



# **GOSPEL** *Partnership*



**CROSSPOINTECOAST**  
cpcoast.com



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## GOSPEL PARTNERSHIP | INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE OF COURSE

This course is designed to be the first point of connection for those considering CrossPointe as their church home. The purpose of this course is to explain what it is to be a Christian, to equip you to live a gospel centered life, and show how that fleshes out at CrossPointe.

Though this course is necessary for partnership, you are not obligated to partner with us. We invite you to work through this material as a means of growing in understanding the gospel and searching out if it is wise for you to partner with us at CrossPointe.

Paul wrote these words to the Philippians:

*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your **partnership in the Gospel** from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:4-6).*

Church participation, in recent years, has been drastically reduced to religious consumerism, instead of a called-out people who, being radically transformed by the gospel, live their lives deeply committed to being an integral part of the body of Christ. The result is that the local church becomes impotent to effect the change so desperately needed in our communities. Our Gospel Partnership course is designed so you would not simply join the church, but that we would discover, together, that we are the church. This is why we use the language of partnership.

### CROSSPOINTE PARTNERSHIP PROCESS

The elders of CrossPointe believe the scriptures take seriously the call for Christians to partner with a local church and for the local church to care for Christians. We consider it a privilege and find great joy in following Jesus and caring for his church.

*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping a 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 (Hebrews 13:17).*

Toward this end, we have the following process as a means to best equip and care for the those who desire to partner with CrossPointe Church. All who desire to partner with CrossPointe need to complete the following:

- ➡ Read through the material in this book.
- ➡ Attend Gospel Partnership course.
- ➡ Meet with an elder or Community Group leader for a Partnership Conversation.
- ➡ Complete the Partnership Covenant.

We are excited that you are considering partnership with CrossPointe Church as we seek to point our community to Jesus.



## Our MISSION:

*To point our communities to Jesus Christ*

What do we mean by pointing?

- Does someone know the story of God?
- Can that person connect his or her own story to the story of God?
- Can he or she connect someone else's story to the story of God?

## Our VISION:

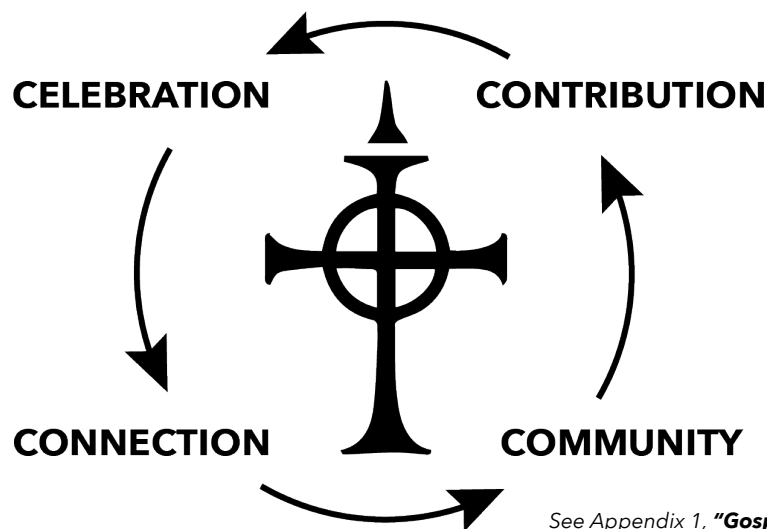
*To see our communities informed and transformed by the power of the gospel for the glory of God.*

Our vision is what we see happening as our mission bears fruit in our communities. To be informed is to look to Christ and his gospel. To be transformed is to believe in him such that it changes who we are and the way that we live. This vision works from the smaller to the greater. That is, the informing and transforming begins early in the morning as we preach the gospel to our own hearts. It then moves into our households and into our relationships, into our Community Groups and our workplaces, into our neighborhoods and our congregation.

## Our RHYTHMS:

As the gospel continues to work in us, we believe that it will radically transform the contours and fabric of our lives individually, communally and culturally. We will seek together to live lives of Celebration, Connection, Community, and Contribution as the gospel works in and through us in every facet of our lives.

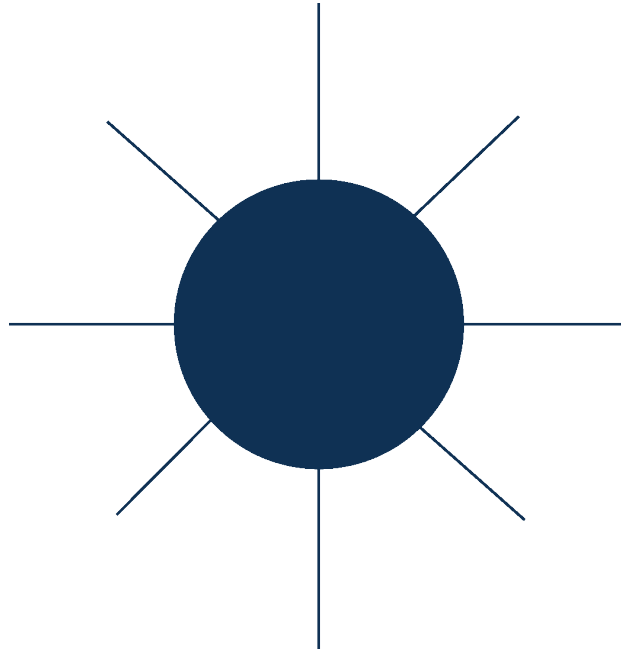
These rhythms are *not* simply programs we create, but the rhythms of our life together in light of the gospel. As a church, we are called to embrace the gospel and seek that the rhythms of gospel transformation shape us personally (Gospel and You), communally (Gospel and Church), and culturally (Gospel and Culture).



*See Appendix 1, "Gospel Rhythms Unpacked" to understand how these gospel rhythms flesh-out in our lives individually, in community and corporately.*



# CELEBRATION rhythm



**CELEBRATION RHYTHM: In response to the gospel, we will be a people who sing of the grace, goodness and glory of God.**

Celebrations throughout the Bible were designed by God so his people would be reminded of his grace, goodness and glory (Leviticus 23; Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:24-25). If we truly understand and believe the gospel, we should be the most celebratory people on the planet. 1 Peter 2:9 is a call to "declare the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." We must enter into a rhythm of celebrating God's extravagant grace, goodness and glory in such a way that the marvelous light of the gospel shines forth and shapes our lives, community and culture.



## SESSION 1 | THE GOSPEL AND GOD

### Definitions

#### What is the gospel?

The gospel is God's proclamation that by grace through faith the believer is united to Jesus in His life, death and resurrection so that he is forgiven of his sin and granted Jesus' righteousness and thus will be presented before God, not condemned but glorifying God forever.

#### What is worship?

Worship is living in the presence of the Holy God through the sufficient sacrifice of Christ with an attitude of reverence and awe that creates a living sacrifice of tribute and fellowship.

#### What is Celebration Service?

The body gathers to *remember* the ground of the gospel and to *celebrate* the fruit of the gospel.

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There is much we want to communicate to you about Partnership in the Gospel with CrossPointe Church, however, it can be overwhelming to know exactly where to begin. Since we are striving to be about Jesus and his story given in the pages of the Bible, it would seem helpful to start where every story starts – In the beginning God ...

These are the opening words of our Bible. They open with the assumption that God is at the center. Without him we have no story. We have no creation. We have nothing. So let's start out by saying a few things about God.

### 1. HOW WE CAN KNOW GOD EXISTS

#### a. Internal:

Everyone is born with an inner sense that God exists (Romans 1:18-20). Only the fool can say in his heart there is no God (Psalm 14:1).

#### b. External

- Scripture and Nature
- Proofs:
  - *Cosmological*: Everything in the universe has a cause. The ultimate and original cause must be God.
  - *Teleological*: The universe reveals an intelligent purpose, so there must be an intelligent creator, God.
  - *Moral*: Our inner sense of right and wrong leads us to a belief in a giver of a sense of justice and morality. God must be the source of right and wrong.



## 2. WHAT GOD IS LIKE<sup>1</sup>

There are many attributes of God that reveal his character and how He relates to the world. God has both unshared (incommunicable) and shared (communicable) attributes. His unshared attributes are unique to himself. His shared attributes are those possessed by God and, in a limited sense, are shared by us as people made in his image. Why do we need to know the attributes of God? There are many practical reasons, and below are just a few:

- Sin distorts our view of God and thus distorts our view of ourselves, others and the world around us (Genesis 3:1-3). Scripture helps us understand the truth about God and thus transforms our perspective on everything. The root of many people's problems is a result of a distortion of God's character. A.W. Tozer (an American Pastor and author who died in the earlier 1960's) wrote, "The low view of God entertained almost universally among Christians is the cause of a hundred lesser evils everywhere among us" (*The Knowledge of the Holy*, pp. 6-7).
- The more we grow in our awareness of God's holiness, the more we become aware of our sinfulness (Isaiah 6:1-7). Until we are aware we are great sinners, we will never know our need for a great Savior. The more we become aware of our sinfulness, the sweeter God's grace becomes. The cross of Christ looms larger and larger in our lives and transforms us.
- The more we understand the attributes of God, the more deeply we will rest in the freedom of God's grace. His forgiveness is based upon his character not our character (Psalm 25:11).
- The more we understand the attributes of God, the more deeply they transform our prayer lives. What we really believe about God shows up in our prayers. Knowing the character of God invites us to pray with great confidence relying on the strong hand of our redeemer to move (Nehemiah 6: 3-8).
- The more we understand the attributes of God, the more we will understand God's plan for our lives. Until we have a vision of God, we will never have a vision from God (Isaiah 6:8).
- The more we understand the attributes of God, the more we will fear God. There is great joy in standing in awe of the greatness and holiness of God (Nehemiah 1:11). It is a life-altering and life-shaping joy. It will deepen our worship and affection for God. Tozer continues to write, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us ... Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God" (*The Knowledge of the Holy*, p. 9).

## 3. THE TRIUNE GOD

We believe there is one God who is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. This one God has eternally existed in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

1. **The Father is God** - God the Father is the Creator of heaven and earth. By his word and for his glory, he freely and supernaturally created, sustains, and rules over all. In his grace, he gave his Son, Jesus, for mankind's redemption (John 6:27; 17:3, 1 Corinthians 8:6, 2 Corinthians 1:3, Ephesians 1:3, 1 Peter 1:3).
2. **The Son is God** - Jesus Christ is the Son of God and is fully God and fully man. He is coequal with the Father and is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Jesus lived a

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 2 :: The Gospel and the Attributes of God



sinless life and offered himself as a perfect sacrifice for sins by dying on the cross. He rose from the dead three days later to demonstrate his power over sin and death. He ascended into heaven's glory and will return again to earth reigning as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 1:22-23, John 1:1-5; 14:10-30, Acts 1:9-11, Romans 1:3-4, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 1 Timothy 6:14-15, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 4:14-15).

3. **The Holy Spirit is God** - The Holy Spirit is equal with the Father and the Son and has come to glorify the Son, who in turn came to glorify the Father. He is present in the world and makes people aware of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He persuades people to repent of their sins and confess Jesus as Lord. He also lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation and provides power for living, understanding spiritual truth, and guidance in applying the truth of God's Word (John 14:16, Acts 5:3-4, 2 Corinthians 3:16-18).

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God who are coequal, coexistent, and coeternal. Yet they are distinct from each other; the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, the Spirit is not the Father. This triune God is the foundation of the Christian faith and life.

## 4. HOW GOD COMMUNICATES TO US

**General Revelation** is the theological term for the way God has spoken to all people in all times. He has made himself known in some attributes of people (made in his image) and in nature.

**Special Revelation** is the theological term for how God has spoken to us through the physical person of Jesus, the Holy Spirit and Scripture.

## 5. WHAT GOD COMMUNICATES TO US

God has *good news* that He wants us to embrace. This good news, or gospel, is told within the context of a grand, over-arching story throughout the pages of the Bible. We believe the Bible is God's Word. It is living and active, and graciously given to lead us in the good news/gospel. It is what we orient our lives around. This Word is perfect. It is without error. It is not simply instructions for living, sprinkled with stories. Rather it is one, over-arching story that is sprinkled with instructions.

## 6. TWO GOSPEL PERSPECTIVES

The Bible can be read through two lenses: the gospel on the *ground* and the gospel in the *air*.

1. **The gospel on the GROUND** is the personal redemptive implication of the gospel. Through this lens we come to understand the *means* of salvation – the **gospel power** (Ephesians 2:8-9).

### REGENERATION - JUSTIFICATION - SANCTIFICATION - GLORIFICATION

In this case, the good news is that God, in and through the work of Jesus Christ and the power of his Spirit (regeneration), accepts us (justification), and changes us (sanctification) to ultimately glorify God in every aspect of our lives (glorification).





2. **The gospel in the AIR** is the historical redemptive implication of the gospel. It is the story line of Scripture. Through this lens we come to understand the *reason* for salvation – the **gospel purpose** (Ephesians 2:10, 14-22).

### **CREATION - FALL - REDEMPTION - RESTORATION**

**CREATION:** *Genesis 1 and 2* - The beauty of God's original creation is described in *Genesis 1 and 2*. The world is as God intended it to be, with humans made in his image, full of worth, value and dignity in perfect relationship with him and each other. Deep within all of us is a desire to have this world as it was originally intended to be.

**FALL:** *Genesis 3* - The Bible clearly acknowledges that man has been separated from God through the rebellion of our first parents, Adam and Eve. From this point on, the entire world has been in rebellion against God. We live in a broken world.

**REDEMPTION:** *Genesis 3 through Revelation 19* - God in his infinite mercy and grace sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. Jesus lived the perfect life we can never live and died the death we all deserve. He bore our punishment, so that by believing in him we could be in a right relationship with God. Believing in his literal life, death and resurrection, and surrendering our lives to him are the only means of salvation.

**RESTORATION:** *Revelation 21* - One day Jesus will return to *fully* establish his Kingdom and his reign. At that time, He will usher in a new heaven and a new earth. There will be one final consummate judgment where Jesus puts the world right. Until that time, we get to be his agents for good and change in this world.

God, in Jesus Christ, has given us both the *message* of reconciliation (the gospel power) and the *ministry* of reconciliation (gospel purpose).

## **7. WHY WE NEED TO KNOW BOTH GOSPEL PERSPECTIVES**

We must know the *gospel power* (regeneration, justification, sanctification, glorification) and the *gospel purpose* (creation, fall, redemption, restoration) and see them both as God's story together – the gospel on the *ground* and the gospel in the *air*.

When we communicate both the *gospel power* and the *gospel purpose* it connects the story of people's lives to a great, redemptive story that is unfolding through history. This gives meaning and purpose to people's lives.

If we only focus on the gospel work (power of the gospel – what Jesus did), but do not know the gospel story (purpose of the gospel – what Jesus is doing through the church), we will tend toward a gospel that is about saving individuals and miss the mission of the gospel – it becomes *about us*.

*God is at the center of the gospel word. Yet much of evangelism tends to place people in that position. The gospel becomes skewed toward me and how Jesus meets my needs. But the gospel Jesus proclaimed is about God exercising his life-giving rule through his Messiah for his Glory (Tim Chester & Steve Timmis, Total Church, p. 55).*

If we only focus on the gospel power, but miss the gospel purpose, we will tend to produce "consumer Christians" versus "missional Christians." The "consumer church" is seen as a dispenser of religious goods and services. People come to church to be "fed," to have their needs met through quality



programs, and to have the professionals teach their children about God. *"I go to church."* The "missional church" is seen as a body of people sent on a mission who gather in community to celebrate the grace, goodness and glory of God. *"We are the church."*

### THE STORY IS ALL ABOUT HIM ... IT'S NOT ABOUT US

If we only focus on the *gospel story*, but miss the *gospel work*, we will tend toward works of man without the power of God. We will begin to believe it is up to us to change the world, and that we are more acceptable and significant to God by doing more – it becomes *dependent upon* us.

## 8. GOSPEL EXPLANATION

### a. Short-Hand Definition

*Through the person and work of Jesus Christ, God fully accomplishes salvation for us, rescuing us from judgment for sin into fellowship with him, and then restores the creation in which we can enjoy our new life together with him forever" (Timothy Keller, Pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church).*

At CrossPointe we often use the term "cross-centered" and "gospel-centered" interchangeably and synonymously. The cross represents all of who Christ is and what He accomplished for us through his life, death, burial, resurrection and ascension, even as we look forward to his promised return.

**b. Jesus' Life** - The most central and important belief of the Christian faith rests on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Since the fall of man in Genesis 3, man has been separated from God because of a totally sinful nature. God in his infinite wisdom and mercy, sent his Son to earth to live as a perfect, sinless man who is fully God. Because Jesus is the only perfect God-Man to ever live, He is the only one who can reconcile man back to God (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

People in our culture will often praise Jesus as a great moral teacher, but many have a problem when it comes to praising him as God. Jesus himself says He is much more than just a good teacher, more than a good man (Mark 10:17-18):

- ➡ Jesus said He was the Son of God and that He is in the Father (John 10:36-39).
- ➡ Jesus said He was God (Mark 14:61-64).
- ➡ Jesus said He was sinless (John 8:46).
- ➡ Jesus told us to pray to him as God (John 14:13-14).
- ➡ Jesus said He was the only way to heaven (John 14:6).

C.S. Lewis wisely said:

*"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mere Christianity, pp. 40-41



**c. Jesus' Death** - Through his death on the cross, Jesus took our sin upon himself, and He died in our place for our sins. This is where we get the beautiful doctrine of **penal substitutionary atonement**.

- ➡ Penal refers to the penalty and punishment for our sin. Paul wrote in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." This death encompasses both the physical and spiritual aspect of humanity.
- ➡ Substitution(ary) refers to Jesus as our substitute, who stood in our place and died the death we deserve to die. The simple fact that Jesus died a horrible death on the cross to bear the weight of our transgressions is simply incredible to think upon.
- ➡ Atonement refers to the reconciliation between God and man that occurs through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ - the perfect and ultimate sacrifice (Isaiah 53:5, Romans 5:8, 1 Peter 3:18).
- ➡ Jesus was also our propitiation (Romans 3:21-26, Hebrews 2:17, 1 John 2:1-2). This is the term theologians use to describe how the wrath of God was diverted from sinners to Christ on the cross.

Unlike the gods of Greek and Roman mythology, or any other god of paganism, who demand a sacrifice to appease their wrath, God turned around and did the exact opposite. Instead of demanding a sacrifice and demanding that we shed blood, He comes and sheds his own. The wrath of God is placed on God's Son and is diverted from men and onto Jesus.

The result is forgiveness, justification, imputation of Jesus' righteousness, and our acceptance as children into God's family with Jesus as our Lord and brother.

**d. Jesus' Resurrection** - After his death, Jesus was buried and sealed in a tomb. In order for anything about Christ as our atonement and propitiation to be true, Jesus must have risen from the grave. On the third day, He rose to life and victory over Satan, sin, and death. Through his resurrection, the very life of God has broken into this world to give us life that is new in character and eternal in duration (Luke 24:36-49, 1 John 4:9-10, 1 Peter 2:22-24, Isaiah 53:3-12).

**e. Jesus' Ascension** - Jesus then ascended into heaven where He is on his throne at the right hand of God the Father. Jesus Christ is presently ruling and reigning as Sovereign, King, and Lord over everything and everyone. The Bible repeatedly and emphatically teaches that nothing is beyond the rule and authority of Jesus Christ.

