

**WHAT WE  
BELIEVE**

**AND**

**WHY**

BY BRUCE ZACHARY



loving God and living His word

What We Believe and Why:

A Representative Overview of the Philosophy of Ministry and  
Theology of the Calvary Chapel Movement and Calvary Nexus

by Bruce Zachary

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>What Is a Calvary Chapel Church? .....</b>  | <b>4</b> |
| 1. Calvary Chapel Statement of Faith .....   | 5        |
| 2. The Calvary Chapel Movement - A Brief History .....                               | 8        |
| 3. The Church Belongs to Jesus So It Is His Ministry, His Church & His Message ..... | 10       |
| 4. The Book of Acts as Our Model .....   | 12       |
| 5. Emphasis: Teaching the Bible .....  | 14       |
| 6. Worship: Music as an Aspect & Expression of Praise & Adoration .....              | 16       |
| 7. Ministry of the Holy Spirit & Gifts.....  | 19       |
| 8. Church Government .....   | 22       |
| 9. Attitude of Grace .....   | 24       |
| 10. Systematic Theology.....   | 27       |
| 11. Reaching the Next Generation .....   | 33       |
| 12. Mission of Outreach & Evangelism:.....   | 36       |
| 13. Equipping for the Work of Ministry.....  | 39       |
| 14. Developing Authentic Relationships.....  | 41       |
| 15. Approach to Giving .....   | 43       |
| 16. Global Missions.....   | 45       |
| 17. Community Service / Servant Evangelism .....                                     | 48       |
| 18. Membership .....   | 49       |

## **What Is a Calvary Chapel Church?**

### **Our Philosophy of Ministry & Theology**

One of our stated goals is to establish churches that are associated theologically philosophically and relationally. By identifying our philosophy of ministry, and theology we communicate what we believe and why we believe it. These core values are essential to transmitting the DNA of a Calvary Chapel church. These core values are slow to change and remain constant in their influence. We are passionate about these values, and care deeply about them. Associations seek to establish accountability through relationship rather than exercising control as in a denominational model. Our values drive our churches towards a particular destination or model. Associated leaders will seek to meet regularly to create and maintain accountability, and to encourage development of healthy churches. Core values determine a church's ministry distinctive, communicate priorities, inspire action, enhance leadership, influence the ministry's character, contribute to success and create the church's culture. Ultimately, anyone who desires to participate relationally in this type of association must agree with the theology and philosophy of ministry as described. So what makes a Calvary Chapel church?

## 1. Calvary Chapel Statement of Faith

We believe that there is one living and true GOD, eternally existing in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, equal in power and glory; that this triune God created all, upholds all, and governs all things. (Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:8 and 48:16; Matthew 28:19-20; John 10:30; Hebrews 1:3).

We believe that the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, fully inspired without error and the infallible rule of faith and practice. The Word of God is the foundation upon which this church operates and is the basis for which this church is governed. We believe that the Word of God supersedes any earthly law that is contrary to the Holy Scriptures.

We believe in the person of God the Father, an infinite, eternal, personal Spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power and love; that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men; that He hears and answers prayer; and that He saves from sin and death all those who come to Him through Jesus Christ. (Deuteronomy 33:27; Psalms 90:2; Psalms 102:27; John 3:16 and 4:24; 1 Timothy 1:17; Titus 1:3).

We believe in the person of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles and teachings, his substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people and personal, visible return to earth. (Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2; Matthew 1:23; Mark 16:19; Luke 1:34-35; John 1:1-2, 8:58 and 11:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 1:2; Revelation 1:8).

We believe in the person of the Holy Spirit, Who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify and empower for ministry all who believe in Christ; (Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 3:18; John 16:8-11; Romans 8:26 and 15:13,16; Hebrews 9:14),

We believe the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Jesus Christ and that He is an abiding helper, teacher, and guide. (John 6:13, 14:16-17 and 16:8-11; Romans 8:26).

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit and in the exercise of all Biblical gifts of the Spirit according to the instructions given to us in 1 Corinthians 12-14. (1 Corinthians 14)

We believe that all people are sinners by nature and, therefore, are under condemnation; that God saves and regenerates based upon faith by the Holy Spirit, those who repent of their sins and confess Jesus Christ as Lord. (Acts 8:15-17; Ephesians 2:1-3 and 8-9; Romans 3:23 and 5:8; Titus 3:5).

We believe in the universal church, the living spiritual body, of which Christ is the head and all who are born again are a part of the Body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 4:15-16)

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ instituted two ordinances for the church: (a) water baptism of believers, and (b) the Lord's Supper. (Matthew 28:19; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 2:38; 1

Corinthians 11:23-26) We also believe that the Lord Jesus Christ validated the ordinance of marriage. (Matthew 19:4-5 and John 2:1-11)

We believe in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ which is His personal, visible return to earth and the establishment of His millennial kingdom, in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment and eternal blessing of the righteous and endless separation of the wicked. (Matthew 16:27; Acts 1:11; Revelation 19:11-16, 20:11-15)

We believe in a literal Heaven and a literal Hell and that all those who place their faith, hope and trust in Jesus Christ will spend eternity in Heaven with the Lord, while those who reject Jesus' free gift of salvation will spend eternity separated from the Lord. (Psalm 9:17; Matthew 5:3, 5:22, 18:9 and 25:31-34; Mark 9:42-49; Luke 12:5; John 3:18; Hebrews 12:23; 1 Peter 1:4; Revelation 14:10-11 and 20:11-15)

We believe in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church where all believers will meet the Lord in the air and be taken out of this world prior to the Tribulation that will come upon the earth. (Isaiah 26:20; Matthew 24:29-31; Luke 21:36; Romans 1:18, 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 4:13-16 and 5:9; 2 Peter 2:7-9; Revelation 3:10, 5:7-10 and 7:13-14)

**A Pastor's Perspective:** *Salvation is through Christ alone. The essence of Christ's work on the cross is that he died for our sins so that we might be reconciled to God. Christ's atonement preserves the justice of God by satisfying the righteous requirements of the law, as well as extending grace and salvation to sinners (man) [Eph.2:8-9]. The doctrine of penal substitution: Jesus took the penalty/punishment for our sins thereby taking our place. The good news [gospel] is that Jesus saves sinners. God's wrath toward sin is no longer aimed at those who trust in Jesus for their salvation.*

*John Stott, observes, "The essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting Himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices Himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be." Stott also observes, "If we expose sin without magnifying Christ, we have failed. A guilty conscience is a great blessing, but only if it drives us to come home."*

*In my community, I meet with pastors weekly to pray or eat together. They come from a broad spectrum of Protestant churches: Vineyard, Foursquare, Missionary, Presbyterian, Baptist, Seeker Driven, Evangelical Free, Christian, Assembly of God, Reform, Nazarene, Calvary Chapel and independents. We are united in our Christian faith, especially our agreement regarding the essentials of the faith as described above and in the National Association of Evangelicals – statement of faith. There is probably no biblical basis not to unite with other churches that hold these beliefs in common. Seek to avoid dividing over differences re non-essentials [e.g. the timing of the Rapture, the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, or church government] and instead seek to discover opportunities to unite based on agreement re essentials.*

## **LIFEWOR**

Review the Calvary Chapel Statement of Faith.

1. Is there any part [e.g. terms] that you don't fully understand?

2. Is there any part that you disagree with?

## 2. The Calvary Chapel Movement - A Brief History

The following history is available on the CCCM website and is used with permission:

**1960s:** Calvary Chapel is a non-denominational Christian church that began in 1965 in Costa Mesa, California. Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa's pastor, Chuck Smith, became a leading figure in what has become known as the "Jesus Movement."

**1970s** It has been estimated that in a two-year period in the mid '70s, Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa performed well over eight thousand baptisms. During that same period, we were instrumental in 20,000 conversions to the Christian faith. A remarkable pattern kept repeating itself. As soon as we moved into a new building, our fellowship would already be too big for the facilities. In two years we moved from our original building (one of the first church buildings in Costa Mesa) to a rented Lutheran church overlooking the Pacific. Soon thereafter we decided to do something unprecedented at the time and move the church to a school that we had bought. The building did not match up to code so we tore it down and built another. But by the time the sanctuary of 330 seats was completed in 1969, we were already forced to go to two services, and eventually had to use the outside courtyard for 500 more seats. This was all fine in good weather.

But by 1971 the large crowds and the winter rains forced us to move again. We bought a ten-acre tract of land on the Costa Mesa/Santa Ana border. Orange County was quickly changing and the once-famous orange orchards were making way for the exploding population of Los Angeles. Soon after buying the land, we again did the unprecedented and erected a giant circus tent that could seat 1,600 at a stretch. This was soon enlarged to hold 2,000 seats. Meanwhile we began building an enormous sanctuary adjacent to this site.

By the time Calvary Chapel fellowship had celebrated opening day in 1973 moving into the vast new sanctuary of 2,200 seats, the building was already too small to contain the numbers turning out. We held three Sunday morning services and had more than 4,000 people at each one. Many had to sit on the carpeted floor. A large portion of floor space was left without pews so as to provide that option.

**1980s** Calvary Chapel also ministers over the airwaves, and this must account for many of those who travel long distances to fellowship here. A Nielsen survey indicated that our Sunday morning Calvary Chapel service is the most listened-to program in the area during the entire week. As of 1987, Calvary's outreach has included numerous radio programs, television broadcasts, and the production and distribution of tapes and records. The missions outreach is considerable. Calvary Chapel not only supports Wycliffe Bible Translators, Campus Crusade, Missionary Aviation Fellowship, and other groups, but we donate to Third World needs. We then built a radio station in San Salvador and gave it to the local pastors there. We also gave money to Open Doors to purchase the ship that, in tandem with a barge, delivered one million Bibles to mainland China. Our financial commitment to missions exceeds the local expense budget by over 50%.



**Current:** Today (2015), Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, the church which only had twenty-five members, has grown to a fellowship of approximately 1500 churches worldwide and has been listed as one of the ten largest Protestant churches in the United States.

**A Pastor's Perspective:** *when I first came to Camarillo, I met a couple that had gone to Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa for years and were going to a local church in town. They told me, "It was just like Calvary Chapel." Suffice it to say that in reality it was not really like Calvary Chapel at all. There was a very different philosophy of ministry as well as systematic theology. Perhaps the couple simply lacked some of the sophistication necessary to discern what were to me very obvious differences.*

*I'm a big fan of the Calvary Chapel movement based on the philosophy of ministry and theology described in the sections to follow. Although I confess my prejudice, I do believe that it is the best approach to ministry. I also recognize that there are many other good churches, philosophies of ministry, and approaches to systematic theology. It is critical for a church planter to carefully consider philosophy of ministry and theology before beginning to plant. A disciple becomes like the rabbi they follow. Know what you believe and why you believe it. Your philosophy of ministry and theology should be compass-like in keeping you on course during good and bad seasons. If you are not committed to a philosophy, you are likely to grasp for any system or model that looks attractive, especially when things are tough. So, as you study the sections below seek to determine what you agree with and also identify areas that you don't agree with.*

## **LIFEWORk**

Perhaps you have attended [or served at] different types of local churches. perhaps there are other movements, philosophies of ministry, or systematic philosophies that you are curious about or attracted to.

