities will always be reflected in external forms. These forms, however, have no life in themselves.

We will, therefore, seek a healthy balance of form and freedom, planning and spontaneity.

10. We will seek to grow in our biblical understanding and practice of worship.

To be growing implies that we have not yet arrived and acknowledges that knowledge is partial at best (1 Cor 13:9; James 1:5). To be in need of growth in understanding is a humbling claim and humility is the only posture of the human heart which God blesses (James 4:6). We will seek to continue growing in our knowledge of God and in our worship of him. Only on the day we stand before his great throne, free from all the affects of sin, will we worship God perfectly, even as he has loved us perfectly.
Session 5
Inreach
As God's Family

The church is a rather shocking familial community when considered against the backdrop of the fallen world. Sin, division, hatred, hurt, and brokenness have plagued families since the first family, Adam and Eve, rebelled against God. Yet now the world witnesses one family, who looks peculiarly different—even if still imperfect. That family is the church, a community of people no longer living under Adam but under the uniting rule of the last Adam, Jesus Christ. God recreated these people and then united them with other recreated people to function as his new family, and not just any family, but a family who reflects God’s image, love, and grace through their union with Jesus.

Unity, Love, Commitment, Witness

In moving forward with Session 5, we should note at least four aspects that characterize God’s new family: unity, love, commitment, and witness. We will then outline several tangible ways we seek to care for one another as family at Redeemer Church. In short, the following should help you see how the biblical portrait of the church as family should shape Redeemer and you.

1. Unity in Christ

We begin with our unity in Christ. On one occasion in Jesus’ earthly ministry, Jesus’ own mother and brothers desired to see him. Jesus uses it as an opportunity to teach: “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it” (Luke 8:21). His point wasn’t to dishonor his earthly family members, but to teach on belonging to the most important family of all through a relationship with himself. Being a true child of God was not tied to one’s ethnicity or class or abilities or heritage; it was tied to one’s disposition to Jesus. The account looked forward to the day when God would gather into one family people from all nations, because of Jesus’ finished work.

Jesus’ cross reconciles people to God and to one another (Eph 2:1-21), secures the forgiveness of sins for all peoples without distinction (Luke 24:47), and binds people together under one new covenant (Matt 26:28). And as the resurrected Lord, Jesus unites people in one Spirit (1 Cor 12:13;
Eph 4:3). All who are joined to Christ experience the same adoption (Gal 4:5), become God’s children (John 1:12-13), enter God’s household (Eph 2:19), call upon the same Father (Gal 4:6), share familial affection (1 Cor 16:7, 20, 24; 2 Pet 1:7), serve one another as brothers and sisters (Rom 12:5-16; Col 3:12-17; Gal 6:10), and participate in the same eternal inheritance (Acts 20:32; Gal 3:28).

It comes as no surprise, then, to see them gather regularly in each other’s homes to pray, pour over the truth, share meals, bear burdens, and meet needs (Acts 2:44-46; Rom 12:13; Gal 6:2; Heb 10:25). They are family. Such a family tie precludes any form of pride and favoritism and cliquish attitudes. All who are united in Christ are equals in the family, without distinction (Gal 3:28). Moreover, we stick together. The blood of Christ binds us together in ways that no earthly relationship can fully comprehend, even among our closest kin. We are not held together by our ethnicity, social compatibility, hobbies, vocation, economic class, or life-stage. Our unity revolves around a heavenly reality that we all share in the Lord Jesus. He is the foundation of our relationships.

2. Cross-centered Love

That also means that Christ’s love will characterize our relationship to each other. We love each other, because God in Christ first loved us, the full, tangible expression of which we see in the cross (John 3:16; 13:34-35; 1 John 4:9-10, 19). The cross stands at the center of our love. Our love is not like the false notions of love, which usually amount to some form of weak emotionalism or dispassionate duty. The love we learn from the cross is different. Christian love is a genuine affection for another’s ultimate good in God such that we spend ourselves sacrificially to see them obtain it (Mark 10:45; Rom 12:10; 1 Cor 9:19-23; 10:31-11:1; 13:4-7; 1 John 3:16; 2 Cor 8:9; 12:15). That’s the love we find in Christ for us; and that’s the love that should characterize our church and you.