In a day when most people sat on the floor, squatted, or reclined, thrones were reserved for kings, priests, and warriors. Throughout the book of Revelation, Jesus is portrayed in each of these roles:

- ➡ As King: Jesus rules over all creation from his throne.
- ➡ As Priest: Jesus mediates between us and God the Father.
- ➡ As Warrior: Jesus sits in triumph over Satan, sin, and death.

(Acts 1:6-12, John 16:28, Isaiah 6:1-7, Revelation 19:11-16, Revelation 21:1-8)

## 9. WHY THIS IS OF FIRST IMPORTANCE

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Paul writes about the gospel - that Jesus lived, died and was resurrected - as being of *first importance*. But why is this so important? The Scriptures tell us repeatedly that we are not only people who sin, but people who are born sinners. Because of this, we have been separated from God.



What is needed is a *sinless substitute* for our *salvation*. This is what Jesus achieved for God's glory and our benefit. Sin needed to be dealt with, so Jesus became sin for us. This does not mean He sinned, but rather He took our sin upon himself.

This is what 2 Corinthians 5:21 is all about:

*"For our sake He made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*

When this happened, Jesus became our *substitute*. He took our deserved place. In doing so Jesus made the only way for our *salvation*. However, the way of salvation would never have come to fruition if He had not conquered both *sin and death*. Jesus' resurrection then is the "other side of the coin" so to speak. Quite frankly there would be no point to talk about Jesus if He hadn't resurrected. By Jesus resurrecting He ushered in the dawn of a new age, one that will see final completion when He returns.

This work of Jesus, the gospel, brings a realization that through him - while we are more sinful, flawed and wicked than we dare believe - we are more loved and accepted before God than we could ever dare hope.

## 10. THE GOSPEL ASSUMED

"The gospel" is a phrase that Christians often use without fully understanding its implications for all of life. Christians speak, teach, and preach about the gospel with the assumption that one fully understands the depth, beauty, truth, and power of it. When one lives with a truncated view of the gospel, one sees the gospel as just the "door" in which one enters God's Kingdom.

But the gospel is so much more! It is not just the door, but the path we are to walk every day of the Christian life. It is not just the means of salvation, but the means of transformation. It is not simply deliverance from sin's penalty, but release from sin's power. The gospel is what makes one right with God (justification), and it is also what frees one to delight in God (sanctification). The ongoing working power of the gospel must never be assumed in one's life. If one is to grow in maturity in Christ, one must deepen and enlarge their understanding of the gospel as God's appointed means for personal and communal transformation.

One must live every moment of life in full view of the Cross.<sup>3</sup>

*"... Of this you have heard before in the Word of the Truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing - as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth" (Colossians 1:5-6).*

*"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that on one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).*

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from The Gospel Centered Life Study, World Harvest Mission



## 11. THREE WAYS TO LIVE: The Gospel vs. Religion and Irreligion

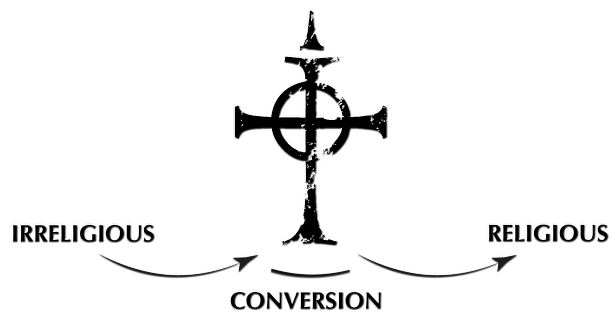
*In Luke 15, Jesus tells a powerful parable about a father and two sons. This parable is commonly known as the "Prodigal Son" or "The Younger Lost Son." However, the narrative is as much about the older brother and the father as it is about the younger brother. The parable might better be called the two lost sons.*

There are three ways to respond to God's revelation of himself and his plan for this world:

- ➡ Religion (moralism): I trust in my own ability to obey God to be accepted by him.
- ➡ Irreligion (relativism): I decide my own truth and meaning in this world outside of God.
- ➡ Gospel (Christianity): I am accepted perfectly in Jesus, therefore, I can obey God.

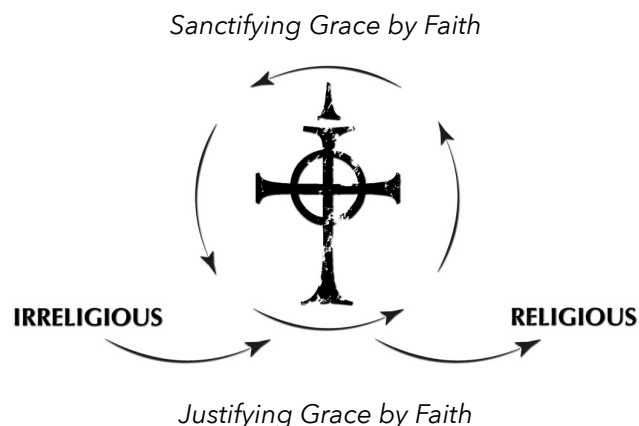
When one becomes a Christian, the tendency is to jump from irreligion (disregard for God) to religion (working to be accepted by God). The way we know Jesus is not by moving from irreligion to religion, but by a life oriented *around* the *gospel*. (I am accepted through Jesus, therefore, I get to obey.)

### a. Traditional Spiritual Formation Chart



### b. Cross-Centered Spiritual Formation Chart

*"For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'" (Romans 1:17, Habakkuk 2:4).*





### c. Gospel vs. Religion

The gospel changes us and changes the motivation, purpose and goals of everything we do. God becomes the goal of everything we do – not to gain acceptance (religion) or avoid him (irreligion), but to find pleasure in him (gospel). Life centered on the gospel of Jesus has huge implications on our relationship with God, ourselves, and the world. The following is a chart of differences between “religion” and the gospel.<sup>4</sup>

#### **RELIGION (performance-based)**

I obey – therefore I’m accepted.

Motivation is based on fear and insecurity.

I obey God in order to get things from God.

When circumstances in my life go wrong, I am angry at God or myself, since I believe, like Job’s friends, anyone who is good deserves a comfortable life.

When I am criticized, I am furious or devastated, because it is critical that I think of myself as a “good person.” Threats to that self-image must be destroyed at all costs.

My prayer life consists largely of petition and it only heats up when I am in a time of need. My main purpose in prayer is control of the environment.

My self-image swings between two poles. If and when I am living up to my standards, I feel confident, but then I am prone to be proud and unsympathetic to failing people. If and when I am not living up to my standards, I feel humble, but not confident. I feel like a failure.

My identity and self-worth are based mainly on how hard I work or how moral I am, and so I must look down on those I perceive as lazy or immoral. I disdain and feel superior to “the other.”

Since I look to my own pedigree or performance for acceptability, my heart manufactures idols. It may be my talents, moral record, personal discipline, social status, etc. I absolutely have to have them; they serve as my main hope, meaning, happiness, security, and significance – whatever I may say I believe about God.

#### **GOSPEL (grace-based)**

I’m accepted – therefore I obey.

Motivation is based on grateful joy.

I obey God to get to GOD – to delight and resemble him.

When circumstances in my life go wrong, I struggle but I know my punishment fell on Jesus, and while He may allow this for my training, He will exercise his Fatherly love within my trial.

When I am criticized, I struggle, but it is not critical for me to think of myself as a “good person.” My identity is not built on my record or performance but on God’s love for me in Christ. I can take criticism. That’s how I became a Christian.

My prayer life consists of generous stretches of praise and adoration. My main purpose is fellowship with him.

My self-view is not based on a view of myself as a moral achiever. In Christ I am simul iustus et peccator – simultaneously sinful and lost yet accepted. I am so bad He had to die for me, and I am so loved He was glad to die for me. This leads me to deeper and deeper humility and confidence at the same time. Neither swaggering nor sniveling.

My identity and self-worth are centered on the one who died for his enemies and who was excluded from the city for me. I am saved by sheer grace. So I can’t look down on those who believe or practice something different from me. Only by grace am I what I am. I’ve no inner need to win arguments.

I have many good things in my life – family, work, spiritual disciplines, etc. But none of these good things are ultimate things to me. None of them are things I absolutely have to have, so there is a limit to how much anxiety, bitterness, and despondency they can inflict on me when they are threatened or lost.

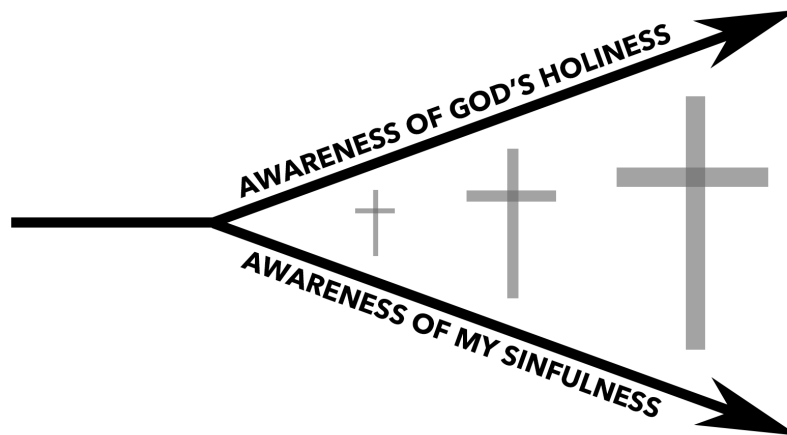
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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Timothy Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church



## 12. LIVING IN FULL VIEW OF THE CROSS

The starting point of the Christian life (conversion) comes when by God's grace I first become aware of the gap between God's holiness and my sinfulness. When I am converted, I trust and hope in Jesus, who has done what I could never do – He has bridged the gap between my sinfulness and God's holiness. He absorbed the wrath of God upon himself so I could experience his mercy. He put himself where only I deserved to be so I could be in a place that only He deserved to be.



## 13. THE CROSS LOOMS LARGE

At the point of conversion, however, I have a very limited view of God's holiness and of my sin. The more I grow in my Christian life, the more I grow in my awareness of God's holiness, and of my flesh and sinfulness. Through reading the Bible, experiencing the Holy Spirit's conviction, and living in community with other people, the extent of God's greatness and the extent of my sin become increasingly clear and vivid. It is not that God is becoming more holy, or that I am becoming more sinful. But my awareness of both is increasing. I am increasingly seeing God as He actually is (Isaiah 55:8-9) and myself as I actually am (Jeremiah 17:9-10). As my understanding of my sin and of God's holiness grows, something else also grows: my appreciation and love for Jesus. His mediation, his sacrifice, his righteousness, and his gracious work on my behalf become increasingly sweeter and more powerful to me. The cross looms larger and more central in my life as I rejoice in the Savior who died upon it.

*All inadequate [teachings of the cross] are due to inadequate teachings of God and man. If we bring God down to our level and raise ourselves to his, then of course we see no need for a radical salvation, let alone for a radical [cross] to secure it. When, on the other hand, we have glimpsed the blinding glory of the holiness of God, and have been so convicted of our sin by the Holy Spirit that we tremble before God and acknowledge that we are, namely 'hell-deserving sinners,' then and only then does the necessity of the cross appear so obvious that we are astonished we never saw it before (John Stott, The Cross of Christ).*

When we come to know Christ, we become conscious of three basic truths:

1. God's holiness: "God is Holy."
2. The depth of our sin: "I am a sinner."



3. The complete sufficiency of Christ's atoning work to make us fully acceptable before the Father (gospel transformation): "Jesus is the Savior of sinners."

The gospel becomes a journey of living in full view of the cross. It is daily reminding ourselves of what Christ accomplished on our behalf on the cross and living every moment of our lives by that truth. It is daily learning more and more of God's holiness and seeing more of our sin in light of that holiness. We are continually faced with two options:

1. We can live daily in full view of the cross, seeing the cross as big enough to bridge the gap between God's holiness and my sinfulness. When we cling to the cross we cling to Christ's righteousness and perfection. We live daily in repentance of our sin and rejoicing in our true identity in Christ.
2. We can shrink the cross by inventing "another gospel" to justify ourselves and relieve our guilt. We will unpack this next week.

## 14. THE GOSPEL APPLIED - CONFESSION

We already stated that the starting point of the Christian life (conversion) comes when by God's grace I first become aware of the gap between God's holiness and my sinfulness. When I am converted, I trust and hope in Jesus, who has done what I could never do: He has bridged the gap between my sinfulness and God's holiness. He absorbed the wrath of God upon himself so I could experience his mercy. He put himself where only I deserved to be so I could be in a place that only He deserved to be.

**a. Conversion** takes place when you have that experience needed to have "eyes to see" and "ears to hear," as Scripture puts it, or a sort of sixth sense. That transforming spiritual sense is itself a gift of the Holy Spirit (regeneration). The goal is not simply to understand facts about Jesus, but to have your whole life captivated by him - to know Jesus, to love Jesus, to worship Jesus. In conversion, your response to the gift of this "sixth sense" or the gospel is repentance, faith and obedience.

**b. Repentance** is simply recognizing you have been going in one direction and to now turn in a new direction. Repentance begs the question - Why do I need to repent? Repent for what? The direction in which all of us are heading, apart from Jesus, is to set something or someone other than God as ultimate in our lives.

*Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel' (Mark 1:14-15).*

*Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified. Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:36-41).*

**c. Faith** is a gift from God such that you a) love God, b) believe that Jesus is who He says He is, and c) entrust your hope of salvation to the reality that Jesus lived a perfect life for you, died on the cross for you, and rose again to restore you to a right relationship with God. You believe and trust that there is no other thing or person by which you can be saved. You recognize you are a sinner who deserves God's wrath, but trust that Jesus took that wrath upon himself for you.





A confession of faith is a confession that Jesus is your Savior, Lord and Treasure. As Savior, you look to him for salvation from the just punishment of your sin. As Lord, you look to him and his Word to guide your life. As Treasure, you look to him as your satisfaction, joy and reward. Your hope that God will forgive you as He promises to do and preserve you until he returns, is not because of anything you have done, but solely through the grace of God in sacrificing his Son on your behalf.

In short, you are trusting in the *gospel* (good news). However, contrary to much teaching out there, trusting in the gospel is not just how you are initially saved, but it is also the way you continue to grow as a Christian.

You don't just have faith in the finished work of Jesus one time; you continually have faith and rely on the finished work of Jesus alone. Again, the tendency is to fall back into religion and seek to earn your acceptance before God through your accomplishments (faith in yourself), as opposed to living life continually trusting in the accomplishment of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

**d. Obedience** is living a life in full view of who Jesus is and what He accomplished for you on the cross. It is relying on the power of the Holy Spirit to trust fully in the gospel to inform and transform every moment of your life, every decision you make, and every relationship you have. It is a life that sings of the grace, goodness and glory of the Creator.

## 15. THE GOSPEL APPLIED - JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

When I am converted, I trust and hope in Jesus; I am *justified* before God because Jesus has bridged the gap between my sinfulness and God's holiness. He put himself where only I deserved to be so that I could be in a place that only He deserves to be.

*"... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:22-24).*

**a. Justification** is having a right legal standing before God. It is an instantaneous legal act of God in which He (1) sees our sin as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight.

God's gift of *justification* is a one-time event that could be no more momentous. We are "born again" (John 3:3), "made alive" (Ephesians 2:5), transferred from the "domain of darkness" into "the kingdom of his beloved son" (Colossians 1:13), "forgiven our sins" (Ephesians 1:7), delivered from wrath (Romans 5:9), "reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:18), and we have "passed from death to life" (John 5:24).

But this is the beginning of the Christian life, not the only act. Jesus died in order that we may not only be *justified*, but also *sanctified* - made holy. It is important to distinguish the difference between justification and sanctification. In justification, the penalty of sin is removed as we are declared righteous in Christ. In sanctification, the pollution of sin is progressively removed as we are made holy in Christ. We must live out of and trust in our justification because our sanctification is progressive and change is often slow.

**b. Sanctification** is a progressive work of God in us that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives.



*Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it (1 Thessalonians 5:23- 24).*

*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13).*

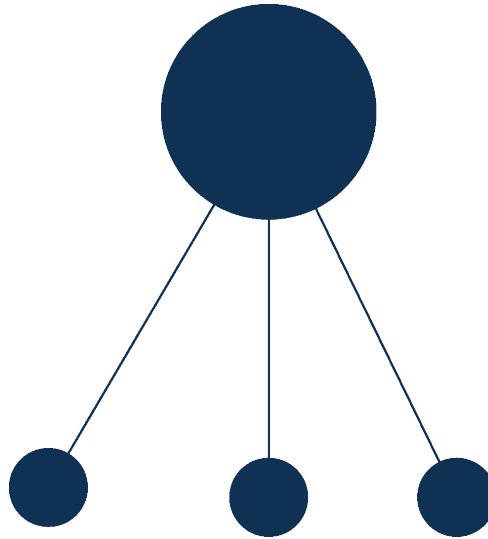
The gospel is the way we are both justified and sanctified. As at conversion, to be sanctified we dwell on the difference between God's holiness and our sinfulness, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we put our faith and trust in Jesus. In *sanctification*, the Holy Spirit works in us, and we work through the power of the Holy Spirit. God transforms us by *causing* us to want his will and then giving us the power to do it. In sanctification, we work because God works in us.

At the point of conversion, we have a limited view of God's holiness and our sinfulness. The more we are sanctified, growing in the Christian life, the more we grow in our awareness of God's holiness and our sinfulness. Through reading the Bible, experiencing the Holy Spirit's conviction, preaching the gospel to ourselves and living in community with other people, the extent of God's greatness and the extent of our sin become increasingly clear and vivid. It is not that God is becoming more holy, or we are becoming more sinful. It's our awareness of both that is increasing. The way to grow in our sanctification is to believe more deeply in our justification and live daily in the full reality of who Jesus Christ is and what He accomplished for us on the cross. In other words, live daily in full view of the cross.

We must know this gospel well! We must let it inform and transform every aspect of our lives so that in our everyday lives we can sing of the goodness, grace and glory of God. (See **Appendix 3: "Our Doctrine"** to understand more deeply CrossPointe's doctrine.) All of this remains in the realm of theory if it is not applied to our lives. It is imperative that our understanding of God and the gospel not be about information, but rather our transformation. It is with that in mind that we explore the next section, the *connection rhythm*.



# CONNECTION rhythm



**CONNECTION RHYTHM: In response to the gospel, we will live in such a way that we connect the story of people's lives to the ultimate story of the gospel.**

Connection (contextualization) is adjusting the way we declare and demonstrate the gospel in culturally adaptable forms, while always holding to a biblically faithful gospel. Jesus beautifully demonstrated a life of connection when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ..." (John 1:14). Jesus, fully God and the essence of God, took on bodily form. He came into a particular culture at a particular time in a particular form. He was a male, a Jew, and a part of the working class. He spent 30 years living in and learning the culture before He started his public ministry. Then before his ascension to heaven He told his disciples, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (John 20:21).



## SESSION 2 | THE GOSPEL APPLIED

### Definitions

#### What is a disciple?

A disciple is one among many disciples who have been called by God to follow Jesus, first in faith for salvation, then in growth in knowledge and obedience, walking in the Spirit, and finally by binding together with other disciples in mission.

#### What does a disciple do?

(Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 1:6)

A disciple walks by faith in the good works prepared in advance for him to do by joining with his fellow disciples for mutual edification and partnership in mission. These good works do not justify the disciple before God, but glorify God before the watching world and the hosts of Heaven as He who began a good work in the disciple carries it to sanctifying completion.