1. Describe some of the differences you are aware of:
2. What are some of the questions you have about different approaches?

### 3. The Church Belongs to Jesus So It Is His Ministry, His Church & His Message

**a. His ministry:** First and foremost it is all about Jesus. As Paul described his ministry at Corinth he declared, “For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake” [2Cor.4:5]. The New Covenant ministry is all about the gospel of Jesus. We are made sufficient for this ministry by the empowering of the Holy Spirit that gives life unlike the Mosaic Law that kills [2Cor.2:14-3:6]. Man’s efforts, for man’s glory don’t bring life! Resolve that it is His church, His mission, by His grace, and that it is for His glory and not yours. We are simply earthen vessels that the excellence of power may be of God and not of us [2Cor.4:7].

**b. His Church:** Jesus used the term “church” two times. First, in Mt.16:18, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it.” The Lord affirmed that it is His church, and that He is the source of growth. He did not propose a methodology but declared authority over his church. Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain [Ps.127:1]. The gospel is an obstacle to people for a host of reasons so there will be temptation to make the message more palatable to people by minimizing or obscuring the commandments, teaching, and life of Jesus. So, make sure that you are committed to trusting Jesus to build His church rather than relying on any methodology that would minimize His rightful place. Remember, whatever you strive to gain you’ll need to strive to maintain. If you’ve pushed and pressured to gain it in your strength you’ll have a burden to maintain it. Man-made works are a heavy burden but Jesus’ load is light and provides rest for the soul.

Second, in Mt.18:17, “If an admonished brother refuses to receive correction, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or tax collector.” Jesus affirms his protection and purification of the church. Pastors who feel threatened about the growth or decline of the church are likely to consider using a methodology that is contrary to Jesus’ plan for His church. Fundamentally, we must decide that it is Jesus’ church and His mission so we decide to do ministry His way. How do we do that?

**c. His message:** Focus on Jesus: Charles Spurgeon, “Preach Christ, always and everywhere. He is the whole gospel. His person, offices, and work must be our one great, all comprehending theme.” All of the Bible focuses on Jesus either predictive of His work, preparatory of His work, reflective of His work, and/or resultant of His work [Brian Campbell- *Christ Centered Preaching*]. The gospel is rooted in Jesus from Genesis to Revelation – His promise, person, or work [cf. Lu.24:13-35]. Jesus isn’t saying, “Let me show you how to live” but rather “Let me show you why I died” [Greidanus – *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*].

Some popular counterfeits to Christ-centered preaching are: moralism, relativism, self-helpism, & activism. Moralism suggests that we appease God’s wrath toward sin with our good deeds. The focus becomes good works. Relativism is the idea that truth is self-determined & we approach God the way that seems best to us. In essence, we create our own God and obey our own law. A departure from God’s commandments is characteristic in relativism. Self-helpism: appeals to the will by challenging people to apply biblical principles without necessarily applying the gospel to their hearts. Christ becomes more of an example than a Savior. Finally, activism emphasizes the social gospel & tends to produce cause-oriented rather than Christ-

centered people. Attempts to effect social change without a change of heart/nature. Caring for the poor, for example, is very important, but it should not be divorced from Jesus & man's greatest need –salvation.

Remember, the admonition of William Willimon, “Unable to preach Christ and him crucified, we preach humanity and it improved.” If we lose focus on Jesus we'll stop being the church.

**A Pastor's Perspective:** *relatively soon after planting the church, some well intentioned encouraging person will approach you after the service and say, “Pastor, I just love your church!” Of course, you will give the right reply, something like, “It's not my church, its Jesus' church.” I know from experience. Yet, it can be really challenging to be humble and remember that the purpose of the church is to proclaim Christ's message of the gospel for His glory. Saying the right thing is relatively easy the greater challenge is what we're thinking. When Paul alluded to his struggles in wanting to do the right things and avoid doing the wrong things [Rom.7] he mentions coveting. No one sees coveting – it is first an attitude issue before the behaviors reveal the problem. In the same way, our desire to control the church and seek accolades for its success is an attitude issue.*

## **LIFEWORk**

1. Consider various approaches to church ministry. What are some of the ways Jesus and the gospel are obscured?

#### 4. The Book of Acts as Our Model

**A Pastor's Perspective:** *When I first moved to Camarillo and met with some local pastors I was asked about my model for ministry. At the time, some of the popular trends were being explored by Bill Hybels at Willow Creek [seeker sensitive model], Rick Warren at Saddleback [purpose driven model] and C. Peter Wagner [various church growth methodologies]. I replied that my model was the Book of Acts. Some of my peers were perplexed, or perhaps astonished at my ignorance or naiveté. Nevertheless, it is the only model I have known, sought to know, or care to rely upon. Fifteen years later [2011] I can affirm that from my experience it definitely is sufficient.*

The New Testament, early church, described in Acts is holistic in that it has: sound doctrine, strong devotion, genuine community, evangelistic passion, and meaningful social justice. The church as described in the Book of Acts is presumed to be our model for the Church because, it was established by the apostles selected by Jesus, it has a record of being extremely effective in performing Jesus' mission, and the majority of the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 were admonished for their departure from the model. In less than sixty years the church had generally departed from the blueprint and was rebuked by Jesus. We'll consider these traits in greater detail later in this section, however it is good to consider a snapshot of the Acts church:

**a. Sound doctrine:** Means that the church emphasizes the Word of God, and the teaching is consistent with orthodox theology. Each of the writers of the New Testament opposes false doctrine whether it is the Pharisee's legalism, the Gnostic's liberalism, or the Sadducee's failure to recognize spiritual realities. Continue in the apostles' doctrine [Ac.2:42].

**b. Strong devotion involves prayer, worship, and the work of the Holy Spirit:** The early church as described in Ac.2:42-47 continued to emphasize prayer and worship [see, Ac.3,4,6,12,13,]. The church was birthed by the Holy Spirit and the apostles were keenly aware of Jesus' admonition to wait for the power of the Holy Spirit [Lu.24:49]. The early church understood that effective church (and Christian) life requires the work of the Spirit. Jesus promised expanding influence if the Holy Spirit was empowering the church [Ac.1:8]. As the church at Antioch ministered to the Lord [worship, prayer, and the Word] the Holy Spirit directed, guided and empowered the expansion of God's kingdom as Barnabas and Saul were sent out to begin New Testament churches. The Holy Spirit inspires true faith adventures. Too often, church leaders pursue a radical idea birthed by the intellect or flesh rather than the Holy Spirit.

**The need to start and finish in the Spirit:** The church must not only begin in the Spirit, but needs to continue and end in the Spirit [Ac.2]. Assuming your church begins in the Spirit and experiences expanding influence there will be a temptation to neglect the work of the Spirit. The danger of "success" is the tendency to confuse momentum and emotion with the work of the Holy Spirit. Where the Spirit is moving there is life transformation. Make sure you continue to depend on the power of the Holy Spirit. Church history reveals a life cycle in a local church or movement of God. Movements become monoliths as the Spirit of God is neglected and routine and ritual replace power and anointing. As Paul warned the Galatians, it is foolish to believe that we can improve upon the power of the Spirit by the works of the flesh [Gal. 3:1-5]. As the

Lord promised, “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts” [Zech.4:6].

**c. Community involves authentic relationships experienced in the context of smaller groups.**

The early church grew exponentially so that there were soon several thousand. They continued daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house [Ac.2:46]. In addition to emphasizing teaching doctrine and worship as a larger group the early church was intentional to develop community in the context of smaller groups. The early church shared their resources so that those in need would be cared for [Ac.4:32-37]. Authentic relationships help to identify physical, emotional and spiritual needs that the members of the community can care for. Genuine community and authentic relationships are often experienced in the context of smaller groups that promote biblical fellowship *koinonia* [Ac.2:42-47] sharing togetherness in oneness in life through Christ –doctrine, fellowship, prayer, gathering together and sharing a meal.

**d. Evangelistic passion:** The early church sought to seek and save the lost without compromising Biblical truth or avoiding the primary issues of sin, confession, repentance & faith in Christ [Ac.5:42]. The results were exponential growth [Ac.6:1;11:24], and missionary vision [Ac.11:19-21; Ac.13 Church at Antioch]. The early church was outward focused and sought to fulfill the Great Commission. The tendency is that established churches become more inward focused – creating an enclave rather than engage the culture around them. Keep breaking down walls that become obstacles and constantly model and encourage people to live on mission ... to go into the culture and make disciples.

**e. Meaningful social justice:** The Acts church was concerned for and purposed to influence and minister to tangible needs of its community. In Jerusalem, the church provided benevolence in the form of a program to feed needy widows. It provided opportunities to show the love of God in tangible ways, to establish new leaders, and create a bridge for pre-believers to know the Lord. The result, “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith [Ac.6:7]. Not only did the church grow exponentially but even priests, perhaps the least likely to come to faith, came to Christ. Community service will always have an attractive quality and should supplement a teaching ministry of the church, not replace it. Remember, the apostles sought to delegate oversight of the community service to others so that they could continue to prioritize the word of God and prayer [Ac.6:1-4].

## **LIFEWORk**

Review the five characteristics of the early church described in the Book of Acts.

1. On a scale of one to ten, with ten being the best, rate your current local church in each of the areas:
2. What would you recommend to improve the church in any of the areas where you see the need to return to the Book of Acts as a model?

## 5. Emphasis: Teaching the Bible

The teaching of the Bible is the hallmark of a true church. In 2 Tim.4:2 we find this imperative; “Preach the Word!” John Stott observes, “Whether the text is long or short, our responsibility as expositors is to open it in such a way that it speaks its message clearly, plainly, accurately, relevantly, without addition, subtraction or falsification.” The Bible and message of the gospel is the primary revelation of God and Christian Living.

The strengths of the teaching [doctrine-driven] model are the church is taught sound doctrine & the assembly is encouraged to study the Bible for themselves, and consider and reflect upon deep theological truth. Nevertheless, we must guard against creating self-righteous people who lack compassion. Bible teaching may not always be popular but people will respect and be drawn to God by declaring, “This is what the Bible says, and this is how to apply it. We are trying our best to apply it in our lives and you can, too.” A primary role of the lead pastor in this model is to teach the Bible.

Expositional verse-by-verse teaching allows people to understand God in the context of books of the Bible. If you start at chapter one, verse one of a book and teach systematically through verse-by-verse, paragraph-by-paragraph, chapter-by-chapter until the end of the book people are likely to understand doctrine and theology. Paul declared that he was innocent of the blood of all men, “For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” [Ac.20:26-27]. It seems that the only way to teach the whole counsel of God is to teach through books of the Bible.