Love will not passively wait to be asked; it will take initiative in seeking the eternal well-being of others. Love will not make self-calculations; it will consider the interests of others as better than our own (Phil 2:4-5). Love will not keep people at arms distance; it will make all necessary investments to see the other prosper in the Lord and his work. Love will not primarily ask, “Why aren’t they doing this for me?” but “How can I pour myself out for them?” Such love is reflected in the Redeemer Church Covenant, but some concrete examples of this love include things like bearing each other’s burdens (Gal 6:2), seeking to do good to one another (1 Thess 5:15), being kind to one another, forgiving one another (Eph 4:32), rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep (Rom 12:15-16), contributing to the needs of the saints, and showing hospitality (Rom 12:13).
3. Commitment to One Another

In a very real sense, then, we are also committed to one another. We live in a culture averse to commitment, or perhaps committed as long as the commitment doesn’t inconvenience “me” or “my plans.” The love of Christ produces a different spirit in the church. In the same way Jesus committed himself to us, even despite our sin and rebellion and weakness, we commit ourselves to each other, even when the relationships are hard, offensive, and messy (Gal 6:1-2; Col 3:13; Jas 5:19-20).

And the commitment runs even deeper, because the local church isn’t only a people we love, but a people we are (1 Cor 1:12-13; 10:16-17; Eph 3:10-11). Our commitment to our brothers and sisters is bound up with our Christian identity, with our belonging to Christ. To belong to Christ is to belong to each other. As John Stott put it while commenting on Acts 2:42-47, “[the Lord] didn’t add [people] to the church without saving them, and he didn’t save them without adding them to the church.”

Among other reasons, this is why we stress the biblical importance of membership at Redeemer Church and also sign a Church Covenant. Commitment to brothers and sisters in our local church is part of who we are, and we value accountability to the union Jesus established between each member of his local body. As Timothy Savage puts it, “The universal church is only as strong as its local manifestations are viable” (The Church, 15).

We are very aware that it’s impossible to obey the “one-anthers” of Scripture apart from a commitment to one another both in word and deed (cf. John 13:35). We understand that the Spirit gives a variety of gifts to each of Jesus’ followers, not for them to enjoy in isolation but for them to serve the well-being of the local church with whom they assemble (Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:7; Eph 4:16; 1 Pet 4:9-11). We refuse to pack our weeks so full of maybe even good things, that we have little time or energy to serve our local church. Our Monday-to-Saturday schedule must include interaction with other saints with whom we are in covenant fellowship to support and encourage and strengthen on a regular basis. Even our personal budgets should be mindful of the needs of our family members (Acts 2:45; 2 Cor 8:9).

4. Witness to the World

Living together in this way will then serve as a visible testimony to the world. People will know that we belong to Jesus, when they witness the persuasive, tangible expression of his life flowing through the relationships of his family members (John 13:35; 17:21-24). Our unity, love, and commitment must shine the self-less love of Jesus into a world darkened with sin and wrecked with despair. As family, the church stands as a glowing beacon of hope to the world that true peace and companionship comes only through the relentless, self-sacrificing love of
Jesus Christ. Thus, one of the strategic ways we can love the world more is by loving one another more. The fire of our love for each other should glow and radiate the warmth of Christ to the dark and cold world that knows no such love.

**Structures of Care**

In order to nurture our growth in this unity, love, and commitment Redeemer Church has three primary structures of care in place. We by no means want to reduce our community to these three gatherings alone. In fact, our prayer is that these three gatherings serve as a catalyst for living together as God’s new family throughout our weeks and not just at specified meeting times.

**Gathered Worship & Discipleship Hour**

Being that Session 4 covered gathered worship, we will not spend as much time developing it here. We will only say that the early churches sought to gather every Sunday, the Lord’s Day, for song, discipleship, prayer, giving, and taking the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 11:17-33; 14:26; 16:2; 1 Tim 4:13; Heb 10:26; Rev 1:10). And they gathered this way in addition to other fellowship and mission occurring throughout the week.

Our gathered worship aims to encourage and equip Redeemer Church as a whole. Discipleship Hour also serves this end, but in a smaller setting and usually with a much narrower focus.

- **Adult classes** may study a particular book of the Bible, a particular topic related to Christian living, or cover the practical outworking of our faith.

