

# **Core Values**

*Of*

**CORNERSTONE**

**BAPTIST CHURCH**

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C.

## **CBC Core Values**

### **Overview of Core Values**

#### **Prayerful Dependence**

*As individual believers and as a local church we cooperate with the Spirit of God in remaining humble and focused on God's agenda as we stay connected to our Heavenly Father through prayer. Prayer is vital for the health of the Christian and for the health of the local church. Thus, as a local church, we seek to bring all we do before the Lord in prayer submitting to His will and not our own.*

#### **Biblical Leadership**

*The New Testament seems to indicate that the congregation should have the ultimate authority in the church. It also indicates that the church should be led by a group of pastors who are entrusted to lead the church in purity of doctrine, distinction in living, direction in vision, and accountability. This is to be coupled with deacons who serve in specific areas of ministry throughout the church.*

#### **Biblical Church Membership**

*We believe that membership matters. As Christians we are called to live in community with one another. Church membership involves a formal commitment to serve and invest in the life of a local body of believers.*

#### **Authentic Christian Relationships**

*Spiritual transformation happens only in community, not in isolation. Therefore we commit to building authentic relationships with one another. We seek to know and be known by our brothers and sisters in Christ.*

#### **Biblical Corporate Worship**

*Since Scripture is the very Word of God, we believe it to be both inerrant and infallible; as such it serves as the only sure guide for what we teach and how we do church. Biblical corporate worship is both guided by the Word of God and composed of the Word of God. Expository preaching takes Scripture as its object and aims to clearly communicate the meaning of the text.*

#### **Mission Mentality**

*Believers are called to be both salt and light to the world. As Christians, we are to stand for morality and virtue. We seek to promote personal evangelism in the lives of each of our members. We commit to work together and with other believing fellowships to evangelize both our communities and to carry the gospel throughout the world.*

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### **Biblical Discipleship**

*We believe conversion is the beginning of the Christian life, not its end. The ultimate goal is transformation of the believer from sinfulness to holiness, from wickedness to godliness. Although transformation takes place only by the work of the Holy Spirit, we see the local church as an essential tool which He uses to conform God's people to Christ's image. We aim to cooperate with the Spirit of God in making disciples of all ages.*

### **Gospel Centered**

*It is the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ that saves, sustains, and secures. Therefore, we aim to center our life as a church on the gospel. It is not only the power that saves us but it is also the power that sanctifies us and helps us persevere to the end. As a gospel-centered fellowship, the glorious truths of the gospel never get old but instead consistently remind us of our identity and purpose.*

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#### **Prayerful Dependence**

Prayer is our lifeline to God. It affords us the opportunity to remain continually connected with our Heavenly Father. Paul in his first letter to the church at Thessalonica says, “Rejoice always, *pray* without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thes 5:16-18). Don Whitney provides a helpful description of what prayer without ceasing is like in the life of a believer:

You might think of praying without ceasing as communicating with God on one line while also taking calls on another. Even while you are talking on the other line, you never lose your awareness of the need to return your attention to the Lord. So praying without ceasing means you never stop conversing with God; you simply have frequent interruptions.<sup>1</sup>

As a local church, we want to avoid the temptation of neglecting conversing with and depending upon God. We seek to remain connected to Him for constant guidance and direction about where we need to be going and what we need to be doing as a local body of believers. We value growth in the spiritual discipline of prayer in the lives of all members. We also commit to praying regularly and growing in the discipline of prayer corporately as a body of believers. The Spirit of God works to bring about unity as the people of God humble themselves and pray.

Prayerful dependence is important for the Christian because Jesus taught his disciples how to pray expecting that they would pray (Matt 6:5-13). He also encouraged them to pray to avoid falling into temptation (Matt 26:41). Prayer serves as a weapon to battle the forces of the evil one whose agenda is to kill, steal and destroy (John 10:10). As a church that values prayerful dependence, we consistently recognize the forces of evil at work desiring to destroy our attempts

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<sup>1</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Discipline for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991), 68.

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to advance the kingdom whenever and wherever possible. Therefore, we must ready ourselves by putting on the whole armor of God (Eph 6:10-20).