In Nehemiah 8, when the children of Israel had returned from captivity and were rebuilding the city, the leadership gathered the people together and began to read the Word of God to them. Nehemiah 8:8 declares, “So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.” This is the essence of expositional teaching. Read the text, observe, explain what it means, and help people to understand how to apply the truth of the Word to their lives.

I encourage you to consider teaching the Old Testament during the mid-week Bible study and teach from the New on weekends. There seems to be very few churches that teach through books of the Bible, and even fewer that teach through the Old Testament. This approach will set the church apart in the community and help establish a reputation as a strong teaching ministry. Your teaching must edify believers, reach mature disciples, and strengthen less mature. Also, teaching should encourage pre-believers to decide to follow Jesus. The teaching should be simple but not simplistic. Consider what does the passage say about God, and what are the likely objections that people are thinking or feeling, and then refute the objections.

Narrative texts [e.g. Gospels, Acts, Genesis] will grow even more popular as people resonate with story as a means of communicating truth. Books that emphasize doctrine [e.g. Paul’s letters] are essential to teach so that people understand Christian life. Thematic or topical expository teaching in a series can be very helpful for a church to understand what the Bible teaches about a particular subject such as prayer, worship, marriage, the Holy Spirit, etc. Consider offering a topical series in the middle of a long book study or between books.

A teaching style has been modeled and taught at Calvary that is effective in regard to elements of teaching [see, appendix re teacher training materials], but discover who *you* are as a teacher and develop that gift and style. Nevertheless, teachers should help the audience remember the message by identifying a theme [subject], object, using biblical cross-references, support material, and illustrations. Personal short-comings & struggles are easier for people to relate to [be real]. Know your audience. For example, the challenges of jr. high students are different than high school students, and college students have their own unique experiences, etc. Let listeners be challenged and shaped by the truth of God's word in the context of the passage and in the context of their culture. An appropriate hermeneutical question is not simply, what does this text mean? but rather how is the text asking me to change?

Be committed to the Word of God. As Paul said to Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" [2Tim.2:15]. You can be taught how to study and how to teach the Bible but you must choose to remain diligent as a student and teacher of the Bible. Remember to, "Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." [2Tim.4:2].

Finally, it is important to recall that evangelism, worship, community service, and fellowship should not be ignored which will eventually cause the church's demise.

**A Pastor's Perspective:** *as a church planter there is a temptation to want to gather a large following as soon as possible. A "dog and pony show" would seem like a great way to accomplish that goal. For example, invite special guests like a celebrity to share their testimony, an athlete to display their skill, special music, or an epic display [think skate demo, bmx, bungee baptisms, fog machines and light show, etc]. The problem isn't that any of those things are wrong. The problem is that it tends to erode confidence in the Word of God and Spirit to draw people to God. You will tend to think that you need to reach people through some "new" thing. Furthermore, if people were attracted by "the attraction" then you will need to constantly up the ante to keep them interested.*

## **LIFEWOR**

Consider your history as a Bible teacher.

1. What experience do you have teaching verse by verse through a book of the Bible?
2. Assuming you have taught through books of the Bible which did you enjoy the most and why?

## 6. Worship: Music as an Aspect & Expression of Praise & Adoration

This area of ministry will have as much impact on a local church as any. In essence, almost every local church will devote one-third or more of the weekend service time to corporate praise and worship through music. So, it is extremely important to have a comprehensive philosophy of ministry. God designs people to worship. People also need to learn how to worship. The church that teaches people how to experience worship will influence its community for Christ.

**a. What is worship?** Worship is a life transformed by an intimate relationship with God. Worship is a spiritual response to God's truth and Spirit [Jn.14:6; 17:17;4:23-24]. Worship is yielding to the revelation of God through the person of Jesus the Christ [Jn.4:25-26]. Worship is demonstrated in song, prayer, lifestyle, by individuals and an assembly, spontaneously and prearranged. Worship is the stirring by God's Spirit of our spirit, emotion and will. It is a response of the whole person to God [Rom.12:1-2]. We worship God because only He is worthy [Rev.4:1]. Worship should be God-focused, build-up believers, and stir pre-believers to desire a relationship with God. Although worship is much more than expressing praise and adoration through song, music is an excellent means to communicate worship as an assembly.

**b. What is the role of leaders?** Leaders must model worship by their lives to establish a healthy church. Authenticity is a key element to true worship – prepare your heart [Gen.4:1-6; Ps.51:10]. Model and encourage people to participate, rather than passive observation, and give them liberty to express themselves: to sing, stand, sit, kneel, pray, raise their hands, etc. Be passionate and others will follow the lead. Passion does not necessarily mean energetic or upbeat. You can be passionate while singing the blues or contemplative worship songs. Leaders are to help implement the lead pastor's vision not their own agenda. The worship leaders are to learn a philosophy of ministry from the lead pastor and they help to communicate and model that philosophy to the church.

**i. Anyone on the platform will be perceived as a leader.** So, do not put a pre-believer on the platform as a musician or a singer. They may be talented, and you may have a perceived need but they cannot lead people into the presence of God if they have no desire to go there and haven't been there themselves. Remember, we are considering worship not entertainment.

**ii. Finding a worship leader** can be a challenge especially early in the planting process. The ideal is finding someone who is talented and has a heart for God. If someone is talented and has a desire to grow in the Lord you can mentor them, but if they really have no interest in growing in Christ, I would choose someone with a heart for God even if they have "less talent" as a musician.

**iii. Real worship is characterized by the power of the Holy Spirit:** Help people distinguish the emotional energy of an event [e.g. concert, sports, etc.] from the transforming work of the Spirit [2Tim.3:1-5]. When people are experiencing corporate worship as an assembly it can be a very dynamic experience. Leaders need to remind and exhort the assembly that an authentic work of the Spirit will encourage life transformation resulting in God's glory.



**iv. Who selects the songs?** I have never asked a worship leader to select songs that would mirror the teaching theme of the message. It is not that I'm fundamentally opposed to the idea, but because I trust that the worship leaders are seeking God's direction. I expect that God will direct them regarding their song selection as He directs the teaching and want to give the Spirit liberty to direct. On the other hand, if you as a lead pastor feel that you should select songs you have the liberty and authority to do so.

**v. Women as worship leaders:** I'm all for it, but remember that you will be spending a lot of time working together especially in a church plant so create accountability. Also, I do not believe that there is any biblical prohibition from a woman overseeing the worship ministry or sharing devotions with the worship community.

**c. What about conflicts regarding musical style:** Our philosophy values reaching the next generation. If we are going to reach the next generation we will have to embrace contemporary music. Contemporary is a constantly changing standard. So, remind the church of the vision to reach the next generation and the need to remain contemporary. In addition be a wise steward who remembers retains and reveals some of the past. Also, keep in mind that each generation will have their own preferences, and it is not unreasonable to expect new generations to reach back to older forms of worship whether it is classical, ancient/liturgical, choral, hymns, unplugged, a capella, etc.

**Multiple worship teams:** Develop multiple worship teams as quickly as reasonable. This develops variety of expression of worship that ministers to various tastes, and also provides depth in the worship ministry of the church. It also provides a place where people called to minister in worship music can share their gifts.

**d. Excellence:** Encourage leaders to establish and seek high standards. The goal is to keep progressing towards spiritual growth & technical proficiency. Leaders need to be prepared and help their team to be prepared. Team rehearsals and individual practice should be required and members of the worship community should expect to be stretched to grow. Evaluate and adjust frequently by meeting with your worship leader(s) and giving meaningful constructive feedback. Help worship leaders to understand that excellence is not perfection – don't put a yoke of perfection upon the worship team.

**A Pastor's Perspective:** *learn to distinguish competency and authority. As a lead pastor you have authority to choose all the songs, all the members of the worship team, and all the arrangements. Nevertheless, you may not have the competency! In other words, the worship leader may know far more than the lead pastor about music ... so let them make decisions. In essence, give them authority along with the responsibility. Impart to them a philosophy of worship ministry, and give profitable feedback but then let them oversee their ministry.*

*Also, if you as a lead pastor are also a worship leader, musician, or pseudo-musician I would encourage you to remove yourself from the worship ministry as soon as reasonable. When our church was young, I used to play drums on one of the teams. People thought it was cool that their pastor played drums. I thought it was fun and that I could set an example as a worshiper and spiritual leader to the worship team and congregation. If I had to do it all over again, I would not get involved with the worship team for several reasons. First, it distracted me from*

*other more valuable uses of my time as a teacher leader and shepherd. Second, it may have potentially undermined my role as a pastor-teacher. Third, it placed our worship leader in the difficult role of leading and developing a team, and exercising authority over the team with the lead pastor participating in the team.*

## **LIFEWOR**

All of the worship leaders at our church read the book “fruitful worship” to ensure that we are all on the same page regarding a philosophy of worship ministry.

1. Talk with pastors, worship leaders and potential church planters about a recommended book that addresses a philosophy of worship ministry. Once you’ve identified a resource obtain copies for all the church planters to review.
2. Arrange to discuss the book at a later date. If you believe that the book is helpful as a future resource plan to use it with your worship leaders.

## 7. Ministry of the Holy Spirit & Gifts

**a. We believe the gifts of the Spirit are operating in the church today:** Gifts of the Spirit are listed in 1Cor.12, Rom.12, Eph.4:11-12, 1Pet.4:9-11. An extensive amount of space was devoted to the gifts and their use in the church. “Charismatics” or “Pentecostals” believe the gifts are available today. The Bible doesn’t clearly state that the gifts pass away or continue. “Cessationists” believe the gifts ended at the end of the Apostolic age. A passage used to support cessation is 1Cor.13:10, “When that which is perfect has come, that which is in part will be done away.” The Greek word that is translated *perfect* is *teleo* and is often translated as mature or complete. They assert the passage refers to the completion of the New Testament. While charismatics would agree that the New Testament is complete and perfect in every sense, we believe that 1Cor.13:10 likely refers to Jesus’ Second Coming. The problem generally relates to sign gifts: tongues, interpretation, prophecy, healings, miracles; but if we do away with those gifts, we would need to do away with: teaching, leadership, serving, giving, etc. Also it is difficult to effectively determine when exactly did the gifts end? Immediately, one day, one week, one month later, when the New Testament was delivered to Jerusalem?

We believe that the gifts are available today, but we don’t center congregational life on the pursuit of the gifts, instead we focus on the giver. Typically, miracles occurred “in groups” to signal or confirm that God is doing a new thing [e.g. Moses/Joshua, Elijah/Elisha, Jesus and disciples, 2 witnesses of Rev.11]. The miracles validated the message. Thus, there may be occasions where gifts were displayed in greater frequency and intensity to confirm God’s dealings [e.g. Azusa St. revival, Jesus Movement]. Nevertheless, we must be on guard re abuses and counterfeits that don’t bring glory to God.