### 1. STORY-FORMED PEOPLE

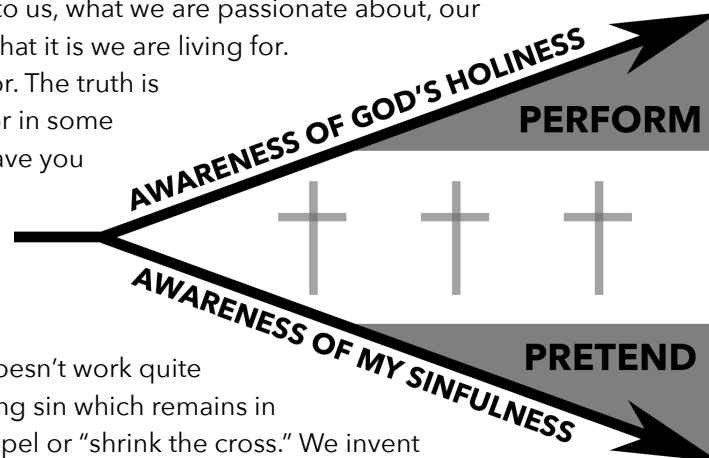
Everyone has a story. You have a story, and I have a story. We all desire to tell our stories. We express our stories in many different ways. Some of us express our story in different mediums of art, music, written and spoken word. Social media has made it possible for us to tell our story through a Facebook status and in 140 characters or less with Twitter. Telling our stories is really about worship. We love to tell our stories because we are created to worship. When we tell our stories, we are revealing the deepest longings of our hearts: what is important to us, what we are passionate about, our values, what is crucial to our lives, and ultimately what it is we are living for.

Whatever that is, it is our god – our functional savior. The truth is everyone is seeking a savior either in themselves or in some other created thing. What self-salvation projects have you embarked on?

### 2. SHRINKING THE CROSS

Unfortunately, sanctification (growth in holiness) doesn't work quite as neatly as we would like. Because of the indwelling sin which remains in our flesh, we consistently tend to minimize the gospel or "shrink the cross." We invent "another gospel" when we either minimize God's perfect holiness, thinking of him as something less than his Word declares him to be, and embark on a self-salvation projects (perform), or we invent "another gospel" when we minimize the depth of our sin and brokenness (pretend). The old hymn put it perfectly, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love."

When this happens the cross becomes smaller and Christ's importance in our lives is diminished. Adam and Eve first did this in Genesis 3 when they rebelled against their Creator. Shame entered their lives, and in verse 7, they sought to cover their own sin and shame, and in verse 8, they minimize their sin by hiding from God.





### 3. MINIMIZING SIN<sup>5</sup>

**a. Defending** - I find it difficult to receive feedback about weaknesses or sin. When confronted, my tendency is to explain things away, talk about my successes, or to justify my decisions. As a result, I rarely have conversations about difficult things in my life.

**b. Pretending** - I strive to keep up appearances and maintain a respectable image. My behavior, to some degree, is driven by what I think others think of me. I also do not like to think reflectively about my life. As a result, not very many people know the real me. (I may not even know the real me.)

**c. Hiding** - I tend to conceal as much as I can about my life, especially the “bad stuff.” This is different from pretending in that pretending is about impressing. Hiding is more about shame. I don’t think people will accept the real me.

**d. Blaming** - I am quick to blame others for sin or circumstances. I have a difficult time “owning” my contributions to sin or conflict. There is an element of pride that assumes it’s not my fault *and/or* an element of fear of rejection if it is my fault.

**e. Minimizing** - I tend to downplay sin or circumstances in my life, as if they are “normal” or “not that bad.” As a result, things often don’t get the attention they deserve and have a way of mounting up to being overwhelming.

**f. Exaggerating** - I tend to think (and talk) more highly of myself than I ought to. I make things (good and bad) out to be much bigger than they are (usually to get attention). As a result, things often get more attention than they deserve and have a way of making me stressed or anxious.

### 4. “SELF-SALVATION” PROJECTS

We embark on “self-salvation” projects when we fail to see Christ as our only hope of redemption. It’s not that we don’t think of Jesus as our savior, but we think we need Jesus plus “something else” in order to find validation and satisfaction. The danger is that “something else” tends to become our functional savior (either ourselves or an idol) and attempts to displace Jesus as our ultimate redeemer. That “something else” becomes our functional source of righteousness and satisfaction apart from Christ. Again it is adding to what Christ has done on the cross. In Romans 10:1-4, Paul’s desire and prayer is that the Jews would be saved not because of their own attempts at righteousness, but because of Christ’s righteousness. He writes, *“For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”*

When we do not rest in the righteousness that comes from God in the gospel, we will make something our functional source of righteousness. We will trust that thing, rather than Jesus, to build our reputation and give us a sense of worth and value. Here are some examples:

**a. Job Righteousness:** God helps those who help themselves. If I work hard, God will reward me.

**b. Family Righteousness:** If I just do things right as a parent, I will be accepted by God/others/myself.

**c. Theological Righteousness:** I have good theology. Of course God is pleased with me!

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from the Gospel Centered Life, Coram Deo Missional Communities



**d. Intellectual Righteousness:** I am better read, more articulate, and more culturally savvy than others, which obviously makes me superior.

**e. Schedule Righteousness:** I am self-disciplined and rigorous in my time management. God is pleased with my stewardship of time.

**f. Flexibility Righteousness:** In a world that's busy, I'm flexible and relaxed. I always have time for others. God appreciates my laid-back demeanor.

**g. Mercy Righteousness:** I care more about the poor and disadvantaged than other people, and this makes me better in the eyes of God.

**h. Legalistic Righteousness:** I don't drink, smoke, or chew, or date girls who do. God is pleased by my moral convictions.

**i. Financial Righteousness:** I manage money wisely and stay out of debt, so God must think highly of me.

**j. Political Righteousness:** If you really love God, you'll vote for my candidate.

**k. Tolerance Righteousness:** I am open-minded and charitable toward those who don't agree with me. In fact, I'm a lot like Jesus that way!

These are just a few examples; perhaps we can think of many more. (Think of anything that gives a sense of being "good enough" or better than others.) These sources of functional righteousness disconnect us from the power of the gospel. They allow us to find righteousness in what we do instead of honestly confronting the depth of our sin and brokenness. Furthermore, each of these sources of righteousness is also a way of judging and excluding others! When we rely on them, we implicitly elevate ourselves and condemn those who aren't as "righteous" as us. In other words, finding righteousness in these things leads us into more sin, not less.

## 5. WARRING AGAINST IDOLS

Another way of embarking on "self-salvation" projects is to pursue after idols for satisfaction and validation. **Idolatry is a major theme for "what ails" us.** In the beginning, we were created in the *imago dei* (image of God) to worship and serve God (Genesis 1:26-27). We were given the *Cultural Mandate* to rule over all created things in God's name (Genesis 1:28-31, Psalm 8:5-8).

*People are now chasing after, rather than ruling over, created things. We are slaves rather than rulers of creation.*

Instead we rebelled against our divine origins (Genesis 3) and "fell into sin." Paul describes this "fall" of humanity in terms of idolatry. We refused to give God glory (i.e. to make him ultimate), and instead began to worship and serve the created instead of the Creator. *"They exchanged the glory of the immortal God ... and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator"* (Romans 1:21-25). The result is the created things began to rule over human beings (Genesis 3:17-19).

**We were created to worship.** We will either worship the uncreated God or we will worship some created thing (idols). Either way, we will "worship and serve" something (Romans 1:25), and whatever we worship, we will serve, for worship and service are always, inextricably bound together.



## 6. UNDERSTANDING IDOLS

### a. Idolatry is at the root of all sin and is a great way to understand sin.

Romans 1:18-25 and Galatians 4:8-9 expose what sin is and how it works.

- ➡ Verse 21 tells us that the reason we make idols is because we want to control our lives, though we know we owe God everything. *"Though they knew God, they neither glorified God nor gave thanks to him."*
- ➡ Verse 25 tells us the *strategy* for control – taking created things, setting our hearts on them, and building our lives around them. Since we need to worship something – because of how we are created – we cannot eliminate God without creating God-substitutes.
- ➡ Verses 21 and 25 tell us the two *results* of idolatry: (1) deception – *"their thinking became futile and their hearts were darkened"* and (2) slavery – *"they worshipped and served"* created things. Whatever you worship, you will serve.

**Summary:** The Bible does not consider idolatry to be one sin among many (and thus now a very rare sin only among primitive people). Rather, *the only alternative to true, complete faith in the living God is idolatry.* All our failures to wholly trust God or to live rightly are rooted in idolatry – something we make more important than God. There is always a reason for a sin, and under our sins are idolatrous desires.

### b. Idolatry is at the root of every heart, and it is the only way to understand motivation.

Unless we believe the gospel, we will be driven in all we do – whether obeying or disobeying – by pride (self-love) or fear (of damnation). We may be obeying God, but we will only be seeking to manipulate him (get blessings from him) through our good works. We will not be obeying him out of delight in who He is in himself. So, apart from *living in full view of the Cross*, all good works are done for sinful motives. Mere moral effort may restrain the heart, but does not truly *change* the heart into Christ-like character. Moral effort merely "jury rigs" the evil of the heart to produce moral behavior out of self-interest. It is only a matter of time before such a thin tissue collapses.

**Summary:** This means that idolatry is always the reason we ever do anything wrong. Why do we ever lie? Why do we fail to love, keep promises, or to live unselfishly? Of course, the general answer is "because we are weak and sinful," but the specific answer is always that there is something besides Jesus Christ we feel we must have to be happy. There is something more important to our hearts than God; something that is spinning out a delusional field and enslaving the heart through inordinate desires. Therefore, the secret to change (and even to self-understanding) is to always identify the idols of the heart.



## 8. THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDOLS

### How are idols formed?

*The idol begins as a means of power, enabling us to control, but then overpowers, controlling us (Richard Keyes, "The Idol Factory" in No God but God).*

Idols have a "surface" and "root" dimension.

**a. "Root idols"** such as power, approval, comfort, and control are more subtle and basic. They are at the roots of our lives, farther from the surface of things. They are motivational drives. They can work through many "near idols." They are mainly dealt with by a process of repenting and rejoicing.

**b. "Surface idols"** are more concrete and specific objects and subjects such as a spouse or a career. Now these things - your business, your ministry, your music - are extremely good things that need to be detached from the far (deeper) idols which are using them. That means they often (even ordinarily) may remain in our lives, if they are "put in their place." This is what Augustine meant when he spoke of the "right ordering of our loves."

## 9. IDENTIFYING OUR IDOLS

**a. Recognize** the "far" and "near" idols in our hearts. "That most basic question which God poses to each human heart: Has something or someone besides Jesus Christ taken title to your heart's functional trust, preoccupation, loyalty, service, fear and delight?" (Dick Keyes). To get to the bottom of what the Bible calls idols, and what Keyes calls our "heart title," ask these diagnostic questions:

- If you are angry, ask, "Is there something too important to me? Is there something I am telling myself I have to have? Is that why I am angry - because I am being blocked from having something I think is a necessity when it is not?"
- If you are fearful or badly worried, ask, "Is there something too important to me? Is there something I am telling myself I have to have? Is that why I am so scared - because something is being threatened, which I think is a necessity when it is not?"
- If you are despondent or hating yourself, ask, "Is there something too important to me? Is there something I am telling myself I have to have? Is that why I am so "down" - because I have lost or failed at something I think is a necessity when it is not?"

### Additional diagnostic questions:

- What is my greatest nightmare? What do I worry about most?
- What, if I failed at it or lost it, would cause me to feel as though I do not want to live anymore? What keeps me going?
- What do I rely upon or comfort myself with when things go bad or get difficult?
- What do I think most easily about? What does my mind go to when I am free? What preoccupies me?
- What prayer, if unanswered, would make me seriously think about turning away from God?
- What makes me feel the most self-worth? Of what am I most proud?
- What do I really want and expect out of life? What would really make me happy?

**Summarize:** What are common themes? What are the "functional" masters? What things tend to be too important?





### **b. Distinguish Root Idols:**

**Power Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - I have power and influence over others."

**Approval Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - I am loved and respected by \_\_\_\_\_."

**Comfort Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - I have this kind of pleasure experience or a particular quality of life."

**Control Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - I am able to get mastery over my life in the area of \_\_\_\_\_."

### **c. Distinguish Surface Idols:**

**Helping Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - people are dependent on me and need me."

**Dependence Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - someone is there to protect me and keep me safe."

**Independence Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - I am completely free from obligations or responsibilities to take care of someone."

**Work Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning /I only have worth if - I am highly productive, getting a lot done."

**Achievement Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - I am recognized for my accomplishments or if I am excelling in my career."

**Materialism Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - I have a certain level of wealth, financial freedom, and very nice possessions."

**Religion Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - I am adhering to my religion's moral codes, and I'm accomplished in its activities."

**Individual Person Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - this one person is in my life and is happy there and/or happy with me."

**Irreligion Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - I feel I am totally independent of organized religion with a self-made morality."

**Racial/Cultural Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - my race and culture is ascendant and recognized as superior."

**Inner Ring Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - a particular social grouping, professional grouping or other group lets me in."

**Family Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - my children and/or my parents are happy and happy with me."

**Relationship Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - Mr. or Ms. "Right" is in love with me."

**Suffering Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - I am hurting or in a problem, because only then do I feel noble or worthy of love or am able to deal with guilt."

**Ideology Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - my political or social cause or party is making progress and ascending in influence or power."

**Image Idolatry:** "Life only has meaning/I only have worth if - I have a particular kind of look or body image."



## 10. DECONSTRUCTING IDOLS

Idols create delusions: Idols appear more wonderful or all powerful than they really are. They lead us to deny their hold on us. We need to stand back and get them into perspective. In what ways are our idols distorting our thinking or hiding themselves from us? (For example: "My idol of status and money has made me deny how much I hate my job and how much happier I would be in another, but lower-paying, career.")

*You don't deconstruct an idol just because you named it. Now you just have a name for your true god.*

**a. Repent** of your idols.

- **Recognize how weak and poor your idols are (in themselves).** In prayer, confess that these things are good, but finite and weak, and praise God for being the only source of what you need. **Pray:** "Lord, this is a good thing. Why have I made it to be so absolute? Why do I feel so pointless without it? What is this compared to You? If I have You, I don't have to have this! This cannot bless me, love me and help me like You! This is not my life - Jesus is my life! This is not my righteousness and worthiness. It cannot give me that. But You can and have!" Write out such a prayer in your own words.
- **Recognize how dangerous your idols are (to you).** Idols enslave, and they will never be satisfied. Realize how they increasingly destroy you. In prayer, confess that these things are absolutely lethal, and ask a strong God for his help. **Pray:** "Lord, why am I giving this so much power over me? If I keep doing it, it will strangle me. I don't have to do so - I will not do so any longer. I will not let this jerk me around on a leash any longer. This will not be my Master - You are my only King." Write out such a prayer in your own words.
- **Recognize how grievous your idols are (to Christ).** Idols ultimately are cruel to the heart of the One who offers you so much, and at such an infinite cost. Realize that when you pine after idols (in your anger, fear, and despondency) you are saying: "Lord, You are not enough. This is more beautiful, fulfilling, and sweet to my taste than You. You are negotiable, but this is not. Despite all You have done for me, I will only use You as long as You help me get this. You are negotiable, but this is not. You haven't done enough for me - if You don't help me have this, I will discard You." In prayer, admit how deeply you have grieved and de-valued Jesus, and ask forgiveness. **Pray:** "Lord, I see how repulsive this idol is. In yearning after this, I trampled on Your love for me. I realize now that the greatest sin in my life is a lack of thankfulness, a lack of grateful joy for what You have done for me." Write such a prayer in your own words.

**b. Rejoice** in the freedom of grace. It is only as we rejoice in the absolute certainty of God's love for us that we can truly repent. In the gospel, free grace is the thing that most assures us and most deeply convicts us.

## 11. PREACH THE GOSPEL TO YOURSELF

One of the most transforming disciplines you can develop is to preach the gospel to yourself daily. To live in full view of the cross and allow the truth of the gospel to define every moment of your life, you must know it well and remind yourself of it often.

*Reminding ourselves of the gospel is the most important daily habit we can establish. If the gospel is the most vital news in*

*Only when you have preached the gospel to your own soul will you know how or have the desire to preach to the soul of your neighbor.*



*the world, and if salvation by grace is the defining truth of our existence, we should create ways to immerse ourselves in these truths every day. No days off allowed ... Your audience is your own heart. And the message is simple: Christ died for your sins. It's a matter of sitting down, grabbing your own attention, and telling yourself, 'Hey, listen up! This is what matters most: You're forgiven! You have hope! Your hope is based on the sacrifice of Jesus. So let's not view this day any other way. Let today be governed by this one defining truth' (C.J. Mahaney, *Living the Cross Centered Life* pp. 132-133).*

*You are loved and accepted by God through the merit of Jesus, and you are blessed by God through the merit of Jesus. Nothing you ever do will cause him to love you any more or any less (Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace* p. 73).*

A biblically faithful gospel is not that of unconditional love. It's not "God accepts you as you are." To think in this way greatly diminishes the Cross. The gospel is far better than unconditional love. God has contra-conditional love for you. The gospel says, "God accepts you just as Christ is." Christ bears the wrath of God that we rightfully deserve because of our sin, and gives us his righteousness that makes us wholly acceptable to God. God never accepts me as I am. He accepts me "as I am in Christ Jesus."

In his essay, *The Idol Factory*, C.J. Mahaney writes, "The center of gravity is different. The true gospel does not allow God's love to be sucked into the vortex of the soul's lust for acceptability and worth in and of itself." Rather, a true gospel radically reorients you to look beyond yourself to the cross for your acceptability, value and worth.

*May the Lord bring us in contemplation to Calvary, then our position will no longer be that of the pompous man of pride, but we shall take the humble place of one who loves much because much has been forgiven him. Pride cannot live beneath the cross. Let us sit there and learn our lesson, and then rise and carry it into practice (C.H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*, June 3).*

There is no such thing as a God-less moment. He is unwaveringly working all things out for his glory. You must see every moment of your life in light of the ongoing work of the gospel in and through your life. Every relationship, every opportunity, every conflict, and every seeming coincidence is God working in you and me to transform every aspect of our lives by the power of the gospel. Cling to the cross, regardless of the circumstance.

## 12. PRACTICAL WAYS TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO YOURSELF

- **Meditate** upon the gospel (Isaiah 53:3-6, Romans 3:23-26; 5:6-11; 8:32-39, 1Cor. 15:3-4, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 2:21).
- **Pray** the gospel (Hebrews 4:16). The whole reason we can enter into the presence of a holy and righteous God is because of the work of Christ on the cross.
- **Sing** the gospel (*Amazing Grace* by John Newton and *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross* by Isaac Watts).
- **Remember** how the gospel has transformed your life (1 Timothy 1:13).
- **Study** the gospel. To grow in your passion for what Jesus has done, you need to increase your understanding of what He has done (*ordo salutis*). David Prior said, "We never move on from the cross, only into a more profound understanding of the cross."
- **Practice** incarnating the gospel. Be a friend to sinners and engage in incarnational ministries.