In John 15, Jesus says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Again, we see the importance of remaining connected. Independent Christian living is an oxymoron. We must remain dependent on Christ in order to bear fruit. Humility is an essential virtue for the Christian and for the church (Matt 23:12; 1 Peter 5:5). The discipline of prayer helps cultivate humility in the life of the believer while eradicating pride. It is difficult to acknowledge our need and dependence on God in prayer and at the same time think we have everything under control. The humble, prayerful person recognizes that circumstances are out of his control, thus depending on the sovereign One who is in control. This is important to us as a local church. We desire to look to God for guidance recognizing that his wisdom and his ways are much higher and better than our ways.

We as individual Christians and as a local church are to pray with boldness, trusting God to move and work when we pray according to the will of God (Matt 7:7-11). No matter how difficult or impossible the situation seems, in Christ there is always hope. There is no mountain too big for God to move when we trust Him and get on our knees before Him (Matt 17:20).

## **Biblical Leadership**

Every organization possesses a leadership structure. Some structures are more effective compared to others depending on the organization, its mission and the people involved. God provides for us in the scriptures clear directives regarding the structure of leadership within the local church. Regardless of the size of the church or the context in which the church is located,

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God's plan for the leadership structure remains the same. The scriptures do not present a complex leadership structure for the church. As such, we as a local body of believers value a simple approach to leadership that aligns with the Word of God.

We believe the scriptures support a church governance structure that is pastor-led and congregation-ruled. Thus, we value congregationalism. This simply means that there are certain decisions within the life of the local church that the entire membership makes together. For example, the calling of a new pastor or the removal of a pastor is a decision the entire membership should make. The acceptance and dismissal of members are also decisions for the entire membership. However, not every decision is a decision for the entire congregation. The church is not a democracy. Members of the body of Christ are to elect pastors to lead and then entrust various areas of leadership to the pastor or pastors.

There are two biblical offices of leadership provided in the scriptures—the office of pastor<sup>2</sup> and the office of deacon (1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9). Therefore, we value a leadership structure that consists of pastors and deacons. Pastors serve as the church's primary leaders. While Christ remains the ultimate Shepherd of His church, He appoints human under-shepherds for His flock. Such under-shepherds correct, encourage, guide, instruct, protect and reprove God's people. We believe that pastors have four main tasks. First, they maintain the doctrinal integrity of the church's confession and teaching. Second, they offer direction—a vision—for the congregation. Third, they oversee the practice of church discipline within the church. Finally, they exemplify and model Christ's love and compassion for the congregation.

The word for deacon translates to English as *servant*. This indicates the appropriate attitude and role of one called to the diaconate. Deacons serve Christ by serving His church,

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<sup>2</sup> At times, the term overseer and the term elder refer to this same biblical office in the scriptures. Most biblical scholars agree that all three terms are synonymous and refer to the same office.

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overseeing and facilitating her various ministries. If the church were a rowboat, the deacons would be the oars that keep it moving.

Finally, we value a plurality of pastors and deacons. The New Testament presents the pastor not as a single authoritarian figure but rather as a member of a pastoral community. Given the demands and stress of ministry, a plurality of pastors prevents one person from carrying the entire weight of the congregation's needs. In addition, a plurality of pastors means a plurality of gifts and strengths, which means oversight that is more effective and shepherding that is more comprehensive. In a similar manner, a plurality of deacons allows greater levels of deacon-specific service throughout the life of the church.

## **Biblical Church Membership**

Biblical church membership is a core value we embrace because it helps define for us what it means to be a local church. The makeup of the church consists of its members. Jonathan Leeman provides a helpful definition of the local church: "A local church is a group of Christians who regularly gather in Christ's name to officially affirm and oversee one another's membership in Jesus Christ and his kingdom through gospel preaching and gospel ordinances."<sup>3</sup> Certain factors distinguish members from non-members there is a need for a clear line of demarcation so that the world knows who represents Christ.

First, the membership of a local church is to embody regenerate members. That is, we want to do the best job we can as members and church leaders to ensure that every member on our rolls professes genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As new members come into our fellowship we want to do the best job we can to hear of their testimony of faith in Christ and

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<sup>3</sup>Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 52.