**b. We need the Holy Spirit to empower us:** It is the power of the Spirit through the Word which brings about true change in people. Jesus instructed the apostles that they needed the power of the Holy Spirit to effectively live the Christian Life and represent Him. When the Spirit empowered the church an epic transformation was manifest [Acts 2]. The church needs to find balance regarding the Word and Spirit. If we neglect the Spirit we dry up, and if we neglect the Word we blow up. Yet, if we find the balance we grow up.

When were the disciples saved in a New Testament sense? For three years, the twelve had related to Jesus as Messiah in an Old Testament sense: they had identified Jesus as Messiah, believed in His words and works and yielded their lives as they followed Him. After the Resurrection, Jesus gathered with His disciples, commissioned them, then He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” It was at that moment that they were saved in a New Testament sense ~ the Holy Spirit was now *in* them [Jn.20:22]. Yet, they were instructed to wait in Jerusalem until they received the Promise of the Father – the baptism of the Holy Spirit to empower them [Lu.24:49, Ac.1:5-8].

**c. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is distinct from salvation:** The baptism of the Holy Spirit empowers believers with gifts for Christian service. Jesus described three relationships between a person and God’s Spirit. First, the Spirit is *with* a person to bring them to Christ [John 14:17]. Second, the Spirit comes *in* a person when they yield to Christ [John 14:17, 1Cor.6:19-20]. Third, the Holy Spirit comes *upon* a believer to empower them for Christian living and service [Ac.1:5-

8]. This relationship is referred to as the baptism or filling of the Holy Spirit [Ac.1:5-8, Ac.2:4, Eph.5:18].

Jesus described this relationship as an overflowing of the Holy Spirit when on the great day of the Feast of Tabernacles, He stood and cried out to the multitude, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified [Jn.7:37-39]. The filling of the Spirit would be like rivers, a torrent, of living water flowing out of the life of the believer. Jesus was distinguishing the Spirit being poured into your life from the experience of the Spirit overflowing out of your life.

**i. The baptism can be same time as salvation or subsequent to:** In Acts 2 and 10 the baptism of the Spirit occurred at the same time as salvation for Jews at Pentecost and Gentiles at the house of Cornelius. On the other hand, it happened after salvation for the Samaritans [Ac.8], the apostle Paul [Ac.9] and at Ephesus [Ac.19].

**ii. The baptism of the Spirit and tongues:** The baptism of the Spirit is often associated with tongues but it is not limited to imparting the gift of tongues. Tongues are not necessary for salvation [1Cor.14:5]. Tongues is not the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

**d. Spiritual gifts are to be exercised in order:** Balance is the key concept as Paul sets forth guidelines for the use of the gifts. The limits are intended to avoid confusion and build-up believers [1Cor. 14:26, 33, 40]. The Holy Spirit does not interrupt Himself – so we don't want people standing up in the middle of the teaching and declaring, "Thus says the Lord ..." unless it's the teacher.

**Pneuma:** Believer meetings [afterglows] provide a forum for people to exercise sign gifts such as tongues, interpretation of tongues and prophecy, and to seek the filling of the Spirit. We've tried them at various times such as Sunday nights, and once a month during our normal mid-week Bible study, and after our mid-week study. My experience is that trying to offer the pneuma when people generally expect a Bible-study is ineffective because of the crowd that is drawn. Also, mid-week, after a study, can simply be too late for the majority of people's schedules. Lately, we're experimenting with a prayer-worship experience on a quarterly basis. I confess that I would like to see more of the gifts sought and exercised in our body and want to insure that we abide in our charismatic roots.

**A Pastor's Perspective:** *one of my biggest challenges in the last 20 years is to find the "right" balance between the work of the Spirit and the Word. In our movement we place on premium on teaching, and although that is clearly to be a Spirit-led activity, it can sometimes seem more intellectual than spiritual. I want to make sure that we don't neglect our experience with the fullness of the work of the Holy Spirit. So, as noted above, I want to create opportunities through the pneuma [believer meeting or afterglow] as well as regularly offering teaching on the work of the Holy Spirit and the availability and use of gifts in the Christian life. I confess that I struggle to find the right balance.*

## **LIFEWOR**

Consider attending a service at a church that is “hyper-pentecostal” and one that believes the gifts ceased at the end of the first century. Compare the experience with the services at a Calvary.

1. In what ways were they different?
2. In what ways were they the same?

## 8. Church Government

**a. The NT does not clearly establish a model of church government:** Church government helps to establish and maintain biblical order, authority, accountability and effectiveness. There are theological arguments that can be made to support the pastor or elder led model. There is less support for a congregational model of authority [no positive model - Num.16 Rebellion of Korah; 1Sam.11-12 desire for a king & rejection of theocracy]. Yet, the Bible likely allows liberty in the form of church government. Let's consider some forms of government:

**b. Denominational control:** A biblical example as seen in Ac.15 in regard to the Jerusalem council. There the decision from Jerusalem was to guide and direct churches in other areas. This form is referred to as Episcopalian, flowing from *episkopos* often translated bishop.

**c. Elder rule:** This is the Presbyterian form coming from the Greek *presbuteros* translated elder. A reference to elder rule can be seen in 1Pet.5:1-5. In this model the elder board leads and directs and the pastor is subject to the board, performing ministry at their direction. In most situations pastors are best qualified to lead not because they are more intelligent but because of the time they spend immersing themselves in the church's ministry on a full-time basis, and their training for ministry. Most pastors will ultimately spend 50, 60 or more hours per week serving in ministry and most elders spend less than 10 hours a week.

**d. Theocracy: this is the model we adopt,** The concept relates to God's leading of His people. In the OT God ruled the nation of Israel, in its inception, as a theocracy. In this model, God spoke and directed Moses who was assisted by and accountable to 70 elders [Ex.18]. Aaron and the priests assisted Moses in ministering to the people and the Lord. In the NT model Jesus is the Head of the Church [Eph.5:23, Mt.16:18] who raises up pastors who then appoint elders to assist and establish accountability [1Tim.3:1, Titus 1:5]. Pastors and elders form a plurality of leaders, the lead pastor serves as an elder and is first among equals. Other elders may be paid staff or volunteers. The lead pastor is the primary visionary but is not the only decision maker of the church, thereby avoiding potential for abuse of authority. The lead pastor is the leader of the board but looks to church board to share in tasks of leadership and decision making [Ac.14:23, 20:17, 1Pet.5:1-5].

### e. The roles of various leaders and boards ~

**i. Communicate to the church the model of government:** The lead pastor should communicate the model to the core group, and later to the church, and the congregation should allow its leaders to direct the affairs of the church.

**ii. Board of Directors [AKA Elder board]:** These are the people empowered and authorized to vote on significant issues that impact the implementation of the short and long-term vision. Board members must meet all the qualifications for elders described in 1Tim.3 and Titus1. Although they must meet the character requirements they do not need to function in the office of elder described below. They decide major decisions impacting the church as contrast with day-to-day operations. Although most board decisions simply require a majority decision I urge you to seek unanimity. Unanimous decisions often reflect the unity of the Spirit. Our board is made up from an even number of pastoral types and business

types with the lead pastor acting as the president of the board and creating an odd number of board members.

**iii. Pastors:** Pastors care for the spiritual needs and development of the body as they help to shape and implement the church's vision. They have met the qualifications for ordination. Their opinions are not binding, unless they sit on the board, however I strongly urge you to seek and consider their counsel as they are generally most familiar with the operation of the church and ministry in general.

**iv. Elders & Deacons:** Again these people must meet the requirements per 1Tim.3, Titus1, and Acts 6. As mentioned earlier, women can be deacons but we do not recognize women as elders. Elders and deacons oversee, or assist in the oversight of various ministries of the church. They shape and implement the vision of specific areas of ministry and provide insight and counsel regarding the overall church vision. Although their opinions are not binding authority it is wise to seek and consider their counsel.

**v. Financial advisory board:** These are believers who are business savvy as a result of education and/or experience, entrepreneurial, and able to think strategically. They advise the lead pastor and/or board of directors to assist in developing the church's short and long-term strategic plan. Their business expertise can be invaluable and can offer clarity [as well as providing an opportunity for these leaders to have significance in advancing God's kingdom]. The board members do not have binding authority but advise re financial matters likely to influence the church.

**vi. Staff:** Help to implement the vision and can include various directors, assistants, and administrative support [in addition to pastor(s)]. Since they are working in the church for many hours each week they have great insights and their opinions should be sought and considered as the vision is contemplated.

**A Pastor's Perspective:** *the concept of church government relates to authority and the decision making process. In practice, when there are matters that are likely to have significant impact on the church such as our short or long term vision [strategic plan] I generally use the following approach: First, I share the idea with our fellow staff pastors, and since we have multiple pastors, it is generally the assistant and executive first, and then the associates. After receiving input from the pastors, I'll share with the staff and then elders and deacons. Once I have gleaned their insights, I'll present to the financial advisory board for review. Finally, the refined vision is shared with the Board of Directors for a formal vote. The process allows various leaders to share their perspectives, offer insights that I failed to consider, and creates consensus among us as we move forward.*

## 9. Attitude of Grace

There is a tension as local churches try to effectively carry out the mandate to see people restored in their relationship with God. There are some local churches that seem very harsh inflexible legalistic and create apparent roadblocks to repentance and restoration that go beyond the Scriptures. On the other hand, there are some local churches that seem to be very loving but are liberal and lack standards so that restoration is offered without a clear biblical understanding of prerequisites. We want to balance the tension by being a church that manifests an attitude of grace. All our doctrinal orthodoxy and understanding of Scriptures are of no value without love [1Cor.13:1-8]. If we love one another as Jesus loves then the world will know that we are His disciples [Jn.13:34-35]. Biblical grace manifests Christ's love as follows:

**a. Compassion without compromise:** Grace is more than politeness or some nebulous emotion. Grace relates to an attitude of unmerited favor that flows from recognition of God's grace towards us as sinners. Compassion without compromise requires you to avoid legalism and liberalism. This is the example of Jesus to the woman caught in adultery, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more" [Jn.8:11]; and Peter's restoration following his denial of Jesus [Jn.21:15-17]. It is also the attitude we are to show one another in light of God's forgiveness of us [Eph.4:32]. Compassion and grace help to reduce hypocrisy and create authenticity, as people will be less afraid to receive restoration.

**b. Restore with a spirit of gentleness:** We are to restore others with a spirit of gentleness and humility [Gal.6:1-3]. The whole message of Scripture from Genesis 3 to Revelation is God's desire to restore fellowship between God and man. Minister grace by creating an environment where people know that God accepts them in Christ; but once they yield to God in Christ they need to seek to apply the truth of Christ to their lives. Apply the truth as a soothing balm, not explosive bomb. In seeking to be gracious don't compromise the integrity of the Word or you'll bring reproach to Jesus.