*Mantras try to create reality by repetition. Preaching the gospel to yourself remembers what God has made reality.*



### 13. CAPTIVATED BY THE CROSS

To counteract our sinful tendency to shrink the gospel, we must constantly nourish our minds on biblical truth. We need to know, see and savor the holy, righteous character of God. We need to identify, admit and feel the depth of our brokenness and sinfulness. We don't need to do these things because "that's what Christians are supposed to do." Rather, we make this our aim because it is the life God wants for us – a life marked by transforming joy, hope and love.

Growing in the gospel means seeing more of God's holiness and more of our sinfulness. Because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross, we need not fear seeing God as He really is or admitting how broken we really are. Our hope is not in our own goodness, nor in the vain expectation that God will compromise his standards and "grade on a curve." Rather, we rest in Jesus as our perfect Redeemer – the one who is "our righteousness, holiness, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

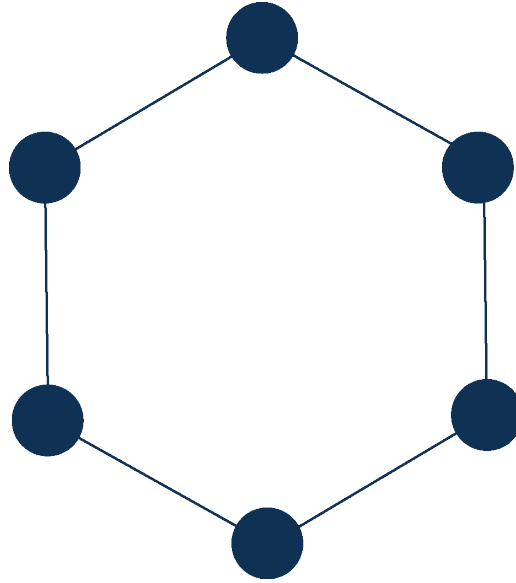
In Galatians 6:14, Paul gives us a fascinating glimpse into how his faith in the gospel transformed him when he writes, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world."

John Stott writes, "Paul's whole world was in orbit around the cross. It filled his vision, illumined his life, warmed his spirit. He 'gloried' in it. It meant more to him than anything else ... This Greek word translated here as 'boast' has no exact equivalent in English. It means to glory in, trust in, revel in, live for. In a word, our glory is our obsession."

This is what it means to live daily in full view of the cross. The gospel was never meant to be lived out in isolation but in the context of rich and deep gospel relationships. In the next session we look at what it means to live in *gospel community*.



# COMMUNITY rhythm



**COMMUNITY RHYTHM: In response to the gospel, we will live within the context of deep, authentic relationships.**

As a reflection of our Creator who exists in community as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we will intentionally create environments of community and belonging. We will attempt to validate people's connectedness wherever they find it, while also encouraging them toward an authentic expression of sharing life with fellow journeyers in Christ. This will involve much sacrifice, authenticity and love.



## **SESSION 3 | THE GOSPEL AND COMMUNITY**

### **Definitions**

#### **What is fellowship?**

(Genesis 12:2; 1 Peter 4:10-11; 2 Corinthians 4:6)

The fellowship of believers is the fruit of the gospel in the community of faith. In order to obtain fellowship, therefore, the disciple does not first pursue community, but rather a knowledge of the gospel and its pure fruit. Fellowship is the disciples together pursuing a knowledge of God, the fruit of obedience, and the glory of God as His love becomes manifest in their midst. Fellowship is never static, but growing. The disciples together always seek to extend the love that they have received from the Father above to both the lost and one another that God would be all the more glorified as rebels become worshipers. In this way, fellowship becomes an act of worship and compels evangelism.

#### **Faithful Discipleship Requires Fellowship**

(John 13:35)

Francis Schaeffer – Upon His authority He gives the world the right to judge whether you and I are born-again Christians on the basis of our observable love toward all Christians. We cannot expect the world to believe that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus' claims are true, and that Christianity is true, unless the world sees some reality of the oneness of true Christians.

#### **Fellowship's Firm Foundation**

Our fellowship is not laid on the foundation of mutual commitment or any human effort or affiliation. Our fellowship has as its ground the very person and work of Jesus Christ. Any other foundation for our fellowship is an unholy brood.

#### **Preexistent Fellowship**

The fellowship that we enter into and into which we invite others is a preexistent fellowship. We don't have one fellowship with God individually and then a separate fellowship with each other. We have one fellowship: God with His people! We invite others to join not into fellowship with each other but into our fellowship that we have together with God in Christ.

#### **The Joy of Fellowship is in Its Increase**

No fellowship is complete that is satisfied in its stagnation. God has created a fellowship that is on a mission to gather in His saints from every tribe, tongue, and nation. The joy that we have in our fellowship with God is inherently missional. It is joy on a mission. It is joy that increases as more of the elect, who are called by His name, are added to make our fellowship together in Christ complete.

#### **What is Community Group?**

Community Group is more than a weekly event, it is a way of sharing life together. It is a group of households gathering as a family around a meal, sharing in gospel-centered conversation, praying for one another and sharing in our mission of pointing our community to Jesus Christ.



## 1. THE IDENTITY OF THE CHURCH - THE GOSPEL

The motivation for everything the church does must be based upon what God has accomplished for us in Jesus Christ and what He is accomplishing through us by the power of the Holy Spirit. The gospel is central to the motives and the methods of what the church does.

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake He made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).*

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

*One cannot explain the explosive power of the early church apart from the fact that they practiced two things simultaneously: the orthodoxy of doctrine and the orthodoxy of community in the midst of the visible church, a community which the world could see. – Francis Schaeffer*

While there is a people of God through space and time (universal church), Scripture also teaches of individual gatherings of God's people in particular areas (local church). Although we enter into a relationship with God individually, by entering into that relationship with God we enter into a relationship with God's people, the church.

## 2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH

The church community is both the end of the gospel and also the means of spreading the gospel. God's promise in salvation is to create his "holy nation", a people that dwell with him forever. "I will be your God and you will be my people" (Leviticus 26:12, Jeremiah 30:22). So Christians, who are eternally united to Christ, are therefore eternally united to one another. We are all ministers of the gospel for the sake of one another. Since our culture knows very little about true community, we will have to work hard at following a biblical vision. In the biblical vision and in true community we are to be:

- an accepting community that reflects the grace we've been given from Christ
- a holy community that urges one another to live God-pleasing lives
- a truth-telling community that is free to repent and to allow others to repent, because of the gospel
- an encouraging community that builds one another up
- a sacrificially generous community that spends its life and wealth on the needs of others



- a suffering community that loves and forgives others even when it harms us<sup>6</sup>

While we live in an individualistic culture that values independence, the church is meant to be a counter-culture that brings in the Kingdom of God through loving and caring for one another and the surrounding culture. God's commands for his community, the church, include teaching on how Christians are to interact with and serve one another.

*"So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:41-47).*

### **3. THE ONE ANOTHER TEACHINGS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

- Members of one another (Romans 12:5)
- Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10)
- Honor one another (Romans 12:10)
- Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)
- Loving one another (Romans 13:8, 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9, 2 Thessalonians 1:3, Hebrews 10:24, 1 Peter 1:22, 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7; 11-12, 2 John 5)
- Edifying one another (Romans 14:9)
- Stop passing judgment on one another (Romans 14:13).
- Accept one another (Romans 15:7)
- Instruct one another (Romans 15:14)
- Greet one another with a holy kiss (Romans 16:16).
- Agree with one another (1 Corinthians 1:10)
- Waiting for one another (1 Corinthians 11:33)
- Have equal concern for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25).
- Serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13)
- Carrying one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love (Ephesians 4:32).
- Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19).
- Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21)
- Esteeming one another (Philippians 2:3)
- Do not lie to each other (Colossians 3:9).
- Bear with each other (Colossians 3:13).
- Teach and admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)
- Encourage one another daily (Hebrews 3:13)

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<sup>6</sup> adapted from Timothy Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church





- Spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24).
- Do not slander one another (James 4:11)
- Don't grumble against each other (James 5:9)
- Confess your sins to each other (James 5:16)
- Pray for each other so that you may be healed (James 5:16).
- Love one another deeply, from the heart (I Peter 1:22).
- Offer hospitality to one another (I Peter 4:9)
- Fellowship with one another (I John 1:7)

#### **4. NEGATIVE ONE ANOTHER TEACHINGS**

- Not lusting for one another (Romans 1:27)
- Not judging one another (Romans 14:13)
- Not depriving one another (I Corinthians 7:5)
- Not envying one another (Galatians 5:26)
- Not biting, devouring, destroying one another (Galatians 5:15)
- Not slandering one another (James 4:11)
- Not grumbling against one another (James 5:9)
- Not hating one another (Titus 3:3)
- Not provoking one another (Galatians 5:26)

The Scriptures are clear that each individual Christian is to be part of the church body and that body functions with certain characteristics. While the methods of applying these characteristics of the church can vary, the necessity of certain functions being present are what constitutes a church. For these characteristics that constitute a church to take place, the Bible teaches that a particular local church has an order or structure. However, this structure can look vastly different in each particular local church.

#### **5. INDICATORS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH**

- Preaching and teaching of all of God's Word (Acts 20:27, 2 Timothy 4:2)
- Worship of God (Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 1:12; 5:16-19)
- Evangelizing of lost people (Matthew 28:19)
- Helping those in need (Luke 6:35-36, Acts 11:29, 2 Corinthians 8:4, 1 John 3:17)
- Baptizing of new Christians (Matthew 28:19)
- Building up of God's people (Colossians 1:28, Ephesians 4:12-13)
- Unity and love among God's people (John 13:34-35)
- Service by God's people (1 Corinthians 12:4-6, Ephesians 4:12, 1 Peter 4:11)
- Partaking of communion (1 Corinthians 11:17-34)
- Church discipline (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1-5)
- Effective prayer (Acts 2:24, Romans 12:12, Ephesians 6:18)
- Biblical church government (Philippians 1:1)
- Holiness among God's people (John 14:15; 17:23, Hebrews 12:14)
- Deep and sincere love for Jesus at all times (Luke 10:27)
- An unwavering commitment to the gospel of grace (1 Corinthians 15:1-8)
- Evidence of the power of God (Romans 1:16)



It is the role of the church to encourage one another to be mature in Christ (Ephesians 4:12-13). Scripture reveals that one becomes a Christian through faith in Jesus alone through grace alone. The Apostle Paul said the goal was not simply to bring people to initial saving faith, but to "present every man mature in Christ" (Colossians 1:28). This can only happen through the work of the Holy Spirit in someone's life through means of teaching, community, prayer etc.

## **6. GOSPEL LEADERSHIP**

We believe Jesus is the reason, foundation, and the purpose for why the church even exists. Therefore, it is absolutely vital that as a church - we love Jesus, obey Jesus, imitate Jesus, and follow Jesus at all times and in all ways, according to the teaching of his Word.

### **Jesus is the head of the church.**

- ➡ Jesus is the Apostle who plants the church (Hebrews 3:1).
- ➡ Jesus is the senior pastor who leads the church (1 Peter 5:4).
- ➡ Jesus is the head of the church (Colossians 1:4, 2:10, 2:19).
- ➡ Jesus grows and builds a church (Matthew 16:18).
- ➡ Jesus shuts a church down for becoming faithless and/or fruitless (Revelation 2:5).

### **Elders are the senior leaders under Jesus.**

- ➡ Elders serve the church (Mark 10:43-45, 1 Peter 5:2-3).
- ➡ Elders lead the church (1 Timothy 3:4-5; 5:17, 1 Peter 5:2, Romans 12:6,8).
- ➡ Elders nourish the church (1 Timothy 4:1-2; 4:6).
- ➡ Elders equip the church (Ephesians 4:11-12).
- ➡ Elders protect the church (Acts 20:28-31).

### **Deacons lead servants in the church.**

- ➡ Deacons are worthy of respect and have strong character (1 Timothy 3:8-13).
- ➡ Deacons are sincere, heartfelt, earnest, honest, and authentic (1 Timothy 3:8-13).
- ➡ Deacons are without addictions - self-controlled (1 Timothy 3:8-13).
- ➡ Deacons do not pursue dishonest gain; they are not greedy (1 Timothy 3:8-13).
- ➡ Deacons keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience and sound theology (1 Timothy 3:8-13).
- ➡ Deacons are tested and proven worthy over time (1 Timothy 3:8-13).
- ➡ Male deacons are additionally called a husband of one woman and to manage their children and household well (1 Timothy 3:8-13).
- ➡ Female deacons are additionally called to not be malicious talkers but to be temperate and trustworthy in everything (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

### **Partners lead and serve under the elders and deacons.**

- ➡ Partners serve by working together like a family (1 Timothy 3:15; 5:1-2).
- ➡ Partners use their gifts to serve other parts of the body (Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:16-17).
- ➡ Partners are called to work together through partnership in the gospel (Philippians 1:5-7).



In relationship to God, the church's purpose is to worship him. Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever (shorter catechism). Although this includes a large gathering of people in a worship service, it grows even larger as the church seeks to worship God in everything they do from work, to family, to relationships and even to rest (Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 1:12; 5:16-19).

## 7. GROWING IN GOSPEL COMMUNITY, FOR THE COMMUNITY

Depending on our background, when we hear about *community groups*, there may be several things that come to mind. Is it just a trendy way of saying Bible study? Is it a place to meet new people and make friends? With no church background, we might wonder what kind of freaky gathering is this?

For CrossPointe, a community group is a primary way to *grow in gospel community, for the community*. Let us unpack that to shed some light on what a group is and is not.

### a. Growing in the Gospel

At the minimum, it is a weekly gathering where people **grow in the gospel together**. Since we believe the gospel is more than just how one gets saved, but it's the means by which we continue to grow as Christians, then we never move away from it. We are people with a huge problem – namely, we look to everything but Jesus for our identities. We need constant reminders of who we are in Jesus because of what He has done for us on the cross. We may cognitively know we are a new creation, but we don't always experience that. We need a community that will remind us of our true identity and help us experience this truth.

However, it is not enough to simply gather; we engage in gospel conversations when we delve into the mystery of the gospel and its implications for our lives. We need some guidance in this, and that is where our study materials come in. Though there is nothing magical about these studies, they do bring intentionality to our conversations. They invite us to look to the Bible, where the gospel message is revealed. They discipline us to ask the tough questions. Questions to get below the surface and allow us a few moments to pause and reflect on the goodness of God, despite how our circumstances sometimes feel.

### b. Growing in Community

As we begin to grow in our new identities as followers of Jesus, we then have the spiritual resources to sacrifice for others while *growing in community*. At the heart of the gospel message is a sinless Man sacrificing for a people that are naturally his enemies. As we dwell on that reality, we can begin to love others genuinely and more fully. We can truly develop community with the people in our groups because we will begin sacrificing for one another. Gospel community is not always the people we naturally hang out with. We tend to hang out with people who are like us and share similar interests or passions. There is nothing wrong with that, but we shouldn't mistake a similar age and stage in life as the prerequisite for gospel community. Sometimes this happens, but it is not the goal. The goal is to be a people who are maturing in Christ together.

### c. For the Community

The last part of growing in gospel community is *for the community*. Maturing in the gospel can never be divorced from loving the community outside the church or outside our Community Groups. The love of Christ we experience together, as we dwell on the beauty of the gospel, should compel us to seek ways to serve and love others who have not experienced the love of Jesus. This does not mean to



wait for the church leadership to organize a service project of some type (not that these are bad, or that we don't do them), but that we seek ways to show others the love of Christ in the everyday rhythms of life. We try to love people in the ordinary and the mundane with gospel intentionality. If we are truly growing in the gospel, we will be humbled by a message that tells us we were nobodies, and have only been made somebodies because of Jesus. So we have no reason to look down on anyone else. We have no reason to boast, except in the cross of Jesus. Yet if we are growing in the gospel, we will simultaneously grow in confidence as well. A confidence in who Jesus is and what He has accomplished will give us strength and power to actually love those who don't believe what we believe. At CrossPointe we believe true community happens when the gospel and everyday life are shared with one another.

## 8. SACRAMENTS

Jesus gave the church two visible symbols (ordinances) as reminders of his life, death and resurrection. These two ordinances are: baptism and communion. Baptism and communion are both a means of grace or an outward means by which Christ communicates to his people the truths of redemption. In celebrating these two sacraments in community, we are reminding each other of who Christ is and what He accomplished for us on the cross so that we may live daily in full view of the Cross.

### a. Baptism

#### What is water baptism?

- ➡ Water baptism is an outward act, which denotes or symbolizes an inward experience that has already taken place in the life of a believer in Jesus. The word "baptism" means "to dip, to immerse, or to submerge." The act of immersing a new believer in water symbolizes two things: first, identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and second, identification with the Body of Christ, his church.

#### Where is water baptism mentioned in the Bible?

*"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 ..." (Matthew 28:19).*

*"What shall we say then? Are we to continue to sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin" (Romans 6:1-7).*

#### What is the purpose of water baptism?

- ➡ Water baptism symbolizes our death, burial, and resurrection with Jesus Christ. It is an outward action that denotes the past inward experience of being born again (Romans 6:3-6).
- ➡ Water baptism is a celebration of our union with Christ.



- ➡ Water baptism is an open declaration that we are now believers and identified with Christ and his Church.
- ➡ Water baptism is one of the first acts of obedience to Christ.

### **Who is baptism for?**

- ➡ Water baptism is for all who have truly accepted Jesus Christ into their hearts as Lord and Savior. "And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:38).
- ➡ All who have repented and received Christ should take the next step of water baptism.

### **Is water baptism a requirement to be saved?**

- ➡ No. Ephesians 2:8-9 says that we are saved by grace and not by any of our own works. Titus 3:5 confirms this by saying that God saved us, not because of righteous things we have done, but because of his mercy.

### **b. Communion**

Jesus instructed his disciples to remember his life, death and resurrection. This is done through communion.

### **What is the Lord's Supper?**

Jesus instructed his disciples to remember his life, death and resurrection. This is done through communion which is a tangible means of grace whereby we see, taste, hold, smell and hear the promises of redemption in Christ. There is a real and special spiritual presence of the glorified Christ mediated by the Holy Spirit which strengthens the believer's faith and points toward the future and full redemption of God's people when Christ returns (Matthew 26:19-20, 26-28; Luke 22:14-20; Mark 14:23-25; Revelation 19:9).

*"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also He took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).*

#### **➡ It is a simple act.**

"... the Lord Jesus on the night He was betrayed took bread ..." (1 Corinthians 11:23)

#### **➡ It is a reminder.**

"... and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me'" (1 Corinthians 11:24).

#### **➡ It is a symbol.**

"In the same way also He took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me'" (1 Corinthians 11:25).

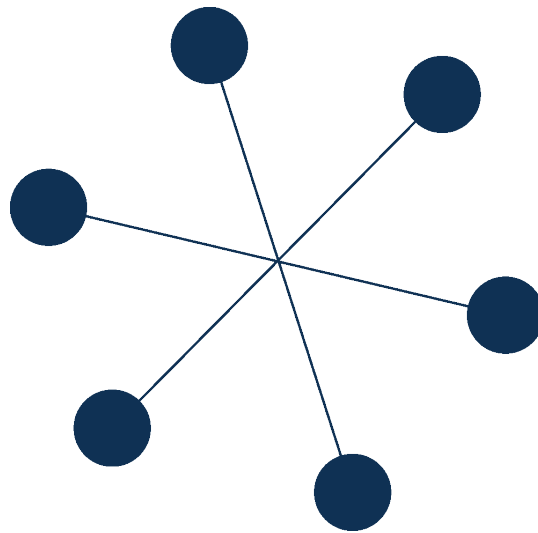
#### **➡ It is a statement of faith.**

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26).