- **Student classes** move through a six-year curriculum that equip them with an overview of the Bible and how to study it, with the basics of the Christian faith, and with practicing the Christian faith in the public square.

- The **children’s ministry** begins with praying for children as infants and gradually acquainting them with the Bible’s storyline and main focus in ages 2 through 4. At age 5 the children then proceed to particular themes in Scripture like God’s faithfulness or his redemption, and by ages 8-12 the teachers help them wear the truth of Scripture in daily life.

**Care Group Meetings**

Care groups are the basic units for Christian community at Redeemer Church. The early church met regularly in smaller groups in each city (Acts 2:46; 12:12; 20:8; 20:20; Rom 16:4-5; 1 Cor 16:19; Phlm 2). And many
of the “one-anthers” befit contexts small enough to practice them (Heb 3:13; 10:24-25; Gal 6:2; Col 3:16; Jas 5:16; 1 Pet 4:8-9; Eph 4:32). So, consisting of about 10-20 people, these smaller groups of Redeemer meet weekly to foster gospel community that regularly makes Christ supreme in every area of life. We do this through...

a. **Biblical Truth.** The church devotes itself to the apostles’ teaching (Acts 2:42; 4:33). Indeed, “all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). Some care groups review the sermon text each week, while others may study a particular book that develops a biblical theme. Whatever the case, we seek to apply biblical truth in specific ways to our lives, so that we might be further conformed to the image of Christ.

b. **Gospel Motivation.** True and lasting change that glorifies God must stem from a heart motivated by God’s boundless love and grace as well as his awesome holiness and judgment. Both are announced in “the gospel,” a message that doesn’t merely get people into the kingdom, but serves their ongoing transformation for the kingdom. The Holy Spirit uses the gospel to save the church (1 Cor 15:1-2), enlighten the church (2 Cor 4:4-6), motivate the church (1 Cor 9:23; 2 Cor 9:13), unite the church (Phil 1:27), humble the church (Phil 2:1-8), protect the church (Gal 1:9-11), warn the church (2 Thess 1:8), embolden the church (Eph 6:15), and so forth. Therefore, the goal in care groups isn’t merely behavior modification, a kind of new ethic without the power of the cross. Rather, the goal is to admonish one another in the gospel such that by treasuring who God is for us in Jesus Christ, we are compelled to live in ways pleasing to him.

c. **Authentic Community.** We must move beyond the superficial. Genuine love for one another doesn’t grow when we hide in the dark but walk together in the light (Acts 19:18; 1 John 1:5-10; Jas 5:16). Through formal discussion questions in a group setting or sincere questions one-on-one, we strive to spur one another along in the faith (Heb 3:12-13), weeping with those who weep and rejoicing with those who rejoice (Rom 12:15). That also means care groups become a context for people to voice their needs, and then for others to pray and help meet those needs when voiced (Jas 2:14-17; 1 John 3:17-18). Whether through conversation, prayer, study, or service, we seek to invest in each other’s lives to fight sin, treasure Christ, and cultivate brotherly affection and service (Heb 10:24; Jas 1:22). Christian growth doesn’t happen in isolation; it’s a community project.
d. Missional Living. The church is a community of people characterized by God’s mission to save the world (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 2:47; Rom 1:14). Our lives should demonstrate on all fronts a commitment to the ongoing march of the gospel (1 Cor 9:19-23). Thus, care groups provide a great context for accountability and partnership in the advance of the gospel wherever we live, work, and play. Group members can meet together at local parks, invite neighbors to front-yard grillouts, target neighborhoods for outreach, and pray for lost coworkers and friends. Care groups can also listen for specific needs of any neighbors living in closest proximity to them, and then seek to do them good (Gal 6:10; 1 Thess 5:15). The goal is to enter people’s lives, bear witness to the love of Jesus, give them a tangible expression of his love in the church, and ask God to make more disciples through us.

Care groups may vary according to age, special needs/interests, geographical location, family orientation, etc., but they seek to make the above vision the goal of their existence. These small groups usually meet weekly for about two hours, though some groups are tailored differently.