Imagine Jesus washing the disciples feet [Jn.13]. They had engaged in ceremonial baths in Jerusalem to prepare for the Passover but walked in open sandals on dirt roads to the Upper Room. The water was not too hot or cold and Jesus did not rub their feet so hard that He began to remove skin or so soft that He left dirt on their feet. The right amount of heat and pressure for the situation is our goal.

**c. Church discipline and grace:** Our God is the God of second chances [and sometimes third, fourth, etc.]. Jesus admonished Peter that extensive grace and forgiveness was available so that relationship with God and others could be restored. The rabbinical view of Jesus' day was to forgive up to three times. Peter thought he was being gracious when he suggested forgiving up to seven times, however Jesus urged seventy times seven. He wasn't setting a numerical limit of 490 but rather implies don't bother counting. If someone repents let them be restored into fellowship [Matt.18:21-22].

**i. Grace is balanced by discipline** and the need for repentance [Mt.18:15-18]. If someone refuses to repent of their sin after being confronted by the one they have sinned against and other witnesses then you'll need to consider informing the church,



especially if the sin is threatening to the spiritual health of the whole. The ultimate sanction of excommunication or removal from the church [Mt.18:15-18, 1Cor.5:1-8] should never be used capriciously and should be used judiciously. Removing someone from the church implies that as a pastor in a position of spiritual authority you are asking God to withdraw His protection from that person until they repent.

**ii. Grace & restoration of authority:** When someone is removed from a position of authority because of moral failure the issue arises as to when and if the one disqualified can be restored. Preliminarily, don't remove someone without evidence to support the charges, and don't assume someone is either guilty or innocent without considering the evidence – be impartial [1Tim.5:19-21]. Once someone is removed, the Bible gives no clear time limit re restoration [any guidelines suggesting 6 months, one year, 2 years or never is man-made and suspect at best]. Paul urges Timothy and us not to lay hands suddenly [1Tim.5:22]. In context it appears that the passage deals with restoring authority more than the initial conferring of authority.

I believe the best guideline is uttered by John the Baptist, “therefore bear fruit worthy of repentance” [Mt.3:8]. In essence, you need to wait long enough to ensure that genuine repentance has taken place as evidenced by the fruit of their life. At some point, you'll need to make a decision re timing and I suggest you err on the side of grace. Certainly, there will be times that you'll discover that you were wrong but generally you can't “go wrong” in seeking to be gracious.

**iii. Grace & boundaries:** Grace doesn't mean an absence of boundaries. Reasonable boundaries are essential to the Christian life and a healthy church. For example, if someone was convicted for a sex crime against a minor it is likely reasonable that they can serve in the church but not with children or youth. Furthermore, the greater the person's influence the greater the need for caution. Thus, a lead pastor who has committed adultery likely needs to be proven while serving under the authority of others for an extended period.

**A Pastor's Perspective:** *I've had multiple experiences where a person in the church has committed sexual sin involving a minor. For example, a young man age nineteen has sex with a seventeen-year-old girl and her parents call the police. The man ends up with a conviction record and now is part of an Internet registry of “sex-offenders.” He subsequently comes to Christ, repents and has led an exemplary life for the past decade. He now wants to become involved in the ministry of the church. I will welcome him with open arms, although I will set what I believe to be a reasonable boundary in that he will not be allowed to serve in the children's or youth ministries. Inevitably, some well-meaning person in the church knows that he is a registered sex offender and objects to him being involved in ministry. Although I'm confident that the “objector” will gossip and tend to cause division in an effort to rally people to their position if I do not acquiesce, I won't back down from the position of grace. Instead, I'll use the opportunity to teach grace to the offender, the objector and the whole church if necessary. To date, I've never regretted a stand for grace.*

## **LIFEWORk**

Imagine an elder contacts you to confess that he has been tempted by pornography in the past. He has experienced more than ten years of victory over temptation to pornography with the exception of a single incident two years before, and another incident six weeks ago. He has confessed, repented, and is receiving biblical counseling as part of his recovery. He doesn't want to bring reproach to the Lord or the church, and thinks he may need to step-down if that is what you want.

1. Discuss how you would respond.

## 10. Systematic Theology

**a. What is a dispensational system of theology?** We follow a dispensational system of theology, which is contrast below with the reform or covenant system. **Dispensationalism** is a system of theology that has **two primary distinctives. 1) a consistently literal interpretation of Scripture, especially Bible prophecy. 2) a distinction between Israel and the church in God's program.** Dispensationalists claim that their principle of hermeneutics is that of literal interpretation, which means giving each word the meaning it would commonly have in everyday usage. Symbols, figures of speech and types are all interpreted plainly in this method, and this is in no way contrary to literal interpretation. Even symbols and figurative sayings have literal meanings behind them. **There are at least three reasons why this is the best way to view Scripture.** First, philosophically, the purpose of language itself seems to require that we interpret it literally. Language was given by God for the purpose of being able to communicate with man. The second reason is biblical. Every prophecy about Jesus Christ in the Old Testament was fulfilled literally. Jesus' birth, Jesus' ministry, Jesus' death, and Jesus' resurrection all occurred exactly and literally as the Old Testament predicted. There is no non-literal fulfillment of these prophecies in the New Testament. This argues strongly for the literal method. Third, if literal interpretation is not used in studying the Scriptures, there is no objective standard by which to understand the Bible. Each and every person would be able to interpret the Bible as he saw fit. Biblical interpretation would devolve into “what this passage says to me...” instead of “the Bible says...” Sadly, this is already the case in much of what is called biblical interpretation today.

**Dispensational theology teaches that there are two distinct peoples of God: Israel and the church.** Dispensationalists believe that salvation has always been by faith—in God in the Old Testament and specifically in God the Son in the New Testament. Dispensationalists hold that the church has not replaced Israel in God’s program and the Old Testament promises to Israel have not been transferred to the church. They believe that the promises God made to Israel (for land, many descendants, and blessings) in the Old Testament will be ultimately fulfilled in the 1000-year period spoken of in Revelation chapter 20. Dispensationalists believe that just as God is in this age focusing His attention on the church, He will again in the future focus His attention on Israel (Romans 9-11). Using this system as a basis, some dispensationalists understand the Bible to be organized into **seven dispensations: Innocence (Genesis 1:1–3:7), conscience (Genesis 3:8–8:22), human government (Genesis 9:1–11:32), promise (Genesis 12:1–Exodus 19:25), law (Exodus 20:1–Acts 2:4), grace (Acts 2:4–Revelation 20:3), and the millennial kingdom (Revelation 20:4-6).** *Again, these dispensations are not paths to salvation, but manners in which God relates to man.* Dispensationalism, as a system, results in a **premillennial interpretation of Christ’s second coming and usually a pretribulational interpretation of the rapture.**

**b. What is the difference between covenant vs. dispensational theology?** **Dispensational theology** essentially sees the Scriptures unfolding in a series of “dispensations.” A dispensation can be loosely defined as the means through which God governs his actions with man and creation. Dispensational theology views the revelation as progressive, i.e., in each dispensation, God reveals more and more of His divine plan of redemption. The thing to remember with

dispensational theology is that there is a sharp distinction between Israel and the Church. They are two different people with two different destinies in God's economy. The Church is seen as a 'parenthesis' between God's dealings with national Israel. The restored kingdom promised to Israel will be fulfilled in the Millennium. Until then is the Church Age—the time of the Gentiles.

**Covenant theology is effectively the polar opposite of dispensational theology.** *While both agree that Scripture is progressive, the overarching principle of covenant theology is the covenant. Covenant theology sees two theological covenants in Scripture—the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.* **The covenant of works** was introduced in the Garden between God and man in which God promised mankind life for obedience and judgment for disobedience. The covenant of works was re-introduced at Sinai as God promised Israel long life and blessing in the land upon on the condition of their obedience to the Mosaic covenant, but expulsion and judgment in the event of their disobedience. **The covenant of grace** was implemented after the fall and represents God's unconditional covenant with man to redeem and save the elect. All of the various biblical covenants (Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and the New) are out-workings of the covenant of grace as God works His plan of redemption in human history. So where dispensational theology saw a discontinuity between the various dispensations (and in particular between the Old and the New Testaments), covenant theology sees a great deal of continuity. This is especially evident in the fact that covenant theology does not see a sharp distinction between Israel and the Church. Both entities are seen as one continuous people of God with one ultimate destiny. All of that serves as the backdrop to view new covenant theology. New covenant theology is a middle point between the two. It shares a lot in common with classic covenant theology, in particular the continuity between the Church and Israel as being one people of God. However, it also differs with covenant theology in that it does not necessarily view the Scriptures as the unfolding of redemption in a covenant of works/covenant of grace framework. Instead it sees the Scriptures in a more promise/fulfillment paradigm.

**New covenant theology** is best described as a hermeneutical principle, or an interpretative grid through which one reads and interprets the Scriptures. As a hermeneutical principle, it stands as a bridge between **dispensational theology** and **covenant [reform] theology**. That is not to say that new covenant theology has intentionally set itself up between dispensational theology and covenant theology, but that new covenant theology shares things in common with both dispensational and covenant theology. As such, we cannot say what new covenant theology is without reference to dispensational theology or covenant theology.

By far the biggest difference between new covenant theology and covenant theology is how each views the Mosaic Law. Covenant theology sees the Law in three ways: civil, ceremonial and moral. The civil aspect of the Law was those laws in the covenant of Sinai which governed the theocratic nation of Israel while they live in the Promised Land. The ceremonial aspect of the Law governed the worship of God by Israel while in the land. Finally, the moral aspect of the Law governed the behavior of God's people. It should be understood that the Law, in and of itself, is one cohesive whole and that the Jews did not delineate between civil, ceremonial and moral; these are just terms used to help identify the three areas of Israelite life that the Mosaic Law governed.

According to classic covenant theology, Jesus came to fulfill the Law (Matthew 5:17). He did so by satisfying all of the ceremonial, civil and moral aspects of the Law. Jesus Christ is the reality behind the shadows of the Old Testament sacrificial system and thereby fulfills the ceremonial aspect of the Law. Jesus Christ also bore the penalty our sins deserved and thereby fulfilled the civil aspect of the Law. Finally, Jesus Christ lived in full accordance with the moral aspect of the Law and fulfilled the righteous requirements of the Law. Now the moral aspect of the Law represents the essence of the covenant of works. As such, it transcends the Mosaic economy. In other words, God has always required holiness from humanity. The covenant of works was not negated due to the fall, nor was it negated even though it was fulfilled in Christ. The moral aspect of the Law still stands as the standard of morality for mankind because it is reflective of God's character, and that does not change. *Therefore, covenant theology still sees the Mosaic Law (especially the Ten Commandments) as prescriptive for the Church, even though the ceremonial and civil aspects have been rendered obsolete in Christ.*

New covenant theology sees the Mosaic Law as a whole and sees it all fulfilled in Christ (so far in agreement with covenant theology). However, because new covenant theology sees the Mosaic Law as a whole it also sees the moral aspect of the Mosaic Law as fulfilled in Christ and no longer applying to Christians. Instead of being under the moral aspect of the Mosaic Law as summarized in the Ten Commandments, we are under the law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21). The law of Christ would be those prescriptions that Christ specifically stated in the Gospels (e.g., the Sermon on the Mount). *In other words, the entire Mosaic economy has been set aside in new covenant theology; it no longer applies in any way to Christians.* So while new covenant theology sees a continuity between the Old and New Testaments in regards to God's people and the way of salvation, new covenant theology draws a rather sharp line of distinction between the Old and New Testaments when it comes to the difference between the old Mosaic covenant and the new covenant mediated by Christ. The old covenant is obsolete (including the moral aspect of the Mosaic Law) and replaced by the new covenant with the law of Christ to govern its morality.