# CONTRIBUTION rhythm



**CONTRIBUTION RHYTHM:** In response to the gospel, we will leverage our time, talent and treasure to further the mission of God for the glory of God. At CrossPointe we are calling all of our partners to a life of contribution (stewardship). This fleshes itself out in three distinct, yet overlapping areas of our lives: *time, talent and treasure*. To steward something is to realize it is not ours, but has been given to us by God to use for the benefit of others. As the gospel works in us, we get the opportunity to have the gospel work through us and to experience the joy



## SESSION 4 | THE GOSPEL AND MISSION

### Definitions

#### **What is God's mission in the world?**

(Genesis 12:2; 1 Peter 4:10-11; 2 Corinthians 4:6)

At the center of God's mission in the world is to make the glory of His Name known among all peoples of the earth. He has done this by revealing Himself perfectly in the face of Christ. He shows that His Name is good, full of steadfast love, and worthy of glory by proclaiming and performing the gospel through the person and work of Jesus, His life, death, resurrection and ascension for the sake of those He came to save.

#### **How do the disciples participate in God's mission in the world?**

(Romans 12:1-2; Acts 4:23-31; Hebrews 13)

As the disciples faithfully attend to the renewing of their minds and their faithful life together the disciples will also be in constant prayer for opportunities for relationships, hospitality and proclamation in the community. It is here that they will discover the way in which they can extend their fellowship by proclaiming the gospel with their lips and the gospel's fruit with their lives. In this way they make known the glory of the gospel in the face of Christ to the community in which God has placed them.

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The gospel does not create merely a collection of individual disciples who wait for heaven. The gospel creates a people who have been invited into the very mission of God.

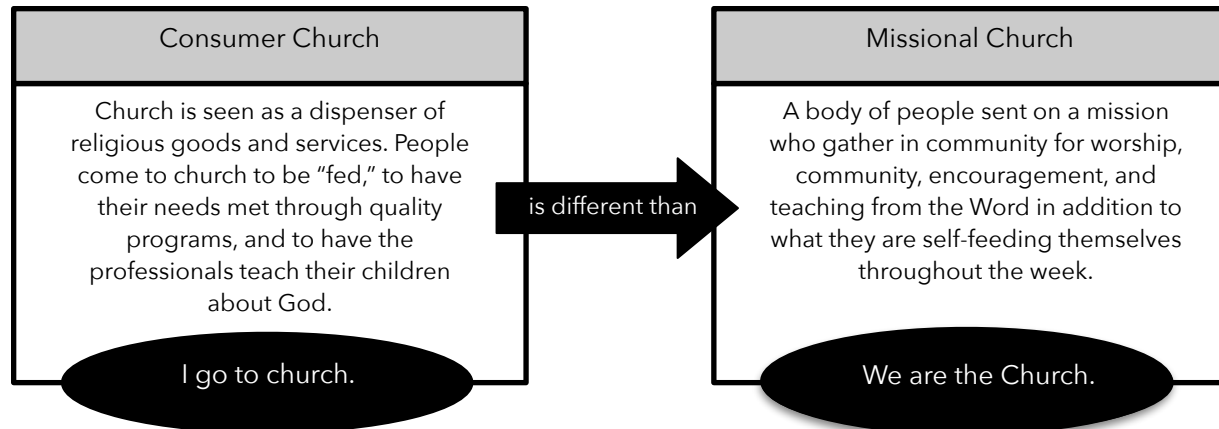
The reason for a church to be on mission necessitates a source of the mission, a reason for the mission. The source and reason for the mission of the church is God and his plan to redeem and renew all things through Jesus for his Glory and our joy. The Father is a sending Father who sent his Son who sends the church on his mission.





## 1. THE CHURCH EXISTS FOR MISSION

"This is the whole of Christianity. There is nothing else. It is easy to get muddled about that. It is easy to think that the Church has a lot of different objects – education, building, missions, holding services. The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs [Christ-like]. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful, you know, whether the whole universe was created for any other purpose. It says in the Bible that the whole universe was made for Christ and that everything is to be gathered together in him" (C.S. Lewis).<sup>7</sup>



The New Testament does not view the church as a particular building where people go, although it includes that, but the church is a people on mission. It is common to view church as a place to "go" and take whatever you can from it while not becoming part of the church, not serving the church, not being in relationship with others in the church, not connecting other people to the church.

The people of the church are to come *together* to celebrate Jesus, learn about Jesus, remember Jesus, serve Jesus and then go out to serve Jesus, teach people about Jesus, and point people to Jesus in the particular context where they live, work and play.

*Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you' (John 20:21).*

*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 (Acts 1:7-8).*

Jesus commands the church to be sent through the power of the Holy Spirit. We are to be sent to the immediate culture where God has placed us, as well as, to all the earth if the opportunity arises. People are first and foremost missionaries in their homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, communities, cities and wherever else God may call them. The people of the church are always on mission.

The church is a people that is for the city, for the culture and for the people where God has placed them. There are different views churches have on how to interact with the surrounding culture. At CrossPointe, we desire to be "for" our culture.

Church "of" culture: The church so embraces the culture there is no difference (syncretism).

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<sup>7</sup> Adapted from Dan Kimball, *Vintage Faith*



Church *"against"* culture: The church so opposes culture they lose their relevance (sectarianism).

Church *"for"* culture: The church engages culture in order to transform it for the glory of God.

## 2. THE MISSION OF CROSSPOINTE

The mission of CrossPointe is to point our community to Jesus Christ. This entails both our local church community, as well as, all the communities in which we have influence.

We believe that mankind was created with dignity and worth, but sin has marred and tainted us, and all of creation needs to be re-created through Jesus. As a re-created community, we believe we are to be sent out into our communities, cities and world to join God's mission of redeeming and renewing all things.

This takes place in all spheres of life: relationships, workplaces, neighborhoods, families, cities, schools, etc. as the community is sent to bring the light of the gospel into the world around us. As a church, our hope is to encourage, train and equip people to do this so the hope of the gospel can take root and spread in our own lives, communities and cities.

It is important that our understanding of the mission of the God through the church does not remain cognitive and something we only talk about.

## 3. ELEMENTS OF A MISSIONAL CHURCH<sup>8</sup>

### ➡ **uses language that is understandable to the culture**

- A missional church does not shrink from historic, biblical terms but works to explain their meaning.
- A missional church avoids "we - them" language and mocking people of different beliefs.
- This language must come from a humble yet bold heart that has been changed by the gospel.

### ➡ **applies the gospel to the core concerns of the culture**

- A missional church seeks to understand the stories of culture in order to better understand the hopes, dreams and fears of people, so it can re-tell culture's story in light of Jesus
- A missional church works to demonstrate that only in Jesus will people find true freedom.
- A missional church is *"for"* the culture and desires to see God's best for the people of society.
- A missional church is filled with people who love their neighbors as themselves and work for the common good of the whole community.

### ➡ **trains people for gospel living in all areas of life**

- A missional church equips its people to view everything with a biblical worldview and work with Christian distinctiveness. They need to know:

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<sup>8</sup> Adapted from Timothy Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York



- a. what cultural practices are good and should be embraced
- b. what cultural practices are adverse to the gospel and should be rejected
- c. what cultural practices can be adapted/revised
- A missional church shows that people who are working to renew and transform culture through their vocations are doing important, real *Kingdom work* and ministry.
- A missional church demonstrates true, biblical love toward those with whom we deeply differ, because the heart of the gospel is a Man dying for his enemies and saving unworthy people by sheer grace.
- ➡ **creates biblical community which is counter-cultural and counter-intuitive**
  - A missional church is filled with people who love one another despite their differences of personality, social status, ethnicity, or vocation and support each other in authentic, nurturing, and supportive friendships.
  - A missional church goes beyond basic "fellowship" to embody a *counterculture*, showing the world how radically different a Christian society is with regard to sex, money, and power.
  - A missional church must be more deeply and practically committed to deeds of compassion and social justice than traditional liberal churches and more deeply and practically committed to evangelism and conversion than traditional fundamentalist churches. This kind of church is profoundly *counter-intuitive* to American observers. It breaks their ability to categorize (and dismiss) it as liberal or conservative.
- ➡ **practices Christian unity as much as possible on the local level**
  - A missional church must not spend time bashing and criticizing other kinds of biblical churches. Such behavior simply plays into the common belief that Christians are intolerant and can't get along.
  - A missional church should cooperate, reach out to and support the other congregations and churches in the local area.

## 4. GOSPEL GENEROSITY

The vertical response to the gospel is *gratitude*. The horizontal response to the gospel is *generosity*.

In his book *The Mission of God*, Chris Wright shows that the Bible story is "all about mission" – God's mission is to save a people for himself through Jesus Christ. Jesus is the focus of the story, but his identity has missionary implications (Luke 24:45-48). This radical, God-centered perspective, Wright suggests, "turns inside out and upside down some of the common ways in which we are accustomed to think about the Christian life. ... It constantly forces us to open our eyes to the big picture, rather than shelter in the cozy narcissism of our own small worlds."

**Implication:** We begin to ask very different questions about our lives.

- We ask, "Where does God fit into the story of my life?" When the real question is, "Where does my little life fit into this great story of God's mission?"
- We want to be driven by a purpose that has been tailored just right for our own individual lives, when we should be seeing the purpose of all life, including our own, wrapped up in the great mission of God for the whole of creation.



- We talk about “applying the Bible to our lives.” What would it mean to apply our lives to the Bible instead, assuming the Bible to be reality – the real story – to which we are called to conform ourselves?
- We wrestle with “making the gospel relevant to the world.” But in this story, God is about the business of transforming the world to fit the shape of the gospel.
- We argue about what can legitimately be included in the mission God expects from the church, when we should ask what kind of church God wants for the whole range of his mission.
- I may wonder what kind of mission God has for me, when I should be asking what kind of me God wants for his mission.

In his book *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road*, Timothy Keller gives this illustration: “Why is generosity the mark of being a Christian? Imagine a person who is deathly ill. The doctor announces to him that there is a medicine which can certainly cure him. Without it, he has no hope. ‘However,’ says the doctor, ‘it is extremely expensive. You will have to sell your cars, even your home, to buy it. You may not wish to spend so much.’ The man turns to his doctor and says, ‘What do my cars mean to me now? What good will my house be? I must have that medicine; it is precious to me. These other things which were so important to me now look pale by comparison to the medicine. They are expendable now. Give me the medicine.’ The apostle Peter says, ‘To you who believe ... [He] is precious’ (1 Peter 2:7). The grace of God makes Christ precious to us, so that our possessions, our money, our time have all become eternally and utterly expendable. They used to be crucial to our happiness. They are not so now.”

*God takes great pleasure in manifesting his presence and pouring out his power on those who dare to align radically their purposes with his (Dr. Steve Childers).*

## 5. MISSIONAL LIVING

### Intercede

- Pray for three lost people (an older, lost son or a younger, lost son).
- Pray the Holy Spirit would begin to work in their hearts convicting them of their need for a true Savior.
- Pray for an opportunity to invest in their life.
- Pray that God would show you a way you can serve them.

### Invest

- Serve them in some simple way (i.e. mow their yard, bake them some cookies, or meet a small need they have).

### Invite

- Invite them to share a meal with you (you buy).
- Invite them to worship with you on Sunday or in your community group. Without an invitation, your family, friends and neighbors are unlikely to go to a church service. If you invite them they have an 80 percent-plus chance of attending a Sunday service.
- Invite them to receive the grace and salvation of Jesus Christ.



## 6. GOSPEL CONTRIBUTION

The Contribution Rhythm is designed to equip and train the church to live our lives on mission with God. At CrossPointe we are calling all of our partners to a life of contribution (stewardship). This fleshes itself out in three distinct, yet overlapping areas of our lives: time, talent and treasure. To steward something, is to realize that it is not yours, but has been given to you by God to use for the benefit of others. As the gospel works in us, we get the opportunity to have the gospel work *through* us and to experience the joy that comes from a lifestyle of contribution (stewardship).

**a. Time:** Every day we have 1440 minutes given to us. Time is just simply the measurement of our lives. What we decide to do with our time is shaped by what we value. Our values reveal our heart. “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6.21). Our values reflect what our hearts worship. Whatever you worship you will give your life for. The gospel begins to radically reorient our values, which shape the decisions we make. Our life’s direction is simply the sum of the decisions we make throughout our lives.

*“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:15-17).*

**b. Talent:** We were created with a unique personality and set of gifts to reflect the glory of our Creator God. “Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations’” (Jeremiah 1:4-5).

We need to ask ourselves, what has God appointed us to be and to do? When we begin to discover how we were uniquely created to serve, we begin to tap into how God intended things to be. We get a glimpse of the heavenly invading this earth. As we steward our talents, Jesus’ prayer of “*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,*” begins to come true.

*From a spiritual viewpoint, when we deny our talents and instead focus on our weaknesses, on some level, we are telling God that we know best and that God somehow made a mistake in gracing us with our unique mix of talents (Albert L. Winseman, Living Your Strengths).*

**c. Treasure:** We all have been blessed with different treasures, including finances. We can seek to use these treasures to benefit others. In 2 Corinthians chapters eight and nine, Paul has much to say regarding financial generosity. Rather than appeal to guilt tactics, he simply reminds the Corinthians of the gospel. Regarding giving, he states:

*I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:8-9).*

*Paul continues later saying, “Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).*

So the first thing you must do is dwell on the truth of the gospel. As you do this, your affections for Jesus and his church will be stirred. At this point, prayerfully consider how God is leading you to give. According to Paul, it’s the disposition of your heart, rather than a certain amount or percentage of income that is of utmost importance. However, the act of giving is assumed here. So the question becomes how much? We should view 10 percent as a guideline. For some that would be a significant sacrifice, and will take much time to achieve. That is okay. If you have never given financially to a



church, just start somewhere. The point is not the amount, but that you are giving sacrificially. What is the next step or “click on the dial” for you? This is figured out in prayer and in community dialogue (with a spouse, friend, community group leader, etc.). Don’t ignore this opportunity for God to grow you in his grace.

## 7. CHURCH PLANTING

CrossPointe does not desire to be an end in and of itself, but to use our *time, talents and treasures* to start other churches. This will include supporting other churches and church plants financially, through equipping, through training, and through sending people who feel called to plant churches in a specific area. This has been part of the DNA of CrossPointe since its inception, and CrossPointe Winter Park along with dozens of other churches across Central Florida are the result of that vision.

CrossPointe Church (Orlando) was established in the Southeast Corridor of Orlando in 2002 with the vision to impact the city and the world through planting “church planting churches.” Through partnerships with Vision 360 Church Planting Network and Acts 29 Church Planting Network, CrossPointe has helped start or re-establish dozens of churches in Central Florida since its inception. We desire to continue planting church-planting churches as we feel this is the best way to point our community to Jesus:

*The vigorous, continual planting of new congregations is the single most crucial strategy for 1) the numerical growth of the Body of Christ in any city, and 2) the continual corporate renewal and revival of the existing churches in a city. Nothing else – not crusades, outreach programs, para-church ministries, growing mega-churches, congregational consulting, nor church renewal processes – will have the consistent impact of dynamic, extensive church planting. This is an eyebrow raising statement. But to those who have done any study at all, it is not even controversial (Timothy Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York).*



## Partnership Covenant

### CrossPointe's Covenant to You

With the enablement of the Holy Spirit, the CrossPointe elders and partners covenant the following:

1. We commit ourselves to lovingly caring for you and seeking your growth in Christ (Hebrews 13:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:12).
2. We covenant to provide teaching and counsel from Scripture (Galatians 6:6, 1 Timothy 5:17-18).
3. We covenant that this teaching will span the whole counsel of God's Word (Acts 20:27-38).
4. We covenant to helping you in times of need (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35, James 2:14-17).
5. We covenant that your elders and deacons will meet the criteria assigned to them in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-13; 5:17-33, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4).
6. We covenant to pray for you regularly, particularly when you are sick (James 5:14).
7. We covenant to be on guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28-31).
8. We covenant to exercise church discipline when necessary (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5, Galatians 6:1).
9. We covenant to help you become equipped to serve Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13).
10. We covenant to seek God's will for our church community to the best of our ability as we study Scripture and follow the Spirit (Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:1-5).
11. We covenant to set an example and join you in fulfilling the duties of church members (1 Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 3:17, 1 Timothy 4:12).

### Your Covenant to CrossPointe

1. I believe it is wise for me to be part of CrossPointe and to come under the care of the elders.
2. I am willing to whole-heartedly serve, pray for and support the mission of CrossPointe, even in the messiness and adventure of a church plant.
3. I will endeavor to maintain a close relationship with the Lord by regular bible reading, prayer, fellowship & practice of other spiritual disciplines.
4. I will embrace and strive to live out the Gospel Rhythms of CrossPointe: Celebration, Connection, Community, Contribution.
5. I will participate actively in both Celebration Service and Community Group.
6. I will give my time, talent and treasure to CrossPointe and our shared mission.
7. I am willing to be in the team rotation in an area led by the Team Directors (i.e. Worship, Production, Connection, Setup, CPKids, etc.).
8. I will go out of my way and my comfort zone to INTERCEDE | INVEST | INVITE.



## Appendix 1 | GOSPEL RHYTHMS UNPACKED

***"Semper Reformanda"*** is a Latin phrase meaning "always reforming" or "forever faithfully reforming." CrossPointe Church seeks to always be reforming its methods as we grow in our understanding of how deep and beautiful the gospel truly is. The gospel never changes; it changes us. So as we seek to live and lead this church in full view of the Cross, we will continually shape our lives around gospel rhythms.

The gospel message (Romans 11:28-36) fuels our gospel motivation (Romans 12:1-2), which in turn must necessarily shape our gospel methods (Romans 12:3-21).

**Our MISSION:** To point our communities to Jesus Christ

**Our VISION:** To see our communities informed and transformed by the power of the gospel for the glory of God.

**Our RHYTHMS:** As the gospel continues to work in us individually and collectively as a missional church, we believe it will radically transform the contours and fabric of our lives – individually, communally and culturally.

### CELEBRATION | CONNECTION | COMMUNITY | CONTRIBUTION

These rhythms are *not* simply programs we create, but rather a rhythm or pattern in which we live. In light of this, we will seek together to live lives of Celebration, Connection, Community and Contribution as the gospel pulsates in and through us in every facet of our lives. As a church, we are called to embrace the gospel and seek that the rhythms of gospel transformation shape us personally (Gospel and You), communally (Gospel and Church) and culturally (Gospel and Culture).

#### **Gospel and You - how a life of gospel rhythm transforms you personally**

First, the gospel of Jesus Christ is the heart of Scripture and the revelation of God to a fallen humanity. In perhaps the most succinct summary of the gospel, Paul said that the gospel is of primary importance, and consists of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection to save sinners in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:1-8). This gospel must inform and transform every aspect of our lives as Christians.

#### **Gospel and Church - how a life of gospel rhythm transforms us together**

Second, there is the (local) church – or gathering of God's people, which does include people who are not Christians (Matthew 13:24-30) – where people are built up in their faith and knitted together in a loving community so they can faithfully engage people in the culture with the gospel while practically experiencing its transforming power in their own lives.