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their understanding of the gospel. Then, as we begin to do life together with new members we hope to see their faith lived out before us. This is where church discipline is so helpful and essential. It provides a means by which we can address members who demonstrate unrepentant sin thus discrediting the name of Christ and His church. The goal of church discipline is not punitive. Instead, it is out of love for a wayward brother or sister in Christ that we exercise church discipline. God disciplines those He loves (Heb 12:5-11). The practice of biblical church discipline preserves the beauty and glory of the bride of Christ as local churches mirror the character of Christ.<sup>4</sup>

Second, we value meaningful membership. If membership is biblical then it must mean something significant. The Apostle Paul emphasized the importance of active participation and service by every member of the body of Christ (Rom 12:4-8; Eph 4:11-16). Every member of the body of Christ serves an integral part. As one member within the body fails to exercise his gifts, the entire body suffers. If a person is not attending and not serving on a regular basis it raises the question as to the legitimacy of his membership. Therefore, we value meaningful membership rolls. If a person's name is on the list as a member of Cornerstone Baptist Church that signifies a person who attends regularly, serves regularly, and gives regularly to the work of the ministry.<sup>5</sup>

Third, church members are those who covenant together. We make promises to God and to one another as to how we agree to live holy and upright lives. We are also called to participate in several regular congregational practices. We affirm two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. By baptism, new believers testify to their faith in Christ as well as their union with Him

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<sup>4</sup>Paul was outraged at the Corinthian church for their failure to exclude from the fellowship one engaging in incest. He instructs the Corinthian believers to avoid judging those outside their fellowship and to prevent *any so called brother* from contaminating it (1 Cor 5).

<sup>5</sup>Medical limitations and other extenuating circumstances are an exception here.



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in death and resurrection. Members partake of the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Christ's death and celebration of the new covenant initiated by Christ's atoning sacrifice.

In summary, we understand the local church to consist of those persons who have been freed from the law of sin and death by regeneration in order to pursue the law of the Spirit. Membership in a local church is not salvific. Only faith in the atoning work of Christ brings forgiveness of one's sin and reconciliation with God. And yet, membership in a local church gives evidence as to the genuineness of a person's faith in Christ. We believe the call to gather together in local congregations to be non-negotiable (Heb 10:24-25). We recognize that as strangers in a foreign land the church must distinguish herself from the lost world in which she presently resides.

### **Authentic Christian Relationships**

We value authentic Christian relationships because we believe they are vital to the life of a healthy Christian and a healthy church. There is an appropriate interdependency between brothers and sisters in Christ within the body of Christ (Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12:12-31). The author of Hebrews admonishes us to meet together regularly and to do so in a particular manner. "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Heb 10:24-25). It is more than merely showing up—we must *consider* what words, what actions and what attitudes will prompt our brothers and sisters in Christ to love and good works.

Authentic Christian relationships do not just happen. Intentionality is at the heart of authentic Christian relationships. We value deep, genuine relationships that go below the surface. Consider the metaphor of an iceberg as it relates to relationships. Most relationships remain

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above the surface. We discuss the weather, gardening, sports, politics and a variety of other things, and yet, we rarely get to the large portions of who we are that are present below the surface. This kind of relating is risky and it takes time, but it is so important. The church should be a safe place for people to be who they really are. Sadly, the church is often not a safe place. We value the vision of the church being a place where we know others and allow others to know us.

Authentic Christian relationships assist us in the process of becoming more like Christ. Wisdom in the book of Proverbs indicates this sharpening impact of another faithful brother or sister in Christ (Prov 27:17). We strive to encourage relationships that provide accountability and the opportunity to confess sin (James 5:16).

We value authentic relationships characterized by genuine care and compassion towards one another. Luke records in the book of Acts the sacrificial devotion demonstrated by the early community of faith (Acts 2:44-47). We desire to demonstrate a similar devotion to one another. If a member of the body is in need, the response of the church is to support, encourage and do whatever possible to meet that need. Distinctively Christian love demonstrates to the world that we belong to Christ (John 13:35).