**c. What is the difference Calvinism vs. Arminianism?** Calvinism and Arminianism are two systems of theology that attempt to explain the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in the **matter of salvation**. Calvinism is named for John Calvin, a French theologian who lived from 1509-1564. Arminianism is named for Jacobus Arminius, a Dutch theologian who lived from 1560-1609. Both systems can be **summarized with five points**.

1. Calvinism holds to the **total depravity** of man while Arminianism holds to partial depravity. Total depravity states that every aspect of humanity is tainted by sin; therefore, human beings are unable to come to God on their own accord. Partial depravity states that every aspect of humanity is tainted by sin, but not to the extent that human beings are unable to place faith in God of their own accord. Note: classical Arminianism rejects "partial depravity" and holds a view very close to Calvinistic "total depravity."
2. Calvinism includes the belief in **unconditional election**, while Arminianism believes in conditional election. Unconditional election is the view that God elects individuals to salvation based entirely on His will, not on anything inherently worthy in the individual. Conditional election states that God elects individuals to salvation based on His

foreknowledge of who will believe in Christ unto salvation, thereby on the condition that the individual chooses God.

3. Calvinism sees **limited atonement**, while Arminianism sees it as unlimited. This is the most controversial of the five points. Limited atonement is the belief that Jesus only died for the elect. Unlimited atonement is the belief that Jesus died for all, but that His death is not effectual until a person receives Him by faith.

4. Calvinism includes the belief in **irresistible grace**, while Arminianism says that an individual can resist the grace of God. Irresistible grace argues that when God calls a person to salvation, that person will inevitably come to salvation. Resistible grace states that God calls all to salvation, but that many people resist and reject this call.

5. Calvinism holds to **perseverance** of the saints while Arminianism holds to conditional salvation. Perseverance of the saints refers to the concept that a person who is elected by God will persevere in faith and will not permanently deny Christ or turn away from Him. Conditional salvation is the view that a believer in Christ can, of his/her own free will, turn away from Christ and thereby lose salvation. Note: many Arminians deny "conditional salvation" and instead hold to "eternal security."

**Conclusion:** So, in the Calvinism vs. Arminianism debate, who is correct? It is interesting to note that in the diversity of the body of Christ, there are all sorts of mixtures of Calvinism and Arminianism. There are five-point Calvinists and five-point Arminians, and at the same time three-point Calvinists and two-point Arminians. Many believers arrive at some sort of mixture of the two views. **Ultimately, it is our view that both systems fail in that they attempt to explain the unexplainable.** Human beings are incapable of fully grasping a concept such as this. Yes, God is absolutely sovereign and knows all. Yes, human beings are called to make a genuine decision to place faith in Christ unto salvation. These two facts seem contradictory to us, but in the mind of God they make perfect sense. The Scriptures teach both the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. If you take either of these positions to an extreme, to the denying of the other, you're likely to have problems.

**d. End times:** The dispensational system results in a **premillennial interpretation of Christ's second coming and usually a pretribulational interpretation of the rapture.**

**e. Pre-trib rapture:** Jesus promised that He would come again for His disciples so that where He is we shall be also [Jn.14:1-3]. The concept of the rapture is described in 1Th.4:17 where the living church is "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air so that we shall ever be with the Jesus. In Jerome's Latin translation, the Vulgate, the Latin translation of the Greek *harpazo* is *raptuse* which yields our English rapture. While we recognize there are differing views regarding the timing we believe the best evidence supports a pre-trib rapture. In essence, the church is delivered prior to the seven year Great Tribulation described in Revelation 6-19. Keep in mind the Rapture is not the same as 2<sup>nd</sup> coming [Mt.24] at the end the Tribulation.

Date-setting: no one knows the day or the hour however Jesus urged us to know the "Season" [Mt. 24:32-35 parable of the fig tree] or prophetic signs leading to His return. Why do we hold the view of a pre-trib rapture:

**i. The church is not appointed to wrath (God's judgment) [1Th.1:10,5:1-9].** God will not judge the righteous with the wicked [2Pet.2:5].

**ii. Attitude of expectancy:** The exhortations to watch and be ready for His imminent return. We are told that Jesus comes as a thief in the night - unexpected, imminent. In the Olivet discourse [Mt.25] Jesus told a series of parables. The moral of each is to watch and be ready for His return at any time. The theme is, "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming" [Mt.24:42]. Paul, echoes the theme to the church at Thessalonica [1Th.5:1-4]. If the Lord would not return until the middle or end of the Great Tribulation then His return would not be unexpected. It appears to be God's plan that every generation live in constant expectation of His imminent return.

**iii. Revelation 4-6:** Rev.4:4 the 24 elders as representatives of the church, are present in heaven before the Great Tribulation. In Rev.5 as Jesus receives the title deed to the earth the 24 elders sing a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; or You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." Only the church can sing the song of redemption. The chronology shows the church in heaven before God's throne prior to the Great tribulation beginning in Rev.6.

**iv. OT types:** Lot was removed before judgment of Sodom [Gen.18:23-19:25; 2Pet.2:7-9]; Enoch [Gen.5:24] and Elijah [2Ki.2:1-11] were "raptured" before judgment, and Daniel was gone as 3 Hebrews were cast into fire [Dan.3].

**f. Israel and prophecy:** Most end times problems occur when we replace Israel and the Church in passages. God is not through with Israel [Dan. 9-12. Romans 9-11]. In 1948 the nation state of Israel was established and this appears to be a key event in Biblical prophecy. Israel [the Jewish people who have yet to receive Christ] goes through the Tribulation not the Church. Noah and Daniel's 3 friends are a picture of Israel preserved.

**g. Arguments used to support the view that the church is present during the Tribulation:**

**i. The Last Trumpet:** Some assert the last trumpet in 1Cor.15:51-52 is related to the seven trumpet judgments of Revelation, however the trumpet of the Rapture is sounded by God [1Cor 15:51-52, 1Th.4:16], whereas the trumpets of judgment are sounded by angels [Rev.8:13].

**ii. Martyrs Rev.20:4-5:** The martyrs that John sees and describes in heaven are tribulation saints not the church [Rev.7:13-14].

**iii. The gathering of the elect Mt.24:29-31:** Immediately after the tribulation Jesus gathers His elect. Although the church is frequently referred to as God's elect, the Jews/Israel are also described as the elect. Here, the promise relates to Israel, not the church [Is.11:12].

**iv. Antichrist makes war against the saints Dan.7:21, Rev.13:7:** Since the Antichrist prevails against them they are not the church [Mt.16:18] but are tribulation saints [i.e. those who come to Christ during the tribulation].

**h. Practical implications of a pre-trib perspective:** First, the expectation that Jesus could come at any time creates an urgency for the work of ministry to reach the lost as quickly as possible. Second, It helps to create a proper perspective of material blessings. We won't cling as tightly to the things of the world if we believe we can leave this world at any moment. Third, it helps to establish and maintain purity in our lives [Mt.24:46, 1Jn.3:2-3]. We believe that the Lord is coming soon, "And *do* this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed [Rom.13:11].

**i. Descriptive vs. prescriptive hermeneutic:** There are some passages that describe how the church functioned but they do not necessarily prescribe how the church must function. For example the church at Troas [Ac.20:7-12] met on Sunday and they broke bread [presumably the Lord's Supper]. This describes what they did but does not necessarily mandate that the church must meet on Sunday, as opposed to Saturday or any other day. Nor does it require the church to partake of communion every Sunday when it gathers.

**j. The negative vs. positive hermeneutic:** Simply because a practice isn't mentioned in the Bible doesn't mean the early church didn't do it or that the church today shouldn't do it. As long as a practice doesn't violate a clear biblical principle then God has given you freedom to do it or not.

**A Pastor's Perspective:** *in my experience there are too many pastors who dislike systematic theology. I'm not suggesting that we reduce our relationship with God to an intellectual exercise or pursuit and neglect the spiritual essence of our relationship. However, if we are not familiar with the significant issues described in this section and able to discuss them with a relative degree of comfort it will likely undermine our credibility with any serious student of the nature of God – theology. Furthermore, those we teach will also be less equipped to discuss what they believe and why they believe it. Let us be prepared to discuss systematic theology issues with gentleness and respect with those who are curious [1Pet.3:15], and be discerning so that we can avoid foolish disputes with those who simply want to argue or debate [2Tim.2:23].*

## **LIFEWORk**

1. Read and reread this section on systematic theology. Be prepared to ask questions at your next meeting.
2. If you have not already read Henry Thiessen's, "Lectures on Systematic Theology" begin to read and finish the book within four months.



## 11. Reaching the Next Generation

**a. The problem:** Francis Schaeffer observed, “Not being able to change, to change under the Holy Spirit, is ugly. The same applies to church polity and practice. In a rapidly changing age like ours, an age of total upheaval like ours, to make non-absolutes absolutes guarantees both isolation and the death of the institutional and organized church.” Change and transformation are at the very heart of the gospel. Change and transformation are evidence of spiritual growth. Yet, people and organizations resist change. Too many churches yield to the pressure of the change resisters and lose their spiritual edge and ministry. Here are some ways to reach the next generation:

**b. Be culturally relevant:** How can the church relate to contemporary culture & contextualize the gospel in that setting? Understand the culture you are trying to reach [missional]. The truth of the Bible doesn’t change but how the church communicates and implements the faith must change from generation to generation, & from culture to culture to be effective and relevant. Every church is affected to some degree by the culture of its community. Answer the implied question, “why would this next generation want to go to church?”

**c. Continually evaluate the culture & the ministry:** To remain relevant and reach each generation with the tools of that generation you must regularly evaluate. The men of Issachar who joined David in his battle with Saul were described as, “those who understood the times and knew what Israel should do” [1Ch.12:32]. There is an ongoing need to evaluate in order to understand the times. Similarly, at Corinth, Paul sought to be sensitive to what was happening in the culture for the purpose of gaining/winning souls for Jesus [5x “I might win”]. Paul became: a servant, as a Jew, as a Gentile, as weak – ie. willing to accommodate self to Scripture to avoid stumbling another [1Cor.9:19-22]. a healthy church is flexible in areas of culture and Christian liberty but does not compromise biblical truth. Be flexible: able to change without becoming an old wineskin, while still maintaining stability.