#### **Gospel and Culture - how a life of gospel rhythm transforms culture**

Third, there are the cultures in which people live their lives. Our lives both shape and are shaped by our culture, and the gospel must be fitted (not altered) to particular people, times and circumstances so that evangelism can effectively occur.





We will now look at how God uses you and the church to impact our culture, and point it to Jesus by living out a life of **CELEBRATION, CONNECTION, COMMUNITY and CONTRIBUTION.**

## **CELEBRATION:**

*In response to the gospel we will be a people who sing of the grace, goodness and glory of God.*

Celebrations throughout the Bible were designed by God so that his people would be reminded of his grace, goodness and glory (Leviticus 23, Acts 2:42-47, Hebrews 10:24-25). If we truly understand and believe the gospel, we should be the most celebratory people on the planet. First Peter 2:9 tells us, "we are to declare the excellencies of him who called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light." We must enter into a rhythm of celebrating God's extravagant grace, goodness and glory in such a way that the marvelous light of the gospel shines forth and shapes our lives, community and culture.

### **How we seek to live a life of celebration in our personal life:**

One of the most transforming disciplines we can develop is to daily preach the gospel to ourselves. In order to live in full view of the cross and allow the truth of the gospel to define every moment of life, we must know it well and remind ourselves of it often.

"Reminding ourselves of the gospel is the most important daily habit we can establish. If the gospel is the most vital news in the world, and if salvation by grace is the defining truth of our existence, we should create ways to immerse ourselves in these truths every day. No days off allowed. ... Your audience is your own heart. And the message is simple: Christ died for you sins. It's a matter of sitting down, grabbing your own attention, and telling yourself, "Hey, listen up! This is what matters most: You're forgiven! You have hope! Your hope is based on the sacrifice of Jesus. So let's not view this day any other way. Let today be governed by this one defining truth." (C.J. Mahaney, *Living the Cross Centered Life*, pp. 132-133).

### **How we seek to live a life of celebration with each other:**

The mission of the gospel was never meant to be a "solo" mission. Mission was to be carried out together - this is why the local church exists. In Matthew 4:19, Jesus called his disciples and said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Often times when we think of being "fishers of men," we think of the lone fishermen fly fishing for trout, or perhaps, the lone angler casting his line into the surf. However, in Jesus' day fishing was a deeply communal process much more like, the TV series *Deadliest Catch*. The disciples understood this because they used nets that required a boat or two with full crews. The call of missions, is a communal work as we seek to celebrate the grace, goodness and glory of God together in word and deed.

### **How we seek to live a life of celebration in culture:**

The people God has sent us to are also celebrating - they happen to be celebrating a different god and a different story. We need to enter their celebrations and do it unto God, and be fully aware that even their celebration of a different god is part of God's Story. Through the light of the gospel, we are to look for ways to serve, redeem, and restore others in the context of their misplaced celebrations so they come to know the one, true celebration for which they were created. We are to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16). When we live lives of celebration, the gospel collides with culture and community to transform it for the glory of God.



## CONNECTION:

*In response to the gospel, we will live in such a way that we connect the story of people's lives to the ultimate story of the gospel.*

Connection (contextualization) is adjusting the way we declare and demonstrate the gospel in culturally adaptable forms, while always holding to a biblically faithful gospel. Jesus beautifully demonstrated a life of connection when *"the Word became flesh and dwelt among us among us"* (John 1:14). Jesus, fully God and the essence of God, took on bodily form. He came into a particular culture at a particular time in a particular form. He was a male, a Jew, a part of the working class. He spent 30 years living in and learning the culture before He started his public ministry. Then before his ascension to heaven He told his disciples, *"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you"* (John 20:21).

### **How we seek to live a life of connection personally:**

You are bringing your own culture. Your cultural preferences are shaped by your family of origin and the traditions in which you grew up. Be aware of who you are and how your unique make-up shapes the way you share and live out the gospel. Pay close attention to your personal preferences as you make decisions about how to engage the culture. Let others speak into your life regarding how you are perceived by those you are seeking to engage – this requires listening! Be aware of how God's Story has shaped the story of your life and be able to share it naturally. We also have gospel distortions (self-righteousness vs. Christ righteousness) that requires of us to be continually transformed by the gospel.

### **How we seek to live a life of connection with each other:**

We shape our own culture. When people come together to form a local expression of the church, the church begins to define their own culture; often times by personal preference and group norms. We must continually evaluate our practices and forms that were once timely and culturally appropriate, but are now ineffective in connecting (contextualizing) the gospel to culture. We must sacrifice the comforts of our personal preferences to engage culture with the extravagance of God's grace, goodness and glory. We also must be aware of how Christ has gifted us as a church and how we can uniquely express the gospel in our particular culture.

### **How we seek to live a life of Connection in culture:**

We must understand the culture of the city and even the neighborhoods in which we live. We live in a city with a wide range of cultural diversity. As we seek to live lives of *connection* we need to seek to understand the unique cultures in which God has called us. We must learn to listen well to the stories that people have. What is the story of your community? What factors have shaped that story? What are its wounds? What are its flaws? What are its strengths? What questions are being asked in the culture that point to their need for the gospel? We must look for redemptive analogies that best fit this culture. We must become great listeners before we become gospel transformers. The people in our neighborhoods are telling us what they believe and why. We need to ask questions and listen. When we hear in their story the false saviors they have been pursuing, then we can share with them the true Savior.

A life of *connection* must continually be shaped by the gospel and the mission of God so that we don't over adapt to our culture, buying into its idols and we don't under adapt to our culture around us, buying into the idols of our own "church culture." Both would demonstrate a lack of confidence in the gospel and disengage us from being gospel-centered transformers.



## COMMUNITY:

*In response to the gospel, we live our lives within the context of deep, authentic relationships.*

As a reflection of our Creator who exists in community as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we will intentionally create environments of community and belonging. We will attempt to validate people's connectedness wherever they find it, while also encouraging them toward an authentic expression of sharing life with fellow journeyers in Christ. This will involve much sacrifice, authenticity and love.

### **How we seek to live a life of community in our personal lives:**

We, at the same time, both crave and fear deep, authentic relationships. The craving we feel deep inside to know and be known is an echo of the imago dei (image of God) in which we were created to experience a triune intimacy with ourselves, each other and with God. Our fear is rooted in sin, which caused shame and guilt to enter into our lives and caused us to seek ways to justify or cover our nakedness. This is why we perform and pretend (being dishonest with ourselves and with others).

First John 1:7 tells us, "If we live in the light, as God is in the light, we can share fellowship with each other." The word fellowship (koinonia) means to have soul to soul interaction, a deep heart to heart connection. Walking in the light is walking in the truth of who we are. It's being real; it's being who we really are in Christ. Koinonia is a result of coming into the light with our sin (1 John 1:9). A community in full view of the Cross is a group of people who are keenly aware of their own spiritual poverty, mourn their sin, experience the comfort of the gospel, walk in humility, hunger and thirst together for righteousness, and seek to live out lives that pursue mercy, purity and peace regardless of the cost (Matthew 5:1-11).

### **How we seek to live a life of community with each other:**

True community is sharing our lives and faith together! True community happens when the gospel and everyday life is shared with other people.

Acts 2:42-47:

- v. 42 *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."*
- v. 43 *"Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles."*
- v. 44 *"All the believers were together and had everything in common."*
- v. 45 *"Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need."*
- v. 46 *"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,"*
- v. 47 *"praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."*

In gospel-centered community we:

- Experience transformation (Acts 2:42, Ephesians 4:16)
- Experience biblical fellowship (Acts 2:42, John 13:34, Romans 15:7)
- Experience true worship (Acts 2:43)
- Experience authentic care (Acts 2:44-45, Galatians 6:2, Proverbs 17:17)
- Experience true accountability (Acts 2:46a, Hebrews 10:24)
- Experience a missional life (Acts 2:46b-47)



### **How we seek to live a life of community in our culture:**

Jesus said the best apologetic of the gospel is the way we live our lives together. John 13:34-35 says, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* We live a life of community in our culture when we demonstrate that we are truly spiritually impoverished (versus self-righteous people) apart from God's grace. We do this when we mourn our sin (of performing and being dishonest, which leads to a lack of authenticity), experience the comfort of the gospel, walk in humility, hunger and thirst for righteousness, and pursue mercy, purity and peace for our city regardless of the cost.

## **CONTRIBUTION:**

*In response to the gospel we will leverage our time, talent and treasure to further the mission of God for the glory of God.*

At CrossPointe we are calling all of our partners to a life of contribution (stewardship). This fleshes itself out in three distinct, yet overlapping areas of our lives: *time, talent and treasure*. To steward something is to realize that it is not ours, but has been given by God to use for the benefit of others. As the gospel works in us, we get the opportunity to have the gospel work through us and to experience the joy that comes from a lifestyle of contribution (stewardship).

### **How we seek to live a life of contribution personally:**

**Time:** Every day we have 1440 minutes given to us. Time is just simply the measurement of our lives. What we decide to do with our time is shaped by what we value. Our values reveal the heart. *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (Matthew 6:21). Our values reflect what our heart's worship. Whatever we worship we will give our lives for. The gospel begins to radically reorient our values which shape the decisions we make. Our life's direction is simply the sum of the decisions we make throughout our lives. *"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is"* (Ephesians 5:15-17).

**Talent:** We were created with a unique personality and set of gifts to reflect the glory of our Creator God. *"Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations'"* (Jeremiah 1:4-5).

We need to ask ourselves what has God appointed us to be and to do? When we begin to discover how we were uniquely created to serve, we begin to tap into how God intended things to be. We get a glimpse of the heavenly invading this earth. As we steward our talents, Jesus' prayer of *"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,"* begins to come true.

*From a spiritual viewpoint, when we deny our talents and instead focus on our weaknesses, on some level, we are telling God that we know best and that God somehow made a mistake in gracing us with our unique mix of talents (Albert L. Winseman, Living Your Strengths).*

**Treasure:** We all have been blessed with different treasures, including finances. We can seek to use these treasures to benefit others. In 2 Corinthians chapters eight and nine, Paul has much to say



regarding financial generosity. Rather than appeal to guilt tactics, he simply reminds the Corinthians of the gospel. Regarding giving, he states:

*I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:8-9).*

Paul continues later saying, “Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

So the first thing you must do is dwell on the truth of the gospel. As you do this, your affections for Jesus and his church will be stirred. At this point, prayerfully consider how God is leading you to give. According to Paul, it’s the disposition of your heart, rather than a certain amount or percentage of income that is of utmost importance. However, the act of giving is assumed here. So the question becomes how much? We should view 10 percent as a guideline. For some that would be a significant sacrifice, and will take much time to achieve. That is okay. If you have never given financially to a church, just start somewhere. The point is not the amount, but that you are giving sacrificially. What is the next step or “click on the dial” for you? This is figured out in prayer and in community dialogue (with a spouse, friend, community group leader, etc.). Don’t ignore this opportunity for God to grow you in his grace.

#### **How we seek to live a life of contribution with each other:**

The church today and historically is called to live among one another, serve together and speak into each other’s lives. The church is called to foster and confirm in each other how God has created them to worship him with unique talents and gifts. The church is to challenge each other to steward their time, talents and treasures toward the advancement of the gospel.

*We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints –and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us (2 Corinthians 8:1-8).*

#### **How we seek to live a life of contribution in our culture:**

Remember, the church doesn’t exist just for itself, but for mission. Our *time, talents and treasure* must be leveraged toward the end goal of the story of the God – the redemption of all of culture for the glory of God. In Jeremiah 29:7, God calls his people to “*seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*” Jesus puts it this way in the Sermon on the Mount, “*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*” (Matthew 5:16).

Our prayer is that we would become a people of good works as a result of stewarding our *time, talent and treasures* so we may *declare the glory, grace and goodness of our God throughout our city and communities. The end result is that we would live lives of celebration!*



## Appendix 2 | THE GOSPEL AND THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

*And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you (Psalm 9:10).*

There are many attributes of God that reveal his character and how He relates to the world. God has both unshared (Incommunicable) and shared (communicable) attributes. His unshared attributes are unique to God. His shared attributes are those possessed by God and in a limited sense shared by us as people made in his image. Below are just a few of the many practical reasons we need to know the attributes of God:

1. Sin distorts our view of God and thus distorts our view of ourselves, others and the world around us (Genesis 3:1-3). Scripture helps us understand the truth about God and thus transforms our perspective on everything. The root of many problems is a result of a distortion of God's character. A.W. Tozer (an American pastor and author who died in the earlier 1960's) wrote, "The low view of God entertained almost universally among Christians is the cause of a hundred lesser evils everywhere among us" (*The Knowledge of the Holy*, pp. 6-7).
2. The more we grow in our awareness of God's holiness the more we become aware of our sinfulness (Isaiah 6:1-7). Until we are aware we are great sinners we will never know our need for a great Savior. The more we become aware of our sinfulness the sweeter God's grace becomes. The Cross of Christ looms larger and large in our lives and transforms us.
3. The more we understand the attributes of God the more deeply we will rest in the freedom of God's grace. His forgiveness is based upon his character not our character (Psalm 25:11).
4. The more we understand the attributes of God the more deeply it will transform our prayer lives. What we really believe about God shows up in our prayers. Knowing the character of God invites us to pray with great confidence relying on the strong hand of our redeemer to move (Nehemiah 6:3-8).
5. The more we understand the attributes of God the more we will understand God's plan for our lives. Until we have a vision of God we will never have a vision from God (Isaiah 6:8).
6. The more we understand the attributes of God the more we will fear God. There is great joy in standing in awe of the greatness and holiness of God (Nehemiah 1:11). It is a life-altering and life-shaping joy. It will deepen our worship and affections for God. Tozer continues to write, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us ... Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God" (*The Knowledge of the Holy*, p. 9).

*The Word, the character, and the actions of God should be evermore before our eyes; we should learn, consider, and reverence them. Men forget what they do not wish to remember, but the excellent attributes of the Most High are objects of the believer's affectionate and delighted admiration. We should keep the image of God so constantly before us that we become in our measure conformed unto it (Charles H. Spurgeon commenting on Psalm 18:22).*

As your pastor, I plead with you to "learn, consider and reverence" the attributes of God. Teach them to yourself, to your children and to your community group.



## EXERCISE

Read through the attributes of God once daily and meditate on one attribute each day looking up the Scriptures and completing the following questions:

1. How does this Scripture correct any distorted views I have of God?
2. How does this attribute strengthen my faith in God?
3. How does this attribute change the way I view myself or others?
4. How does this attribute change my perspective on a challenge or difficult time I am facing?
5. How does this attribute change the way I pray?

## ATTRIBUTES

Though this list is in no way exhaustive, it does give a picture of God.

### Unshared Attributes

- ➡ **Omniscience:** God has perfect and complete knowledge of all things past, present, and future. His knowledge cannot be thwarted. It is comforting to know that God knows everything about us (our needs, our sin, our desires, etc.) and still chose to save us (Job 42:2, Psalms 139:1-6; 147:5, Isaiah 40:12-14; 46:10, Hebrews 14:13).
- ➡ **Omnipotence:** God has supreme power and can do anything He wills. His power ensures us of our salvation and ensures us that everything He does has a perfectly good purpose (Job 42:2, Psalms 147:5, Matthew 19:26, Ephesians 3:20, Romans 1:16; 8:35-39, Genesis 18:14, Jeremiah 32:17 and 27, Luke 1:37, Romans 8:28).
- ➡ **Omnipresence:** God is present everywhere, at all times; in the highest heavens He is there and in the deepest sea He is also there (Psalms 139:7-12, Jeremiah 23:24, Proverbs 15:3, Deuteronomy 31:6, Colossians 1:17).
- ➡ **Immutability:** God's character and being does not change. He is the only constant in the universe and will remain so for all eternity (Numbers 23:19, Psalms 102:27, Malachi 3:6, Romans 11:29, Hebrews 13:8, James 1:17).
- ➡ **Eternality:** God exists outside of time, yet He created time and chooses to operate within it. Because He can see all events in the context of eternity, He knows what is best for all events that take place in our lives (Psalms 90:2; 93:2; 102:12, Ephesians 3:21).
- ➡ **Self-Existence:** God is the only being that has existed without being created and does not continually rely on another being for sustained existence. It is very reassuring to know that God is the sustainer of all things and that He is ultimately in control of all events (Exodus 3:14, Isaiah 41:4; 43:10; 44:6; 48:12, Revelation 1:8 and 17; 2:8; 3:14; 21:6; 22:13).
- ➡ **Sovereignty:** God is sovereign over all events, but He does allow human freedom as He wills. He has ultimate authority over all things past, present, and future and most importantly He is sovereign over our salvation (2 Samuel 7:28, 1 Chronicles 29:10-13, Psalms 103:19, Genesis 50:20, Romans 1:18-32; 8:28).
- ➡ **Transcendence:** God is completely distinct from anything else in the universe. It is comforting to know that his greatness and power is unsurpassed in all of the world (Genesis 1:1, Psalms 102:25-27, Isaiah 42:5, Acts 17:24, 1 John 2:15-17).
- ➡ **Creator:** God has formed all things in creation ex nihilo (out of nothing). We should take pleasure in his creation and also take joy in knowing He created everything out of his own



self and by his own power (Genesis 1:1, Psalms 33:6; 102:25, Isaiah 44:24, John 1:3, Romans 11:36, Hebrews 1:2; 11:3).

### Shared Attributes

- ➡ **Spirit:** God is found in a state that is invisible as well as immaterial. The Spirit has cognition, emotions and a will. Since we are made in the image of God, it is incredible to know that we have a spirit that will go on eternally with him if we know him (John 1:18; 3:1-10; 4:19-24; 6:40; 14:16-17; 16:12-16, 2 Corinthians 3:15-17, 1 Timothy 6:15-16, Psalms 139:1-4, Ephesians 4:30).
- ➡ **Holiness:** God is entirely pure and separate from everything evil. Since He is absolutely holy, we can only come into relationship with him through the imputed righteousness of Christ. And through sanctification we are made holy and conformed to the image of Christ (Exodus 3:5, Leviticus 19:2, Psalms 5:4-6; 99:5, Isaiah 6:3; 8:13; 57:15, Habakkuk 1:12-13, 1 John 1:5, 1 Peter 1:14-19, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 1 Peter 1:2).
- ➡ **Love/Goodness:** God is perfectly good and loving, and all that is good and loving is a gift from him. This same love should be the example and motivation for all that we do in our lives (Exodus 34:7, Psalms 84:11, John 3:16, Ephesians 2:4-7, Galatians 5:22, 1 John 4:8-16, Matthew 22:37-40, Proverbs 13:24, Hebrews 12:6).
- ➡ **Truth:** All truth comes from God, and we are to speak the truth as well as live in the truth (Numbers 23:19, John 14:6; 17:17, Titus 1:2, 2 Corinthians 1:20).
- ➡ **Justice/Righteousness:** God is perfectly just in all He does. He does not conform to what is deemed right and wrong, but rather, right and wrong flow out of who He is. God deals fairly with all people in all times and so should we (Genesis 18:25, Exodus 34:7, Deuteronomy 32:4, Acts 17:31, Romans 2:11).
- ➡ **Mercy:** God does not enact his wrath on some people because He is loving and merciful. Christ's crucifixion in our place was the ultimate act of mercy in history. Out of God's mercy for us, we should be people who are constantly merciful to those around us (Exodus 34:6-7, Matthew 18:23-35, Romans 12:8, Ephesians 2:4-7, Titus 3:5).
- ➡ **Beauty:** God is beautiful and his creation reflects this. We should take time to reflect on his beautiful creation as well as his own personal beauty and glory (Psalms 27:4; 50:2, Ecclesiastes 3:11, Isaiah 33:17).