Members Meetings

In addition to gathered worship and care groups, the elders also lead the church in monthly members’ meetings in which the congregation is able to interact with each other regarding the vision of the church, the work of ministry, the advance of the gospel, and other family matters. These meetings can be filled with much rejoicing in the Lord’s work that he is doing through us and among us. Or they can also be filled with great sorrow over sin that needs to be addressed with corrective discipline. These meetings serve a crucial role in shepherding the church and holding one another—including the elders—accountable to Christ and all he stands for.

Other Family Ministries

Besides our three primary care structures, other ministries exist within Redeemer Church. The idea is to provide sufficient and varied opportunities for men and women to participate in, but without becoming “activity-driven” or even unnecessarily remove people from the primary care structures already mentioned. Some of the additional ministries include:

- **Worship Team Ministry**: worship leader training; singers; instrumentalists, Advent Choir
- **Audio / Media Team Ministry**: sound booth volunteers, sound, computer
- **Men’s Ministries**: Tuesday Men’s Bible Study; Men’s Prayer
Breakfasts; Men’s Retreat and Retreat Planning Team

**Women’s Ministries:** Women’s Bible Study; Women-Encouraging-Women Events; Women’s Retreat and Retreat Planning Team; Hospitality Ministry; Prayer Team Ministry

**Student Ministries:** Thursday Night Transformation (ages 12-18); various outreach efforts within Fort Worth

**Children’s Ministries:** Delighting in God (“DIG”) Children’s Ministry; Nursery Ministry; Special Event Childcare Rotation

**Care Group Leadership** (includes training through Pastoral Discipleship)

**Pastoral Discipleship:** Spring/Fall 8-week class on 2nd and 4th Tuesdays
Session 6
Outreach as God's Missionaries

To this point in this membership course, we’ve stressed our relationship to God and to one another as members of his church. To stop here would be to neglect a pivotal aspect of God’s purpose for leaving us here on earth, rather than whisking us off to heaven immediately following our conversion. Jesus did not leave us here merely to enjoy life in him and to care for one another. Instead, he left us with a mission as his worshippers to spread a passion for that joy in him with others. We long that others might relish the worship of our all-glorious God along with us! As we learned in the first session, the mission of Redeemer Church is to...

Equip God’s people
to delight in his glory
and declare that glory
to our neighbors and the nations!

Winning and Making Disciples

Matthew 28:18-20 - ”And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Acts 1:8 - ”But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The Great Commission, along with Jesus’ words in Acts 1:8, are among Jesus’ final instructions to his followers. In both cases, the Lord directs those who are his children to remember the mission to which he has called them. His instructions call us to evangelize people to the point of conversion, and to train them to obey what Jesus taught. Consequently, to be found faithful in our mission as a church, we must be committed to both evangelism and discipleship.
Winning Disciples - Evangelism:

Our lives are to be spent on evangelism.

*Proverbs 11:30a - "...whoever captures souls is wise."

We’re to be witnesses of what God has done for us through the gospel. In the original language in which the New Testament was written (i.e., Greek), the word for witness is “martus”. It is the word from which we derive the English word martyr. This derivation comes from the idea that you bear witness to what you believe by dying for it. In this passage of Scripture, it refers to the fact that your life will bear witness to what you believe. This is a truth that must be expressed in our lives both locally and globally.

Our vision is for the harvest.

*Matthew 9:35-38 - "And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’"

*John 4:35 - "Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest?’ Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest."

Jesus himself has promised that the harvest is plentiful. If we believe him, then we’re to ask him for wisdom concerning our role in the harvest and for laborers to help in the work. We believe God has a plentiful harvest for us to reap in the Tarrant County area, and we’re commanded by him to “open our eyes” to see it.

Furthermore, we believe that he would have us participate in his harvest worldwide, which is why we are committed to finding out how he would have us involved to the ends of the earth.

Our approach to evangelism must be consistent with our theology.

We go to preach the gospel. The biblical gospel acknowledges that the true problem in people’s lives is not simply their felt needs, but their rebellion toward God and their rejection of his authority and rule in their lives.
Our evangelism must be God-centered.

The most important issue for any person is how they, as sinners, can relate to a holy God? Evangelism is helping people to see how the issues of their life relate to the character of God.

The primary problem for humanity relates directly to God. It involves Adam’s sin and our continued participation in it. It relates to our rebellion against God and our attempted usurpation of his authority. Because of his holiness and justice, he must respond to our sin in wrath, demanding payment that we are unable to satisfy in any way.