**d. Emerging cultures:** Postmoderns are pluralistic but the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Roman Empire was much more pluralistic than North America today. **Characteristics of today’s postmoderns:**

**i. Denial of personal objectivity** [I do believe in God, but that’s how I was raised. No one can know for sure].

**ii. Knowledge is uncertain** [the government says smoking is bad but who really knows for sure].

**iii. Absolute truth is replaced by relative truth** [if religion works for you ... that’s great].

**iv. Tolerance is the mantra** [unless there is a claim of absolute truth].

**v. General cynicism** [the Bible will not be accepted as authority until they see how it applies to them].

**vi. Rejection of meta-narratives for mini-narratives** [cf. every culture has an ideal of how things should be, that there is a problem(s), & seeks solutions].

**e. Characteristics of churches that are effectively reaching postmoderns:**

**i. Not ashamed for passionate love for Jesus:** C.S. Lewis, “the great difficulty is to get modern audiences to realize that you are preaching Christianity solely and simply because you happen to think it is true; they always suppose you are preaching it because you like it or think it is good for society or something of that sort.”

**ii. Promote incarnational ministry:** Realize that postmoderns are on a spiritual search & go to them & engage in daily life like Jesus [enter the culture]

**iii. Engage in service:** Community service

**iv. Participatory & experiential praise:** Model vulnerability & awareness of God

**v. Expository teaching:** [especially narratives]

**vi. Connect with tech:**

**vii. Live community:** Develop trust & intimacy over time; use community groups that stay together for years not months; postmoderns may want to get to know the people of God before wanting to get to know God. Help people experience Christian life as a journey/process in relationship with others.

**viii. Lead by transparency & team** [authenticity is key] Don't seek to entertain but to engage, connect with people by letting them know you're seeking to follow Jesus too & you're not always successful

**ix. Casual and fresh style:** Casual atmosphere but respectful of God. Things feel fresh: change is welcomed and the organization is loose and flexible.

**x. Generation integration:** Balance youth and experience to create generation integration. Look for and develop future leaders who display integrity and character and challenge and empower them. Let them make a difference control their destinies and participate. Youth are not simply future leaders but are up front and behind the scenes leading and directing the church.

**A Pastor's Perspective:** *Preliminarily, there is nothing wrong with focusing on an older generation. Nevertheless, I really value reaching the next generation and so our church invests time, money and vision to reaching youth and young adults. I try to avoid acting like a hipster to try to attract young people and seek to be authentic. Our staff has generation integration, and I'm regularly monitoring the demographic mix of our congregation to evaluate whether we are reaching young people. Nevertheless, I know that there will come a time when I'm unable to reach 20-somethings effectively. By raising up young men as Bible teachers and providing opportunity for them to teach regularly we are more likely be effective in reaching the next generation. Also, I've surrounded myself with leaders who I respect who I've entrusted with the responsibility to help me realize when I'm not being effective in reaching the next generation so that my role can change for the good of the church and the kingdom. It's a scary proposition but I believe it is healthy if we intend to reach the next generation.*

## **LIFEWOR**

Consider the demographics of your current church.

1. How is the next generation represented?
2. How could your current church more effectively reach the next generation?

## 12. Mission of Outreach & Evangelism:

As roses at the edge of vineyards provide insight re health of vines, so do various factors reflect on health of church: Western Europe has gone from a primarily Christian region to less than 10% claiming to be church-ed today. Per Floyd Bartel in his book "A New Look at Church Growth" 95% of all Christians in North America will not win one person to Christ in their lifetime. Many Christians have no idea how to relate to the unchurched or to pre-believers. Many are isolated from, uncomfortable with, and unreasonably expect pre-believers to act like mature believers. What are some key lessons:

**a. Jesus' example & mission:** Jesus' mission was declared as follows, "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" [Lu.19:10]. In context, Jesus was passing through Jericho when he encountered Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector who acquired great wealth by extorting his fellow Jews and was hated in his community. Remarkably, Jesus invites himself to eat at Zacchaeus' home. The religious leaders scorned Jesus, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner." The charge was true – apparently no one is too bad for Jesus as He reaches out to the last lost and least. Jesus understands that no one is as bad as they could be and no one is as good as they should be – all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God [Rom.3:23]. During the meal, Jesus declared, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham." Zacchaeus had manifested a desire to repent and yield to God. Luke however does not record for us what Jesus had said during the meal or what dialogue took place between the Lord and Zacchaeus, but it is reasonable to make a few assumptions. First, Zacchaeus realized that God desires a relationship with him. Jesus took the initiative to reach out to him. Second, he understood that although God loved him and desired a relationship that his actions of exploitation and the accompanying attitudes were wrong and were an obstacle to a relationship with God, and thus he needed to repent. Third, during the course of the meal he came to the awareness that Jesus was in fact the Messiah.

Jesus commissioned His disciples with the words, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." Not only were they being sent, but sent to go as Jesus.

**i. Be relational:** Spend time with and get to know lost people [Lu.5:29-32, Lu.19:7-8, Mt.9:9-13 – ate with & associated with sinners]. It involves a sacrifice of time, listening, an awareness of another culture and likely some discomfort. It requires prayer to constantly align our heart with God's, and certain desperation to fulfill Christ's mission.

**ii. Compassion:** Jesus looked at the multitudes of people and was moved with compassion for they were like sheep without a shepherd – vulnerable, likely to get lost, and unable to adequately care for themselves in the midst of wolves. And so He began to teach them many things about God. Then he miraculously multiplied loaves and fish so that His disciples could feed the massive crowd. Prior to having the disciples feed the multitudes He instructed them to gather in smaller groups. So, the disciples were no longer serving an impersonal multitude but were engaging individuals. Compassion flows when we see people's individual needs [Mk.6:34-44]. Care for physical needs to enhance opportunities to care for spiritual needs.

**b. Paul at Mars Hill [Ac.17:16-34]** Know the culture's position on reality, underlying spiritual interest, places of connection, and encourage true fulfillment in Christ. Recognize the need to bring the gospel to Western culture, including America in a post-modern world. Avoid dangers of irrelevance & syncretism.

**i. Care about spiritual need:** Paul was moved by their idolatry. They were spiritual people but had no relationship with the true and living God, and Paul felt compelled to introduce them to Christ. The city's fine art, culture, architecture and civilization could not replace the absence of God. Paul was grieved that these people would spend eternity separated from God if they did not receive Christ; and that reality motivated him to share the gospel.

**ii. Meet people where they gather:** Paul entered into the cultural life where people gathered at the marketplace and synagogue and sought opportunity to speak of God. The unique message of Jesus created curiosity that provided opportunities to speak to larger groups of philosophers at the Areopagus [v.18-21]. Paul encountered Epicureans, who pursued pleasure as the chief purpose in life, and Stoic philosophers, pantheists who put great emphasis on moral sincerity and a high sense of duty, and overcome natural desires by self-discipline. Neither philosophy can offer true fulfillment which is why people were interested to hear the gospel.

**iii. Proclaim Jesus and the resurrection:** The unique message of the gospel is attractive in any culture as people long for hope meaning and purpose. The evidence for the resurrection is overwhelming and beyond a reasonable doubt, and provides a sure foundation for the truth of the gospel [v.30-34].

**iv. Create a bridge of common connection:** Paul initially spoke of spirituality & and praised them for being religious. He did not begin with the OT Scriptures as he did with Jews at the synagogue, nor did he rebuke/criticize their pagan beliefs. He used the altar dedicated to "The Unknown God" as a Nexus to reveal the true God. He speaks of God as Creator – a universal concept, rather than initially speaking of the Covenant God. Paul was familiar with their culture and quoted their poets as a means to connect with them. We need to be sensitive to the cultural values and engage the culture in dialogue. Neither Jesus or Paul built an enclave to avoid the culture nor did they affirm or approve of the cultural values opposed to the gospel; but they were aware of the culture and could dialogue with the culture.

**v. Communicate the need for repentance and coming judgment:** Help people understand that they have a responsibility to God as Creator and the need to yield or experience judgment. "We learn from Paul [v.30] that we cannot preach the gospel of Jesus without the doctrine of God, or the cross without the creation, or salvation without judgment." (Stott)

**c. Authentic church planting is accomplished when pre-believers are reached**

**i. Be intentional:** How will you reach pre-believers rather than attracting "disgruntled" believers from other churches? Reaching those who are distant from God requires a high level of commitment to develop relationships & reach the unchurched.

**ii. Develop a culture of invest and invite:** Invest in the lives of pre-believers & then invite them to church and to receive Christ.

**d. Salvation is a single event [one-time] but coming to faith is a process:**

**i. The typical process leading to salvation:** People move from an awareness of God to an initial awareness of the gospel. Once they understand the basics and the implications of the gospel, the next step is to develop a positive attitude regarding the gospel. Then, they count the cost – analyzing the burdens and benefits. Ultimately, a decision to act is made leading to repentance and faith in Christ. Subsequently, there is a post-decision desire to grow leading to assimilation into body life, discipleship and maturity.

**ii. Answer the questions people are asking** rather than simply giving answers to what you think they should ask. Take time to discover the obstacles and issues and respond with gentleness, respect and humility [1Pet.3:15]. Try to understand issues in the culture's worldview, encourage the listener(s) to consider the truth of Christ's claims, invite people to journey with the church community as they experience Christian life & invite them to make a commitment to Jesus [conversion by faith]. Help people discover the benefits of relationship with God for today & eternity. Address felt needs from a biblical perspective. For example, distinguish God's love and hope from the cultural norm or help people to see that God is not "a genie" to grant their wishes.

**iii. Preach with an expectation that pre-believers are present:** Assume that pre-believers are gathered when the assembly meets on weekends. As a teacher be careful that to avoid "christianese" without defining terms. Also, invite people to make a decision for Jesus especially weekend services so that the church begins to discover and expect that people are getting saved at the church.

**e. Develop relationships in the community:** Model and discuss your experiences. Encourage people to actively develop relationships at work, school, neighborhood, marketplace, etc.

**A Pastor's Perspective:** *if there was one area in the life of our church that I would like us to be more effective in it is the mission of outreach and evangelism. Although we have seen many people come to Christ through the years, and do a great job hosting large-scale outreach events, I believe we can do a better job of personal/relational evangelism. So, towards that purpose, this year we have focused our vision for the church towards personal evangelism. We started with an eight week series on apologetics and then a study through the Gospel of Luke focused on Christ's mission, "seeking and saving that which was lost" [Lu.19:10] and our responsibility to live that mission. People are being equipped and encouraged for the mission.*

## **LIFEWOR**

As leaders you need to be setting the example in regard to personal evangelism.

1. Describe a recent experience in sharing the gospel:
2. This week share Jesus and the gospel with someone who is unchurched and be prepared to discuss the experience at your next planters' meeting.