## **Biblical Corporate Worship**

Every person possesses an innate desire to worship. We see this in the numerous things people worship. Yet, our hearts are ultimately dissatisfied apart from delighting in and valuing God above all created things (Ps 37:4; Rom 1:25). As Augustine said in his *Confessions*, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.” Therefore, in our corporate gatherings we seek to cultivate an atmosphere that allows the Spirit of God to work so that worshipers recognize their greatest need. As followers of Jesus Christ worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:23), it is our hope and

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prayer that they find contentment and satisfaction in the One who can ultimately satisfy. We also pray for the lost to see clearly the One their hearts long to know and worship. We believe certain characteristics of biblical, corporate worship will help us towards this end of seeing God most glorified in us as we find our satisfaction in Him.<sup>6</sup>

First, biblical, corporate worship is both *composed of* and *guided by* the Scriptures. Apart from the Word of God we are without a true understanding of the character of God and the nature of man. The Word of God prepares us to respond appropriately to God in worship. A primary and essential component of biblical, corporate worship is expositional preaching. This simply means that the preacher exposes a particular passage of Scripture by shedding light on its original audience and context and then crosses the bridge to uncover the eternal truths and relevant applications for our current context. This is a daunting endeavor yet vital for the spiritual growth of the preacher and the entire church body. We believe that spiritual growth is dependent upon a regular diet of the Word of God. This does not preclude an occasional topical or biographical sermon. Yet, the primary mode of biblical, corporate worship consists with the Word of God comprising the content of the message.

Second, biblical, corporate worship aims to exalt God. Therefore, we strive in dependence upon the Spirit of God to give praise and exaltation to our great God and Savior while avoiding the exaltation of man. In a culture that is predominantly man-centered as opposed to God-centered this takes intentional effort and a commitment to go against the grain at times. We aim for excellence in all that we do together as a local church (Col 3:23). Yet, in our pursuit of excellence we attempt to always transfer the glory off of ourselves and onto God—the One who is worthy of all our worship and praise (Ps 115:1; Isa 6:1-5).

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<sup>6</sup>John Piper deserves credit for this language in what he calls Christian hedonism—that “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.” See John Piper, *Desiring God* (Colorado Spring, CO: Multnomah Books, ).

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Third, biblical, corporate worship recognizes the necessity of believers assembling together regularly and the *corporate* nature of this assembling. The author of Hebrews provides the admonition to stir up one another to love and good works during the regular assembly (Heb 10:24-25). We value corporate singing, corporately hearing the Word of God proclaimed, giving corporately to support the work of church and the advancement of the kingdom, and corporately participating in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper on a regular basis. We desire to function *together* in Christ for the glory of God. Unity in the body of Christ brings great honor and praise to our God (Eph 4:3; 1 Pet 3:8).

Music is extremely valuable as it serves to help the Word of Christ dwell richly within us (Col 3:16). Yet, it is not foundational to a healthy church. "Music is a biblically required response to God's Word, but the music God gave us was not given to build our churches upon. A church built on music—of whatever style—is a church built on shifting sands."<sup>7</sup> We utilize various styles of music—the primary concern is with the content of the songs that we sing. The music we sing must align with the truths found in Scripture that remind us of the gospel and our daily need for God's transforming grace. The predominance of music in worship consists of congregational singing. This does not preclude a solo or choir special. Instead, the emphasis is on the predominance of music in worship being corporate. Dever and Alexander aptly describe the beneficial aspects of congregational singing:

What a blessing it is to hear the whole church singing together with all our hearts! When we hear one another singing the same words all together, there is both a common melody and a diverse harmony that expresses the unity and diversity of the local church in a way that encourages us to press on together. In our overly individualize culture, congregational singing is one of the most visible ways to encourage a specifically *corporate* emphasis to our worship and life as a local church.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Mark Dever, *What is a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 67.

<sup>8</sup>Mark Dever & Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 116.

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In summary, biblical, corporate worship is characterized by worship that is Word-centered, God-exalting, and corporate in nature. As we worship together in this manner on a consistent basis we trust that God will use it in our lives to conform us more into the image of Christ—for our good and His glory.

## **Mission Mentality**

Oftentimes when we think of those on mission for God we consider missionaries, church planters and pastors. Yet, there is no distinction according to the scriptures. We are all called to be on mission for God. Every child of God has a distinct purpose—that is to advance the kingdom of God by being on mission for God. Therefore, as a local church we want to encourage every member to embrace a mission mentality.