This is the sense in which we say that God-centered evangelism means helping people see how the issues of their lives relate to the character of God.

Our message must be the Gospel.

The biblical Gospel begins with the fact that God is both our sovereign Creator and our righteous Judge (cf., Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 98:9). God, therefore, has the right of ownership over us by virtue of creating us, and he has the right to punish or reward us by virtue of his royal, judicial office. Because God is both our Creator and Judge, we are doubly accountable to him for our all our behavior - word, thought, and deed.

Man was created by God, in God’s image, to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Man, however, sinned against God by disobeying his holy law. Therefore, man separated himself from God’s holy and satisfying presence, and incurred God’s wrathful displeasure (cf., Genesis 1:27; Romans 3:23; Romans 1:18).

Jesus Christ, as God’s one and only Son, became a man to redeem fallen humanity from the penalty, presence, and power of sin (cf., Romans 3:21-26; Ephesians 1:3-10; Philippians 2:5-11). Being fully God and fully man, Jesus is the only mediator between God and man (cf., 1 Timothy 2:5).

Jesus Christ’s active obedience in his life and passive obedience in his death was the substituted payment for the penalty that we deserved for our sin. His death is God’s only provision for the forgiveness of man’s sin and the appeasement of God’s wrath against him (cf., Isaiah 53:6; John 3:36; Acts 4:12).

Jesus’ resurrection from the dead on the third day is the only means by which sinful man can be presented before the all-holy God. It is the means appointed by God by which he can justify the one who has faith in Jesus (cf., Romans 3:26).

Our response to the Gospel must be faith (repentance and belief) - turning away from our sin and self-sufficiency toward God, and trusting in Jesus’ life and death as the substituted penalty that we
desired to pay for our sin and his subsequent resurrection and ascension as the final triumph over sin, death, and Satan (Mark 1:15; Luke 24:46-47).

Our method must be declaration and demonstration of the Gospel.

Evangelism always involves the declaration of the Gospel, for the Gospel is a message declared. We believe that every Christian is called to be an ambassador / witness of the Gospel.

Romans 10:14-15 - "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'

Regeneration brings the kingdom of God into our lives. As a church, we believe we are not only to declare that kingdom, but also to demonstrate that kingdom through the deeds of kindness and love that he has prepared for us.

Matthew 5:13-16 - "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

This demonstration of the gospel takes place at times through organized, event-based ministry efforts but mostly occurs through the every-day lives of individuals and families wherever we live, work, and play.

The Global Harvest

We believe that God has provided a great opportunity for Redeemer Church to participate in God’s global harvest. We will seek to provide ongoing opportunities for the members of Redeemer Church to minister among unreached people groups (UPG’s) on cross-cultural fields.
Adopting Unreached People Groups

What Defines a People Group?

The term “nations,” as rendered in the Bible, has for the most part been misunderstood within the church. The Bible is not speaking of an established governing body such as the United Nations. The references in the Bible that point to nations are referring to a particular group of people who speak the same language and can be distinguished from all other peoples. A people group consists of “a significantly large grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation, etc., or combinations of these” (Ralph Winter, Mission Frontier). For evangelistic purposes, it is “the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.”

What Defines an Unreached People?

The term “unreached peoples” carries with it numerous questions that need to be clarified. Most obviously, one needs to have an understanding of the working definition of an unreached people. Unreached people (i.e. “…a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” Revelation 7:9) can be rendered as “a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize their people group without requiring outside (cross-cultural) assistance” (Ralph Winter, Mission Frontier).

What Does it Mean to “Adopt” a UPG?

As a way of participating in the global harvest, Redeemer Church’s strategy is to adopt a few unreached people groups on which to focus our prayers, resources and missions efforts. Adopting an unreached people group means that we will seek to …

1. Build strong relationships with long-term missionaries among our adopted Pugs and commit to praying for their needs regularly;

2. Provide regular updates on the status of the work among our UPGs and set aside monthly times of prayer and fasting on their behalf;

3. Organize periodic short-term mission trips to share in the work of spreading the gospel among our adopted UPGs;

4. Pray that the Lord would raise up among our own church family long-term workers to serve among the nations!
Adopting Missionaries

While our resources are limited, our prayers are much less so. For this reason Redeemer has committed to prayerfully support a much larger number of missionaries than those who serve among our adopted UPGs. The missionaries we’ve committed to pray for are not necessarily Redeemer Church members but often are. Some are missionaries within our own Southern Baptist Convention that have asked us to remember them in prayer.