*The low view of God entertained almost universally among Christians is the cause of a hundred lesser evils everywhere among us. A whole new philosophy of the Christian life has resulted from this one basic error in our religious thinking. ... The only way to recoup our spiritual losses is to go back to the cause of them and make such corrections as the truth warrants. The decline of the knowledge of the holy has brought on our troubles. A rediscovery of the majesty of God will go a long way toward curing them. It is impossible to keep our moral practices sound and our inward attitudes right while our idea of God is erroneous or inadequate. If we would bring back spiritual power to our lives, we must begin to think of God more nearly as He is (A.W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy, pp 6-7).*

*What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us ... Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God. For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God himself, and the portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like (A.W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy, p. 9).*





## Appendix 3 | FIVE COMMITMENTS ON MISSION

### GATHERED GOSPEL CELEBRATION | 1 Corinthians 10:14-17

The body gathers to remember the ground of the Gospel and to celebrate the fruit of the gospel.

### SCATTERED GOSPEL COMMUNITY | 1 Peter 2:9-12

A missional church requires missional households scattered in mission.

### DISCIPLES ARE THE FACE OF THE CHURCH | John 13:35

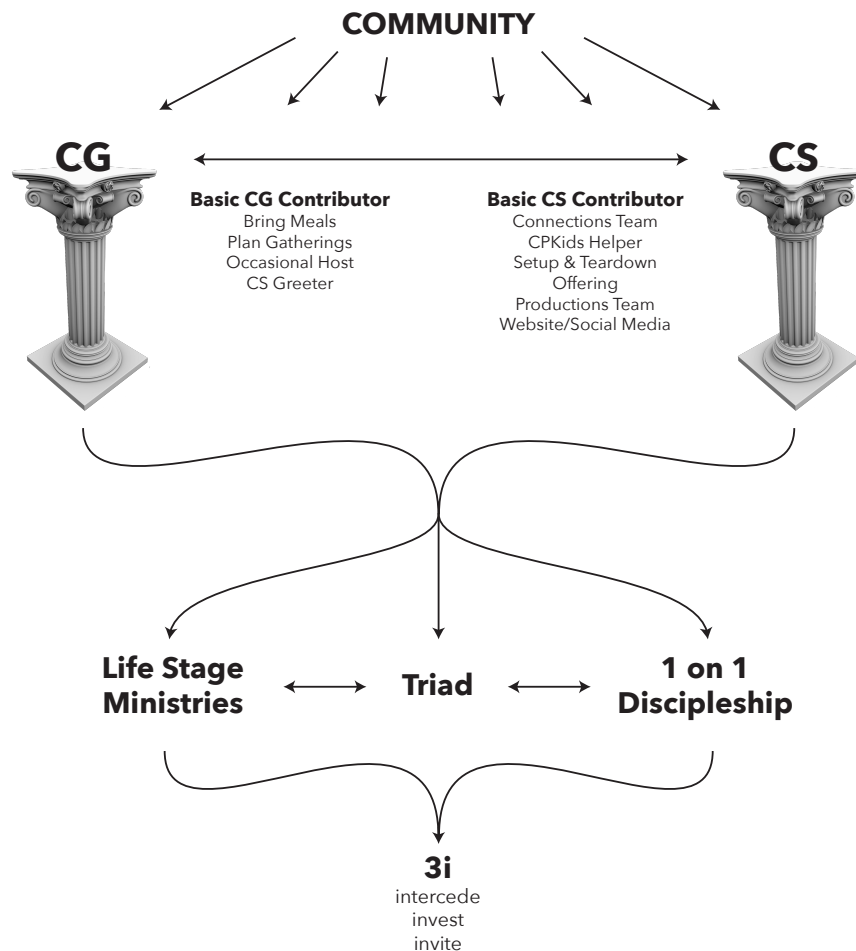
The church is made up of disciples together making disciples.

### FRUITFUL MULTIPLICATION | Mark 4:20

Faithfulness will produce fruitful multiplication as households and as a movement.

### INCARNATIONAL | John 13:14-15

Don't institutionalize what can be embodied.





## Appendix 4 | CROSSPOINTE DOCTRINE

### OUR DOCTRINE

- ➡ **About God** - God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He has eternally existed in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are coequal and are one God (Genesis 1:1; 26-27; 3:22, Psalm 90:2, Matthew 28:19, 1 Peter 1:2, 2 Corinthians 13:14).
- ➡ **About Jesus Christ** - Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is coequal with the Father. Jesus lived a sinless human life and offered himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on the cross. He arose from the dead three days later to demonstrate his power over sin and death. He ascended to heaven's glory and will return again to earth reigning as King of Kings, Lord of Lords (Matthew 1:22-23, Isaiah 9:6, John 1:1-5: 14:10-30, Hebrews 4:14-15, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Romans 1:3-4, Acts 1:9-11, 1 Timothy 6:14-15, Titus 2:13).
- ➡ **About the Holy Spirit** - The Holy Spirit is equal with the Father and the Son of God. He is present in the world to make men aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He also lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. He provides the Christian with the power for living, understanding spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. The Christian should seek to live under his control on a daily basis (2 Corinthians 3:17, John 16:7-13; 14:16-17, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 2:12; 3:16, Ephesians 1:13, Galatians 5:25, Ephesians 5:18).
- ➡ **About The Bible** - The Bible is God's Word to us. It was written by human authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and Christian living. Because it is inspired by God, it is truth without any mixture of error (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21, 2 Timothy 1:13, Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 30:5).
- ➡ **About Human Beings** - People are made in the spiritual image of God, to be like him in character. People are the supreme object of God's creation. Although every person has tremendous potential for good, we are marred by an attitude of disobedience toward God called "sin." This attitude separates people from God (Genesis 1:27, Psalms 8:3-6, Isaiah 53:6, Romans 3:23, Isaiah 59:1-2).
- ➡ **About Salvation** - Salvation is a gift from God to us but we must accept it. We can never make up for our sin by self-improvement or good works. Only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness, can anyone be saved from sin's penalty. Eternal life begins the moment one receives Jesus Christ into his life by faith (Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8-9, John 14:6; 1:12, Titus 3:5, Galatians 3:26, Romans 5:1).
- ➡ **About Eternal Security** - Because God gives us eternal life through Jesus Christ, the believer is secure in that salvation for all of eternity. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian. It is the grace and keeping power of God that gives us this security (John 10:29, 2 Timothy 1:12, Hebrews 7:25; 10:10-14, 1 Peter 1:3-5).
- ➡ **About Eternity** - People were created to exist forever. We will either exist eternally separated from God by sin or in union with God through forgiveness and salvation. To be eternally separated from God is hell. To be eternally in union with him is eternal life. Heaven and hell are places of eternal existence.



## WHAT DOES CROSSPOINTE BELIEVE?<sup>9</sup>

The short answer is that we are first – Christians, second – evangelicals, third – missional, and fourth – reformed.

**First**, we are Christians, which distinguishes us from other world religions and cults. Therefore, we adhere to both the Apostles and Nicene Creeds.

**Second**, we are evangelicals, and we are in agreement with the doctrinal statement of the National Association of Evangelicals:

- ➡ We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.
- ➡ We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- ➡ We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his virgin birth, in his sinless life, in his miracles, in his vicarious and atoning death through his shed blood, in his bodily resurrection, in his ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in his personal return in power and glory.
- ➡ We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.
- ➡ We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.
- ➡ We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
- ➡ We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Third**, we are missional:

- ➡ We believe our local churches must be faithful to the content of unchanging biblical doctrine (Jude 3).
- ➡ We believe our local churches must be faithful to the continually changing context of the culture(s) in which they minister (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).
- ➡ We believe our mission is to bring people into church so that they can be trained to go out into their culture as effective missionaries.

**Fourth**, we are reformed:

- ➡ We believe God created the heavens, the earth.
- ➡ We believe God created man and woman in a state of sinless perfection with particular dignity as his image bearers on the earth.
- ➡ We believe our first parents sinned against God and that everyone since is a sinner by nature and choice. Sin has totally affected all of creation including marring human image and likeness so that all of our being is stained by sin (e.g. reasoning, desires, and emotions).

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<sup>9</sup> Adapted from Acts 29 Church Planting Network



- ➡ We believe that because all people have sinned and separated themselves from the holy God that He is obligated to save no one from the just deserved punishments of hell. We also believe that God in his unparalleled love and mercy has chosen to elect some people for salvation.
- ➡ We believe the salvation of the elect was predestined by God in eternity past.
- ➡ We believe the salvation of the elect was accomplished by the sinless life, substitutionary atoning death, and literal physical resurrection of Jesus Christ in place of his people for their sins.
- ➡ We believe the salvation of the elect, by God's grace alone, shows forth in the ongoing repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ that leads to good works.
- ➡ We believe God's saving grace is ultimately irresistible and that God does soften even the hardest heart and save the worst of sinners according to his will.
- ➡ We believe the gospel should be passionately and urgently proclaimed to all people so that all who believe may be saved through the preaching of God's Word by the power of God's Spirit.
- ➡ We believe that true Christians born again of God's Spirit will be kept by God throughout their life, as evidenced by personal transformation that includes an ever-growing love of God the Father through God the Son by God the Spirit, love of brothers and sisters in the church, and love of lost neighbors in the culture.
- ➡ We believe that God is Lord over all of life and that there is nothing in life that is to be separated from God.
- ➡ We believe that the worship of God is the end for which people were created and that abiding joy is only found by delighting in God through all of life, including hardship and death – which is gain.

## **WHAT DOES CROSSPOINTE NOT BELIEVE?**

To help clarify our beliefs, it may also be helpful to declare what we do not believe. In stating what we are not, we do not seek to attack those who disagree with us, but rather distinguish ourselves so that people considering partnership with CrossPointe are aware of who we are, as well as who we are not.

- ➡ We are not liberals who embrace culture without discernment and compromise the distinctives of the gospel. Rather, we are Christians who believe the truths of the Bible are eternal and therefore fitting for every time, place, and people.
- ➡ We are not fundamentalists who retreat from cultural involvement and transformation, but rather, we are missionaries faithful both to the content of Scripture and context of ministry.
- ➡ We are not isolationists, and we seek to partner with like-minded Christians from various churches, denominations and organizations in planting church-planting churches.
- ➡ We are not hyper-Calvinists who get mired down in secondary matters, but rather, we pray, evangelize, and do good works because we believe that the sovereign plan of God is accomplished through us, his people.
- ➡ We are not eschatological Theonomists or Classic Dispensationalists (e.g. Scofield). We believe that divisive and dogmatic certainty surrounding particular details of Jesus' Second Coming are unprofitable speculation because the timing and exact details of his return are unclear to us.
- ➡ We are not egalitarians and do believe that men should head their homes and male elders should lead their churches with masculine love like Jesus Christ.



- ➡ We are not Open Theists and believe in the sovereignty and foreknowledge of God in all things.
- ➡ We are not religious relativists and do believe that there is no salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ alone.
- ➡ We are not nationalists seeking to simply improve one nation but instead, we are ambassadors of the King of Kings commissioned to proclaim and demonstrate the coming of his kingdom to all nations of the earth.
- ➡ We are not moralists seeking to help people live good lives, but instead evangelists laboring that people would become new creations in Christ.
- ➡ We are not relativists and do gladly embrace Scripture as our highest authority above such things as culture, experience, philosophy, and other forms of revelation.
- ➡ We are not Universalists and do believe that many people will spend eternity in the torments of hell as the Bible teaches.
- ➡ We are not naturalists and do believe that Satan and demons are real enemies at work in this world and are subject to God.
- ➡ We are not rationalists and do believe that not everything can be known but that God calls us to live by faith with mystery and partial knowledge regarding many things.
- ➡ We are not evangelical feminists and do believe that God reveals himself as a Father and is to be honored by the names He reveals to us without apology.
- ➡ We are not embarrassed by the bloody death of Jesus Christ, and we do believe He died as a substitute for the sins of his people in selfless love.
- ➡ We are not ashamed and do proclaim a loving gospel of grace which sounds like foolishness and offensiveness to the unrepentant while also saving multitudes with ears to hear good news.
- ➡ We are not polemicists who believe that it is our task to combat every false teaching but are passionate about preserving the integrity of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## CONFESSIONAL STATEMENT

*The following confessional statement is derived from the Gospel Coalition Foundation Documents.*

### **The Tri-une God**

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love and in his holiness. He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration. Immortal and eternal, he perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning, sustains and sovereignly rules over all things, and providentially brings about his eternal good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation, to the praise of his glorious grace.

### **Revelation**

God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in the created order, and has supremely revealed himself to fallen human beings in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word. Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by his Spirit has graciously disclosed himself in human words: we believe that God has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are both record and means of his saving work in the world. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error in the



original writings, complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. We confess that both our finitude and our sinfulness preclude the possibility of knowing God's truth exhaustively, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God's revealed truth truly. The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and do the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel.

### **Creation of Humanity**

We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in his own image. Adam and Eve belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and devoted fellowship with their Maker. Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church, and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. The distinctive leadership role within the church given to qualified men is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments.

### **The Fall**

We believe that Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original blessedness—for himself and all his progeny—by falling into sin through Satan's temptation. As a result, all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (e.g., physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, spiritually) and condemned finally and irrevocably to death—apart from God's own gracious intervention. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to himself.

### **The Plan of God**

We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation, and to this end foreknew them and chose them. We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace have faith in Jesus, and that he will one day glorify them—all to the praise of his glorious grace. In love God commands and implores all people to repent and believe, having set his saving love on those he has chosen and having ordained Christ to be their Redeemer.

### **The Gospel**

We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ—God's very wisdom. Utter folly to the world, even though it is the power of God to those who are being saved, this good news is



christological, centering on the cross and resurrection: the gospel is not proclaimed if Christ is not proclaimed, and the authentic Christ has not been proclaimed if his death and resurrection are not central (the message is: “Christ died for our sins . . . [and] was raised”). This good news is biblical (his death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), theological and salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), historical (if the saving events did not happen, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and we are to be pitied more than all others), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual persons are saved).

### **The Redemption of Christ**

We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to his Father, the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh, fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures. The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. As the mediatorial King, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God’s sovereignty, and is our High Priest and righteous Advocate. We believe that by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in him we might become the righteousness of God: on the cross he canceled sin, propitiated God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. By his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death and defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all his people; by his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. Because God chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, no human being can ever boast before him—Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

### **The Justification of Sinners**

We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God’s justice on our behalf. By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. Inasmuch as Christ was given by the Father for us, and his obedience and punishment were accepted in place of our own, freely and not for anything in us, this justification is solely of free grace, in order that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. We believe that a zeal for personal and public obedience flows from this free justification.

### **The Power of the Holy Spirit**

We believe that this salvation, attested in all Scripture and secured by Jesus Christ, is applied to his people by the Holy Spirit. Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and, as the other Paraclete, is present with and in believers. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith, and in him they are baptized into union with the Lord Jesus,



such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God's family; they participate in the divine nature and receive his sovereignly distributed gifts. The Holy Spirit is himself the down payment of the promised inheritance, and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

### **The Kingdom of God**

We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God through union with Christ by faith and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit enter the kingdom of God and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins, the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God, and the prospect of the glory yet to be revealed. Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace. Living as salt in a world that is decaying and light in a world that is dark, believers should neither withdraw into seclusion from the world, nor become indistinguishable from it: rather, we are to do good to the city, for all the glory and honor of the nations is to be offered up to the living God. Recognizing whose created order this is, and because we are citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God. The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation. The kingdom of God is an invasive power that plunders Satan's dark kingdom and regenerates and renovates through repentance and faith the lives of individuals rescued from that kingdom. It therefore inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.

### **God's New People**

We believe that God's new covenant people have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem; they are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies. This universal church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only Head; thus each "local church" is, in fact, the church, the household of God, the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth. The church is the body of Christ, the apple of his eye, graven on his hands, and he has pledged himself to her forever. The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, and, above all, by her love for God, and by her members' love for one another and for the world. Crucially, this gospel we cherish has both personal and corporate dimensions, neither of which may properly be overlooked. Christ Jesus is our peace: he has not only brought about peace with God, but also peace between alienated peoples. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. The church serves as a sign of God's future new world when its members live for the service of one another and their neighbors, rather than for self-focus. The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world.

### **Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself. The former is connected with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal. Together they are simultaneously God's pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of his return and of the consummation of all things.

### **The Restoration of All Things**





We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all and his people will be enthralled by the immediacy of his ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of his glorious grace.



## Appendix 5 | COMMUNITY AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

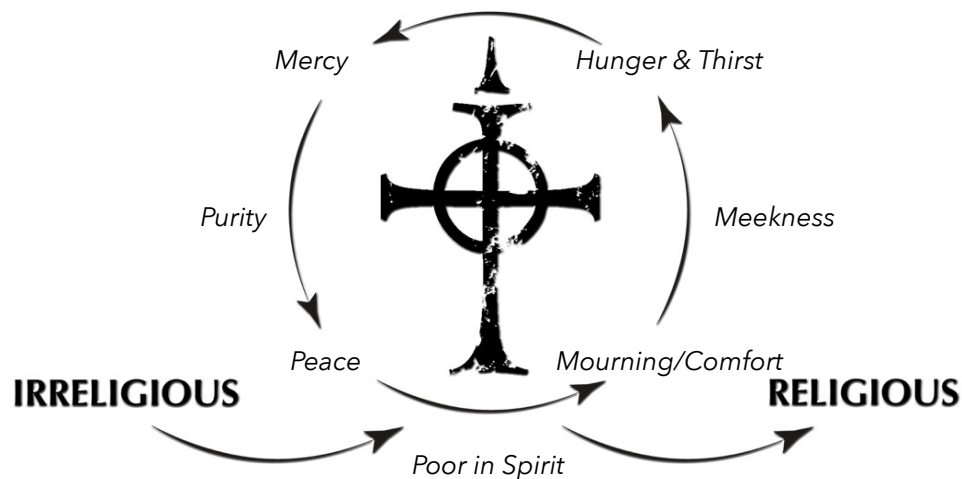
We, at the same time, both crave and fear deep, authentic relationships. The craving we feel deep inside to know and be known is an echo of the imago dei (image of God) in which we were created to experience triune community with ourselves, each other and God. The fear is rooted in sin. This sin has produced shame and guilt in our lives causing us to seek ways to justify ourselves (perform) and cover our nakedness (pretend). That is why we perform and pretend, and ultimately live inauthentic lives being dishonest with ourselves and others. First John 1:7 tells us, "If we live in the light, as God is in the light, we can share fellowship with each other." The word fellowship (koinonia) means to have soul to soul interaction, a deep heart to heart connection. Walking in the light is walking in the truth of who we are. It's being real; it's being who we really are in Christ. This can only happen in a community that clings to the cross.

Matthew 5:13-16: Imagine what a community of people would look like if they lived together at the foot of the cross? They would be salt and light – a city set upon a hill. How do we become that church? The answer lies in Matthew 5:1-12.

### a. A gospel-centered person is keenly aware of one's spiritual poverty.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3).*

The Sermon on the Mount produces despair in the heart of the natural man, and that is the very thing Jesus means it to do, because as soon as we reach the point of despair we are willing to come as paupers to Jesus Christ and fully receive his grace. Awareness of our spiritual poverty is the entrance into the kingdom of God. The knowledge of our own poverty brings us to the threshold of Christ's transforming work in us.