We value and embrace a mission mentality because of the numbers of people around us locally and across the globe that do not know Jesus Christ. Current estimates indicate that there are still over 7,000 people groups that are unreached (approximately 2.87 billion individuals). John Piper points out that the reason for missions is that the worldwide glorification of God does not yet exist.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, as a local body of believers committed to seeing the lost come to faith in Christ and to God being worshiped among the nations we are a body of believers on mission.

At the end of Matthew's gospel, Jesus appeared to his disciples following his death, burial and resurrection and told them to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19-20). The Great Commission is a command from our Lord and Savior to make disciples both *locally* and *globally*. In order to do this we must go—we must go where people are who need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ in the communities around us and to the ends of the earth. We not

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<sup>9</sup> John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), page 11 (from twelfth printing, June 2001 edition).

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only want to participate by going but also by supporting Great Commission efforts both locally and globally.

Disciples of Jesus Christ make disciples. Evangelism is a natural overflow of a grateful heart. In order to make new disciples we must consistently share our faith with others who do not know Christ. We trust the outcome of our sharing to the Lord but recognize our responsibility to share. As individual believers, we each have a story to tell regarding the work of redemption in our personal lives. As a corporate body of believers, we are to stand out as a city on a hill testifying to the work of redemption in our community.

We believe a healthy church is a church committed to the unchanging orthodox doctrines of the faith embedded within the scriptures and embraced throughout the history of the church. Yet, we welcome the regular change in the makeup of membership as believers from various backgrounds and interests are added to the congregation. As a body of believers that consists of various personality types, races, socioeconomic status and interests we demonstrate to the watching world that what unites us is not our sameness, but instead our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Membership within the local church is for *all* believers. When our Lord returns and ushers in the kingdom in its fullness there will be believers present from *every* tribe, language, people and nation (Rev 5:9-10). As a local assembly of believers we embrace doctrinal truth that never changes and a membership makeup that is constantly changing.

Jesus calls his disciples to be both salt and light in the world (Matt 5:13-16). As the people of God, we are called to engage the culture in which we live by preserving the truth and precepts of God's Word. In order to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the work of redemption, our lives as Christians must remain distinctive from the lives of those who do not claim Christ. The value of biblical church membership helps guarantee that the people of God do not become

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*tasteless* to the world. We are not called to lives of isolation, but instead to lives that intersect a secular culture with the truth of the gospel.

A church that is on mission also seeks to bring about justice in places of brokenness and injustice. God is perfectly just. Our Lord in his earthly ministry spent significant time with those considered “outsiders.” As believers, we anticipate the establishment of justice when Christ returns and His kingdom comes in its fullness. Still, as God’s children, we cannot wait until Christ returns to seek justice; rather, we are obliged even now to pursue it, though we will have only limited success while Christ tarries. Every step towards justice, however small or temporary, glorifies God.

Scripture speaks often of the poor. The Old Testament manifests a deep concern for the poor and oppressed (Leviticus 17, Psalm 146:5-9); so also does Christ Jesus (Matthew 25:45, Luke 14:13). We therefore understand that concern for the weak, poor and oppressed is a sign of Christ-likeness. For this reason, we seek opportunities to be on mission in ministering practically to those in need around us. We recognize that by caring for practical needs the Lord often opens doors to minister to spiritual needs that are present. A healthy church understands that being on mission involves the active sharing of God’s love through the proclamation of the gospel as well as through acts of Christian love to alleviate the suffering of the needy.

In conclusion, consider the metaphor of a cruise ship as opposed to a battleship. A church that embraces a mission mentality is a church that realizes there is a real battle at hand with no time for merely cruising. We are at war and the consequences of losing are an eternal hell for those around us and across the globe who do not repent and believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we embrace mission at all costs.

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### **Biblical Discipleship**

A Christian disciple is an apprentice in the process of learning to obey all the teachings of Jesus Christ. When Jesus called the first disciples he instructed them to come and “follow me” (Matt 4:19). It was a request that required leaving familiarity and letting go of everything in order to put Christ first and follow Him completely. The same is true for disciples of Jesus Christ in the twenty-first century. True, biblical discipleship unto Christ requires complete surrender. It is praying as Jesus prayed, “not as I will, but as you will” (Matt 26:39). As a church that values biblical discipleship, we aim to hold out this high standard that Jesus gives for His disciples. In order to embrace this core value as a local church we believe it is important to emphasize that biblical discipleship is rooted in biblical theology, that it is a process, and that the purpose of biblical discipleship is so that the saints might be equipped for the work of ministry.