Our Strategy

We encourage Redeemer Church members to...

1. **Bear witness** to Jesus Christ and His Gospel in the network of relationships God provides for each of us.

2. **Participate** in church-wide outreach efforts such as White Settlement Outreach, Utah Mission trips and other local, organized efforts that arise.

3. **Pray** regularly for our organized outreach ministries, our adopted UPG’s and adopted missionaries. We further encourage regular prayer for the lost within small groups and for members to partner together for the sake of sharing Christ with friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, etc.

4. **Go** to labor alongside missionaries among our adopted UPGs.

5. **Support** others who go. Give financially to help others going on short-term mission trips and those within our church body who will go to the nations for full-time gospel ministry.

Whether locally or abroad, it is our desire that every member of Redeemer Church will be actively engaged in declaring God’s glory to our neighbors and the nations!
Appendices
A Thumbnail Sketch of the
Doctrines of Grace
also known as Reformed Theology

1. Complete Inability or Utter Depravity

Because of the Fall, humanity is unable of himself/herself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God. His/her heart is deceitful and corrupt. His/her will is not free, but is in bondage to his/her sinful nature. Therefore, he/she will not--indeed, cannot--choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ--it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him/her a new nature. Faith is not something human beings contribute to salvation, but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation. Repentance and faith are God's gifts to the sinner, not the sinner's gifts to God.

See Ps. 51:5, 58:3; Is. 53:6, 64:6; Jer. 17:9; Jn 3:3, 8:44; Rom. 3:10-12, 5:12; Eph. 2:2-3; Eph. 2:8-9; I Cor. 2:14; II Tim. 2:24-26

2. Unconditional Election

God's choice of certain ones unto salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as repentance, faith, etc. On the contrary, God gives repentance and faith to each individual who He has selected. These acts are the result, not the cause of God's choice. Election, therefore, was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in human beings. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Holy Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus, God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

See Deut. 7:6-7; Is. 55:11; Jn. 6:44, 6:65, 15:16; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:28; 9:11-13; II Tim. 1:9

3. Particular Redemption or Specific Atonement

Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including the faith that unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation.

See Mt. 1:21, 20:28; Jn. 10:14-18, 17:9; Acts 20:28; Rom. 5:8-9; Titus 2:14; Rev. 5:9
4. **Efficacious Call of the Spirit or Irresistible Grace**

In addition to the outward general call of salvation that is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external call (that is made to all without distinction) can be, and often is, rejected; whereas the internal call cannot be rejected. It always results in conversion. By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by the will of the humanity, nor is He dependent upon humanity’s cooperation for success, the Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to repent, to believe, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God’s grace, therefore, is invincible. It never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.

See Ezek. 11:19-20; Jn 6:37; Rom. 8:30; Col. 2:13; James 1:18; Titus 3:5

5. **Perseverance of the Saints or Perseverance of the Savior**

All who are chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given repentance and faith by the Holy Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God and thus persevere to the end.

See Is. 43:1-3; Jer. 32:40; Rom. 8:35-39; Eph. 1:13-14; I Thess. 5:23-24; Jude 24-25

**Summary of the Doctrines of Grace**

According to this interpretation of the teachings of the Bible known as iReformed theologyi, salvation is accomplished by the almighty power of the Triune God. The Father chose a people, the Son died for them, and the Holy Spirit makes Christ’s death effective by bringing the elect to repentance and faith, thereby causing them to willingly obey the gospel. The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration, justification, sanctification, glorification) is the work of God and is by grace alone for His glory alone. Thus God, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation (John 1:12-13; Romans 9:16).

We desire and seek to hold to our Reformed convictions humbly, recognizing the sincerity and earnestness of godly men and women who hold to other positions
Threefold Ministry of the Church

Three relationships every Christian has:
1. Relationship to God
2. Relationship to other Christians
3. Relationship to non-Christians

Ministry understood in terms of these relationships:
1. Upreach - Worship (eternal)
2. Inreach - Equipping, "One anothering" (temporal)
3. Outreach - Missions and evangelism (temporal)