R. Kent Hughes says that *poverty in spirit* is the awareness and admission that we are utterly sinful and without the moral virtues adequate to commend us to God.



**This is the first principle of the kingdom.** Until we are gripped by God's grace with this beatitude then we cannot experience any other beatitudes. The knowledge of our own poverty brings us to the threshold of Christ's transforming work in us. Poverty here is not being economically poor, and it is way more than just being humble. It is at the core of what makes us humble. It is not just a position of humility it is a condition the Bible tells us we are all born into.

**People tend to view their spiritual condition in 1 of 3 ways:**

1. **Rich in Spirit** – The Pharisees and moralists view the Beatitudes as something they can achieve on their own to earn salvation. This is called self-righteousness. These are the kind of guys we want to punch in the face but we don't because we know there is a little bit of spiritual snobbery in us as well. A spiritual snob is the spiritual equivalent of a snobbish prom queen. She looks good on the outside but is shallow and empty on the inside. Here is how we know if we view ourselves as rich in spirit: *We think God owes us something.*
2. **Middle Class in Spirit** – The Humanist views the Beatitudes as a moral standard that we can strive for because we are all born basically good. Humanists believe that if we just give people opportunity and education they will be good. However, since the dawn of the Age of Enlightenment we have simply become more creative and efficient in sinning. We have just become smarter in the way we kill each other. I am not suggesting we go back to the dark ages; I am simply arguing that we are spiritually powerless and need to go back to the gospel.
3. **Poor in Spirit** – Citizens of the kingdom of heaven view the Beatitudes as something that moral striving cannot obtain but something that can only be lived out through the working power of the gospel. **What Jesus is preaching at the very beginning of the beatitudes is that our spiritual condition is absolutely impoverished.** I know this is wildly unpopular in an age where self-empowerment, self-help and self-fulfillment reign supreme.

*The difference between a Christian and a Pharisee is a Pharisee repents only for their sins, but a Christian repents also for their righteousness (Timothy Keller).*

*There is no one righteous, not even one. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:9, 23).*

*Everything that does not come from faith is sin (Romans 14:23).*

*The man who is truly poor in spirit need not worry so much about his personal appearance and the impression he makes; he will always make the right impression (M. Lloyd-Jones).*

- How do you typically view yourself – spiritually rich, spiritually middle class or spiritually poor?
- How does *not* seeing yourself as spiritually impoverished shrink the cross in your heart and mind?
- How does seeing yourself as spiritually poor affect the way you relate to others?

**b. A gospel-centered person is quick to mourn sin.**

The only response to seeing our spiritual bankruptcy is to mourn. *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted"* (Matthew 5:4).

*For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it – though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you*



*suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death (2 Corinthians 7:8-10).*

By God's grace, when we see the depth of our spiritual depravity it produces a godly grief that produces the kind of repentance that leads to salvation. This godly grief that Paul speaks about is the same mourning that Jesus speaks about when we see the depth of our sin. Godly grief leads to true repentance. Martin Luther's famous 95 Thesis state, "the whole life of believers should be repentance." Repentance is letting Christ turn our world upside down in such a way that every aspect of our lives are oriented toward Christ and his Kingdom; It is changing our minds about what is ultimate in life.

It is essential that you not fail to be convinced of your spiritual poverty and thus never truly mourn or grieve the depth of your sin.

Let us consider spiritual poverty another way. To escape reality, 50 million people pour into Orlando each year. Why do we spend so much time and money on escaping the reality of our lives? Why do we cram our lives full of shiny little gadgets and our calendars with busyness? It could be because we are afraid that if we stood still long enough the echo of the emptiness of our souls would ring too loudly. We live in a world that runs from mourning. This is what Jesus is talking about in Luke 6:25, "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep."

Herman Bavink writes, "The more abundantly the benefits of civilization come streaming our way, the emptier our life becomes. ... With all its wealth and power, it only shows that the human heart, in which God has put eternity (Ecclesiastes 3:11), is so huge that all the world is too small to satisfy it."

**The cross was meant to cause us to stand in absolute horror of our sin**, but if we are not careful, the pleasures of this world can become pursuits to anesthetize (numb) us to the this horror. As well, the problem is that the pleasures of this world are only temporal reliefs from the horrors of sin. The gospel is the only eternal release and relief of sin.

Mourning is grieving the sin in our own life and also grieving the sin that is in the world. When we see the greatest poverty and pain in the world as a result of sin then we can no longer tolerate sin in our own lives or in our communities. However, if we don't first mourn the sin in our own lives before we mourn the sin in the world, we then become like the Pharisees – prideful, critical and corrupt. It is easy to overlook our own sin and become critical of the sins in the world.

Our comfort and joy, and the comfort and joy we offer the world is not founded in the temporal, fleeting pleasures of this world but in the eternal, unchanging truth of the gospel. The great paradox Jesus preached was that those who mourn will find deep joy.

*The man who truly mourns because of his sinful state and condition is a man who is going to repent; he is indeed, actually repenting already. And the man who truly repents as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit upon him, is a man who is certain to be led to the Lord Jesus Christ. Having seen his utter sinfulness and hopelessness, he looks for a Saviour, and he finds him in Christ. No one can truly know him as his personal Saviour and Redeemer unless he has first of all known what it is to mourn. For it is when a man sees himself in this unutterable hopelessness that the Holy Spirit reveals unto him the Lord Jesus Christ as his perfect satisfaction (Martin Lloyd-Jones, Studies on the Sermon on the Mount, p. 49).*

If we truly mourn, we shall rejoice. This is something that follows as the night follows the day. The cross both convicts and comforts.



**Our comfort is rooted in the gospel.** It is the same feeling we would have if shipwrecked far out at sea without any hope and then, out of nowhere, were rescued by the Coast Guard. Our joy and comfort is rooted in the truth that because of Christ's work on the cross we are:

- **Justified** – made completely righteous before God and forgiven because of Christ's work on the cross (Colossians 2:13-15).
- **Sanctified** – given the Holy Spirit who works in us (1 Thessalonians 5:23).
- **Glorified** – secure in the hope of the completed work of Christ (Philippians 1:6).

Chuck Colson was the chief counsel for President Richard Nixon from 1969 to 1973, and he was commonly named as one of the Watergate Seven. He recounts this story in his book, *Who Speaks for God?*, "That night when I ... sat alone at my car, my own sin – not just dirty politics, but the hatred and evil so deep within me – was thrust before my eyes, forcefully and painfully. For the first time in my life, I felt unclean, and worst of all, I could not escape. In those moments of clarity I found myself driven irresistibly into the arms of the living God."

**Why the cross?** The cross was meant to cause us to stand in absolute horror of our sin, but it was also meant to show us the riches of God's forgiveness and grace.

*The more you see your own flaws and sins, the more precious, electrifying, and amazing God's grace appears to you. But on the other hand, the more aware you are of God's grace and acceptance in Christ, the more you are able to drop your denials and self-defenses and admit the true dimensions of your sin. The sin under all other sins is a lack of joy in Christ (Timothy Keller).*

**c. A gospel-centered person lives a life of meekness.**

*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5).*

*Humility is honestly assessing ourselves in light of God's holiness and our sinfulness (C. J. Mahaney).*

Meekness is not equated to weakness, but how do we live meekly without coming across as weak? Meekness is being freed from self in its every shape and form – self concern, pride, boasting, self-protection, sensitivity, always imaging people are against us, a desire to protect self and glorify self (Martin-Lloyd Jones).

**d. A gospel-centered person hungers for righteousness and the One who is righteous.**

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied (Matthew 5:6).*

Righteousness is the desire to be free from the power and desire of sin. It is a supreme desire in life to know God and be in fellowship with him. Satisfaction, true satisfaction, can only be found in Christ and him alone. Satisfaction comes only when we taste of the glorious riches found in the person of Jesus Christ. **Yet, there is a paradox:** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst. Jesus reveals a great paradox – satisfied yet thirsty; filled yet hungry. To truly experience Christ is to crave more and more of him. When we experience a little bit of Christ it should cause us to crave more and more of him.

**How is your appetite?** What do you crave to satisfy your soul? Don't be too quick to say Jesus. I know that is the right answer but is it the answer you truly believe? Is righteousness your life's pursuit?

**e. A gospel-centered person pursues a life of mercy.**



*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy (Matthew 5: 7).*

Mercy comes from mercy. Mercy is produced in us by God's grace as we see our spiritual poverty; we mourn our sin and are comforted by God's grace and mercy. This leads to a pursuit of righteousness. The righteous life is one that pursues mercy. Mercy moves toward need, not away from need. The cross is the greatest demonstration of mercy the world has ever known. In this single act of mercy God made it possible for us to be forgiven of a debt of sin we had no hope of repaying a part from his mercy. An amazing mercy that Christ so freely gives to us is a mercy that must overflow out of our lives. The cross makes this possible! We must live every moment of our lives in full view of the Cross. It will make us merciful people.

- Have I seen need but not been moved to meet it?
- Do I carry bitterness because I fail to forgive?
- Have I ever personally experienced such mercy and forgiveness?

**f. A gospel-centered person pursues a life of purity.**

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Matthew 5: 8).*

I believe Jesus is referring to at least two things: a cleansed heart and single-focused heart.

*Better to be blind and see with your heart, than to have two good eyes and see nothing (Helen Keller).*

Far too many of us have two good eyes but we don't see God. We don't see him with our hearts because we do not have pure hearts. This is the ultimate goal of being pure in heart – that we will see and savor Christ above all things. When our hearts become cleansed and single-focused on God, we begin to see God in ways that we could never have imagined. One of the great challenges of the church is that we witness with our mouths about Jesus as our savior, but our actions give witness to other saviors. **What false saviors does my life give witness to?**

**g. A gospel-centered person pursues a life of peace.**

*Blessed are peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God (Matthew 5:9).*

It takes a much greater warrior to wage peace than it does to wage war. The end goal of the gospel is peace. Our goal as gospel-centered people is to bring peace to the world around us so that the world will crave the One who is peace.

*For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his Cross (Colossians 1:19-20).*

- Do I have peace with God?
- Do I need to seek to reconcile a broken relationship?
- How do I seek to bring peace in my world?

**h. A gospel-centered person pursues mercy, purity and peace regardless of the cost.**

*"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 'Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.'" (Matthew 5:10-12).*



## Appendix 6 | CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

### SUMMARY OF ELDER COMMITMENTS

1. **The elders reserve the right to share information from any meeting or conversation with other elders and elder candidates.**
2. **All information that is confidential or sensitive that is shared between elders or elder candidates will be held in confidence by the elders and elder candidates (and their wives—see below).**
3. **The elders reserve the right to share information, which is otherwise confidential or sensitive, with their wives.**
4. **All persons who handle or have access to household giving records are held to a strict standard of confidentiality.**

*See the note below regarding children, husbands and wives.*

### The Scripture on Confidentiality

Two themes are important for us to consider as we seek to build a faithful practice of confidentiality that both glorifies God and respects our brothers and sisters in Christ.

#### Concealing Knowledge

Proverbs 12:23 – *A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims folly.*

Proverbs 16:28 – *A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.*

Proverbs 17:9 – *Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.*

Proverbs 25:9-10 – *Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and do not reveal another's secret, lest he who hears you bring shame upon you, and your ill repute have no end.*

#### An Abundance of Counselors

Proverbs 11:14 – *Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.*

Proverbs 12:15 – *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.*

Proverbs 28:13 – *Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.*

Matthew 18:15 – *If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.*

### Confidentiality Commitments

The elders at CrossPointe Coast desire to honor this tension between “concealing knowledge” and the safety of “an abundance of counselors.” The following statements are our commitments to the congregation.

#### **-1- The elders reserve the right to share information from any meeting or conversation with other elders and elder candidates.**

We believe in shepherding the church as a plurality of elders. We serve the church best as we serve and shepherd together. As we serve, we do not want to isolate ourselves from one another, and we do not want to isolate the church from the wisdom that we can share together. As such, with wisdom and discernment in each particular circumstance, an elder may find it best to share information from a meeting or conversation with another elder or elder candidate in order to seek prayer and further counsel to best shepherd the church.

Thus, we ask that individuals not ask an elder something such as, “Please don’t share this with anyone else.” This puts the elder in an awkward position. He lacks the perspective of whether or not what will be shared is something that (a) ought to be shared with another elder due to its impact on the church or (b) he ought to seek the counsel of another elder as to how best to serve the person.

#### **-2- All information that is confidential or sensitive that is shared between elders or elder candidates will be held in confidence by the elders and elder candidates (and their wives—see below).**

This commitment is the hinge upon which our commitment to offering confidentiality to the church turns. Our sincere and solemn commitment to the congregation is that all elders and elder candidates (and their wives) will maintain strict confidentiality regarding all sensitive information and all requests for confidentiality by individuals. While there may be wisdom in conversation regarding confidential matters between the eldership members, the elders will not discuss confidential matters outside of the eldership.



### **-3- The elders reserve the right to share information, which is otherwise confidential or sensitive, with their wives.**

A few realities are being held simultaneously with this commitment.

The first is that CrossPointe Coast believes that a husband and wife are truly one flesh. We also believe that an elder's wife is held to a strict standard of wisdom and confidence with her husband. For this reason, we bring an elder candidate's wife into many of the stages of the elder candidacy itself. We do not believe that it is healthy for a husband to hold a strict right to withhold information from his wife, even for the purpose of confidentiality.

On the other hand, we believe it is often wise for a husband to protect his wife from information he is privy to due to his role as an elder. This is not to say that his wife does not have the right to know if she were to ask, but that the elder will exercise wisdom and discretion in how and what to share with his wife.

Finally, as the elders are men, we believe that our wives bring wisdom, perspective and gifts, that are a compelling benefit to the congregation. We believe that bringing their counsel to bear upon particular circumstances, even instances of confidentiality, is beneficial to the church and relieves the elder of the sense of caring a weight and burden in his home that he is unable to share with his wife.

### **-4- All persons who handle or have access to household giving records are held to a strict standard of confidentiality.**

Giving information is a particular concern for confidentiality in the church. Persons who count the offering, enter giving data or have access to giving records meet the following qualifications:

- They are Gospel Partners with CrossPointe Coast.
- They have been background checked.
- They have committed not to share any household giving information with anyone who is not a part of the financial team or the elders.
- They have committed to checking their heart in prayer for envy, judgment, curiosity, gossip, and other such temptations.

We recognize the peculiar dangers of having access to household giving records. The elders have commissioned a small team of partners to aid in counting on Sunday mornings and other administrative details regarding finances. The elders have had a personal conversation with each of these individuals to ask if they feel comfortable having access to this information. We recognize that it can be difficult to know such information about their fellow believers without giving in to the temptations mentioned above.

While all elders have access to giving records, only particular elders are a part of the counting team. As a general rule, Lead Pastors and other staff persons are not a part of the counting team, and if they do serve in such a capacity, it is always in the presence of a lay partner. The elders are also called to take care in their access to household giving information that they might guard their hearts against both favoritism and judgmentalism.

### **A note regarding husbands and wives**

At times there is reason for a husband or a wife to seek the counsel of an elder apart from his or her spouse. In most cases, the information that is being shared will be held in confidence. In other words, the elders will not share the conversation or information with the spouse without permission.

On the other hand, if the matter of confidence is such that the spouse is sinned against or the household is put in jeopardy because of the matter at hand, the elder will first encourage the person to share with the spouse, or to accompany the person in sharing. If the person fails to share with the spouse, the elder will seek the counsel of the other elders regarding bringing the matter to the spouse.

### **A note regarding parents and children.**

Children are both a significant part of the life of the church and the stewardship responsibility of their parents. While the elders commit to shepherding children of all ages and taking their concerns seriously, the elders commit to parents that they will not withhold information about their children from parents.

## **The Elders, Counselors and the Sufficiency of Scripture**

The elders of CrossPointe Coast, including the Lead Pastors, are Bible men. That is, we seek to derive our counsel and measure its faithfulness and wisdom from the scriptures. At times, we will share practical wisdom from life experience or best practices that others have shared with us, but such counsel must be measured against the truth of the scriptures. This definition of the sufficiency of scripture is helpful from Ligonier Ministries. "To say that Scripture is sufficient is to say that the Bible contains all that we need for determining what we must believe and how we are to live before God [1]."

It should also be said that the CrossPointe Coast elders are not licensed or trained counselors or psychologists. There will be times in which we will refer a person to a trained counselor. We do not believe that such a referral replaces the role of the church in shepherding the congregation. Neither do we believe that such a referral denigrates the sufficiency of scripture for determining how we are to live. Rather, we see such a referral as an honest assessment of our own limitations, education and





capacity as elders. Thus, any referral ought to be seen as supplemental to and not a replacement of the role of the elders and the church in shepherding one another.

## The Congregation and Confidentiality

While the congregation is not held to the elders' confidentiality commitment, we are all still held to the standard of scripture as it regards both gossip and counsel.

Below we have listed a few principles that are helpful to discern how to handle sensitive information in the church.

- Constantly search the scripture for its warnings regarding the sins of the tongue.
- Do not use the need to seek counsel as an excuse to gossip.
- Do not use the sharing of prayer requests as a cover for sharing what does not need to be shared. Consider if you ought to simply commit the matter to personal prayer, prayer with your spouse or prayer with an elder.
- Matthew 18:15-20 should be considered as a partner addresses another in the congregation who has sinned against him. At the same time, do not isolate this passage from the whole counsel of scripture regarding rebuke, repentance and restoration. Some basic principles are from Matthew 18 are:
  - a) seek first to resolve disputes privately and relationally
  - b) the goal is repentance, forgiveness and restoration
  - c) the church can help one another in moving toward this goal
  - d) the church body (particularly the elders), though not a first resort, may play a significant role in seeking restoration
  - e) rebuke, repentance and restoration in the church is a matter of grave seriousness
  - f) the presence of God the Holy Spirit is of utmost importance

Matthew 18:15-20 – *If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.*

## Confidentiality and the Danger of Abuse

A positive consequence of the elders sharing in confidence together is that no partner in the congregation will be asked to keep something in confidence that he or she cannot share with other members of the eldership. We never want the claim of confidentiality to become a cover for hiding wrongdoing.

If a partner in the congregation sees something in the elders, staff or other leadership in the church that is concerning, he or she is free to share this concern with an elder. The principles of brotherly love and Matthew 18 still apply to the relationships between partners and elders, but the partners must also know the freedom to bring their concerns to the other elders if concerns are not quickly resolved in personal relationship.

If a partner has a concern regarding an illegal activity or abuse, we encourage the partner to communicate with the elders immediately. Know that the elders have a responsibility before the law and commitment before the Lord to report allegations of abuse to the proper authorities.

If a partner's report of illegal activity or abuse goes unheeded, the elders encourage the partner to consider these two options.

1. Contact Acts 29 to seek counsel and to report the concern. Brian Lowe is the Southeast Director of Acts 29 and can be contacted at [usse.admin@acts29.com](mailto:usse.admin@acts29.com) ([acts29.com/network/us-southeast](https://acts29.com/network/us-southeast)).
2. Contact the local authorities if the elders fail to report abuse or if illegal activity is unaddressed.

## Footnotes

[1](<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/biblical-sufficiency/>)(<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/biblical-sufficiency/>)