First, biblical discipleship is rooted in biblical theology. That is, sound doctrine and teaching prepares followers of Christ to obey Him in all things. In the Great Commission, Jesus instructs the disciples to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations, *teaching* them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20). Without understanding we are at a loss as to how to follow. Thus, an emphasis on teaching members the scriptures, biblical theology, church history and various aspects related to Christian living is vital as we seek to grow into Christ.

Second, Christian discipleship is a process. It is a process whereby followers of Jesus Christ grow in Him (Eph 4:15) being empowered by the Holy Spirit to overcome the pressures and trials of this life and reflecting the character of Christ. The lives of those who claim to follow Christ should increasingly reflect His character and the fruit of the Spirit. Growth is a sign of life. Therefore, as we see growth in the lives of Christians we want to encourage this,



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acknowledging that the Spirit is at work and fruit is evident. Likewise, when we see an absence of growth in the lives of those who claim Christ we want to lovingly question this and provide instruction as to what growth in godliness looks like. When discipleship ceases to impact how we live, but instead is merely about information to be learned, a compartmentalization takes place in our thinking resulting in hypocrisy. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for showing honor outwardly but having hearts far from Him (Matt 15:8-9). We acknowledge that spiritual fruit is never something we can bring about in our own efforts and strength. It is always a gift of His grace in our lives when we witness the Spirit of God cultivating fruit in the lives of disciples.

Third, the aim of biblical discipleship is the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry (Eph 4:12). As disciples are equipped new disciples are made both locally and globally. Disciples of Jesus Christ make disciples. This sounds simple but as Francis Chan notes: “The simplest things to understand are often the most difficult to put into practice.”<sup>10</sup> At the heart of our discipleship efforts is an equipping process that provides the means for multiplication. We aim our discipleship efforts at all ages recognizing that spiritual transformation is a lifelong process and that it never begins too early. Children and teenagers are capable of teaching others the truths of the faith and thus being used by God in the process of making disciples.

## **Gospel Centered**

A gospel-centered local church accurately understands the gospel. Gospel simply means good news. It is good news because apart from the gospel every person is in a dangerous dilemma before a holy God. Sin separates humanity from God and places man in a position deserving the wrath of God. God being rich in grace and mercy sent His one and only Son to live a perfect life,

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<sup>10</sup> Francis Chan, *Multiply*

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die a criminal's death, rise from the grave and ascend to heaven demonstrating His power of sin and death. Those who by faith repent and believe in what Christ accomplished receive the very righteousness of Christ and are saved from the judgment of God.

A church that makes the gospel central does so by making it explicit. Oftentimes, the gospel is merely assumed in the life of the church. Matt Chandler distinguishes between the *assumed* gospel and the *explicit* gospel. The assumed gospel seeks to see lives first and foremost conformed to a pattern of religious behavior. The explicit gospel seeks to see lives transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup> In our preaching and teaching we aim to emphasize the gospel over and over and over again. It never gets old and it is never irrelevant. We aim to avoid the extremes of legalism and license (i.e., cheap grace) and instead encourage transformation through the power of the gospel.

A local church that values the gospel remaining central is a church that emphasizes the gospel in everything. Oftentimes, we recognize the good news of the gospel in our justification—that is our right standing before God the Father because of the atoning work of God the Son. But, the gospel is just as essential to our sanctification. It is in remembering and increasingly adoring what God has done for us in Christ, embracing who we now are in Christ, and treasuring all that has been secured for us in Christ that we then live lives that reflect the character of Christ. We value disciples seeing all of life through the lens of the gospel. There is no area of life that the gospel does not impact. In our marriages, parenting, relationships, finances, vocations, involvement in the public square and a variety of other areas of the life the gospel sets the trajectory for how we think, feel and act.

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<sup>11</sup> Matt Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel*

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