### 13. Equipping for the Work of Ministry

**a. Spiritual formation process:** All of God's people are called to minister. The goal of leaders is to develop mature believers who discover their role in the body of Christ, and help to build-up the body. Paul described it this way, "And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ [Eph.4:11-12]. Equipping refers to placing people in the condition they should be. Research consistently shows that the greatest need for strengthening the church is to get people involved in ministry. People want significance: they want to know that their lives make a difference; if not mobilized for ministry, they will look for significance in work hobbies recreation etc. The goal is to have an intentional process that moves people to become mature followers of Christ that contribute to their community. As believers minister it builds up the Body helps to establish maturity and creates unity.

Apostles refer to ones sent out cross-culturally (e.g. missionaries) [this is distinct from the office of apostle held by the 12]. God has gifted certain people to reach a culture of pre-believers and this gift is clearly needed. Prophets proclaim truth under God's anointing and help people distinguish the truth of God from other cultural values [again, the gift is contrast with the office], and evangelists win souls for the Lord. But our focus is the role of the pastor-teacher who loves, cares for and feeds the Word of God, and has the express responsibility to equip God's people for the work of ministry. How do you equip people for the work of ministry?

**b. Create a culture of serving:** Develop a congregational atmosphere in which spiritual formation is a core value, and people understand that they serve God by serving others. Expect the best from people and encourage a high level of commitment to Jesus. Set high expectations for people since they will never rise above the level of expectations. One of the characteristics of a healthy church is that people move from consuming to contributing. In that regard, people should be involved in at least one ministry appropriate to their gifts.

**i. All people in a local church should participate in ministry:** Gallup's research suggests that generally only 10-20% of the assembly do 100% of the ministry. This stunts the growth of the 80-90% as well as the body of Christ generally. However, Gallup's research is particularly interesting in that it indicates that 40-50% of those who aren't participating would if asked or trained. So preliminarily establish and communicate a standard that *everyone* should serve God by serving others. Avoid a clergy-lay distinction and abuses of authority by clergy over the people [the doctrine of the Nicolaitans Rev.2:6]. Remove the myth that ministry is only the pastor's job, and remove unbiblical obstacles to serving God by encouraging all to become involved in ministry.

**ii. Organized trained & mobilized:** Create a structure of ministries for people to become part of. Insure that each ministry leader is prepared to train and recruit volunteers. Mobilize people to volunteer and leaders to recruit. In addition to training to perform a function equip them by seeking to develop Christ-like character.

**iii. Make it easy for people to get information and get involved:** As lead pastor you want to constantly reinforce the message of "saved to serve" ~ that we serve God by serving others.

Encourage people and challenge them to take the next step by getting involved in a ministry. Make sure the process is as simple as possible: e.g. complete a card, sign-up on line, or even a sign-up table. The easier it is to get started the greater the response is likely to be.

**c. Intentional leader development & mentoring:** Getting everyone involved in serving God by serving others is one part of equipping believers for the work of ministry. In addition, there needs to be a meaningful leadership development program.

**i. School of Ministry [SoM]:** I strongly urge you to consider adopting our som program as a formal means to train leaders. Each of our church planters will be provided with curriculum, vision statement and forms for use in their local church. The purpose of the program is to equip people to be more effective spiritual leaders. The program covers fourteen modules: devotions, worship, servant leadership, the leader's time, expository preaching, defending the faith I and II, ministry and people I and II, planning and vision, equipping and evangelism, pastoral epistles, church history, and Calvary distinctives.

**ii. Intern program:** The intern program provides an opportunity for those interested in vocational ministry to discover more about who Jesus is, who they are, and discover more of God's calling for their life through working in the ministry of Calvary Chapel. A full description of the program and forms shall be provided for our church planters to use.

**A Pastor's Perspective:** *I estimate that I spend fifteen to twenty percent of my week engaged in intentional leadership development. It includes staff meeting, meeting with the executive administrator and assistant pastor, meeting with youth/next generation leaders, school of ministry classes, and meeting with church planters. All of these meetings are intentionally focused on leadership development, mentoring and helping to create a culture where people learn to serve God by serving one another. Equipping for ministry should be an intentional process to move people from consumers to community. I recommend that you start to design time in your schedule as soon as possible for the purpose of equipping leaders to equip others to serve. Designate the time in your calendar and protect it – the more time generally the better.*

## **LIFEWORk**

Who are you currently mentoring? Describe how you are [or have in the past] developed leaders and equipped them for the work of ministry. Discuss what worked well and what seemed not to work.



## 14. Developing Authentic Relationships

How can a growing church remain intimate? The bigger you get the smaller you must get ...

**a. Community groups:** The early church expanded exponentially so that thousands were gathering. Yet, smaller group gatherings in homes were an essential feature of the early church [Ac.2:46, 5:42, 20:20]. Whether they are called “home groups” “life groups” “cell groups” “grow groups” or any other descriptive term, the purpose is to promote biblical community. Almost 60 times in the New Testament we read the phrase “one another.” It is difficult, if not impossible, to develop biblical community until you develop authentic relationships. There are many advantages to community groups: they are not limited by facilities, can expand geographically, promote assimilation and more.

**A church of community groups:** You are either a church with community groups or a church *of* community groups. Make small groups part of the early vision/dna of the plant. Establish and communicate a goal that everyone becomes involved in community groups/mid-week study. Although we offer a mid-week service that typically goes through books of the Old Testament, we never promote the church service. Instead we constantly promote community groups. Also, we try to incorporate small group aspects into the mid-week study such as discussion questions and prayer groups.

**b. Community groups should include:** Spiritual development [e.g. Bible study, Christian living resources, devotionals, Christian history/biographies, leadership development], worship, prayer, discussion/interaction, and fellowship. Seek to develop mature disciples and leaders not just small group members. People need to have a sense of community and deeper relationships, feel appreciated and respected, feel listened to, grow in faith, receive practical help and encouragement to develop spiritual maturity.

**i. The key concept is community:** People know and care for one another. Groups should serve the purposes of providing care, meeting needs, and supporting ministry as they have opportunity to serve together. For example, groups can meet individual needs for prayer, emergencies, and can serve together by “adopting” a missionary or working as a group during a beyond sunday community service project.

**ii. Develop assistant(s):** Who can become group leaders so that as groups reach a ceiling size [e.g. 16-20] it can form two groups.

**c. A proposed model:**

**i. Groups tend to form re common life connections:** For example, newly married, married with young kids, financial stewardship, college & career, middle-age singles, seniors, men, women, etc.

**ii. Common resource:** Two times a year utilize a mandated common resource that all groups study together for about 8 weeks. Common resources help the group to identify with the larger body of the church. By limiting the use of common resources to twice a year you still provide autonomy for each group to focus on particular needs and interests.

**iii. Training:** Each group leader should participate in training [@ 6 weeks], and should intern as an assistant leader in a group [training materials are available to all **Calvary Chapel** church planters].

**iv. Oversight:** The pastor or other leader acting as the overseer for the community groups should communicate with and/or meet with leaders on a quarterly basis. The purpose of the meetings is to reinforce the vision, address issues, discuss resources and needs, provide training, encourage and answer questions.

**A Pastor's Perspective:** *in the initial stages of the church plant try to develop multiple community groups as a means to expand the core group. For example, you might teach the same study two different nights of the week at two different locations. This helps community groups to become part of the dna of the church. As the church matures you can offer a mid-week Bible study at the church facility for those who struggle with the social dynamics of a community group, prefer a larger dynamic, or perhaps some amenities such as children's ministry or a full worship team. Nevertheless, promote the community groups rather than mid-week study at the church.*

#### **LIFEWORK**

Describe your experience as a participant, leader, or Bible teacher in a community group setting.

1. Why do you believe that community groups are beneficial?
2. Why might it be difficult for a lead pastor to encourage people to attend a community group rather than attending a mid-week study at the church taught by the lead pastor?

## 15. Approach to Giving

**a. Tithing in the new covenant:** The NT does not “command” the giving of a tenth as was required in the OT [Mt.23:23, Lu.11:42, Lu.18:42, Heb.7:7-10], but the NT always creates a higher standard than the OT [see, Sermon on the Mount]. God’s people should honor Him by voluntarily returning some of the blessings that God has given them.

**b. How should we respond to the better covenant:**

**i. Give voluntarily:** 2 Cor.8:3-4

**ii. Give cheerfully not out of compulsion:** 2 Cor.9:7

**iii. Sacrificially:** 2 Cor.8:1-5

**iv. Regularly & proportionately:** 1 Cor.16:1-2

**v. Model generosity:** You can tell where your heart is by seeing where you are putting your money. "Where you treasure is, there will your heart be also" [Mt. 6:21]. As a leader you need to model generosity, and as a church be generous in giving sacrificially to advance the gospel.

**c. Trust God to provide:** Pastor Chuck Smith frequently shared, “Where God guides He provides.” The idea is that if God is in something He will provide the resources. God will move people to support His will and vision. Therefore, there is no reason to pressure people to give. Avoid manipulation, guilt and shame as motivators. Instead, love the people and feed them the word of God. As people mature in Christ they discover the joy in giving, and their right and responsibility to give to support God’s mission. Trust that as you teach through the Bible that God will place the proper balance and emphasis on the subject of giving.

**d. Reduce pressure re the offering:** We receive an offering each Sunday but prior to receiving the offering we ask people to complete a prayer request so that way everyone can place something in the offering whether a prayer request or a monetary gift. An alternative is to rely upon on-line giving and/or to have a receptacle for people to place an offering as they leave or enter the church. Don’t make people feel compelled to give.

**e. Building fund campaigns:** In the three building projects that I’ve been involved in during the last seven years we never undertook a typical campaign of asking people to make pledges for contributions. We simply trusted that if we communicated the status on a quarterly basis that God would move people to respond per His will. I’m not suggesting that a campaign is wrong but it was a blessing to see God come through with the needed resources without making the money the focus.

**A Pastor’s Perspective:** *as planters we need to discover God’s faithfulness in providing finances and learn to trust Him. Generally, when you’ve been on staff or worked for someone else you didn’t have the sense of direct responsibility to pay the bills. However, as a lead pastor that sense becomes very real even though you know that it is God’s work and His responsibility to provide. I remember when we first started renting meeting space and after a month of Sundays we were “in the red” \$1,000.00. I was afraid and wanted to contact everyone in the church and*

*tell the need and ask for help. I remembered how George Mueller had responded to similar situations by fervently praying and purposed to do the same; and resisted the temptation to make the need known. The next day, Monday, I went to the mailbox and there was a check for \$1,100.00 from someone who didn't attend the church, and had no idea about our current situation. They included a simple note that God had put on their heart to send the check. It was the exact amount that we needed plus 10%. It was a great lesson early in my ministry experience to learn to trust God to provide. When you know that God will provide it is much easier to be generous.*

*Another discovery that may be helpful for you is that people are often more motivated to give to vision than to need. In essence, telling the church that, "We need a \$1,000.00 to pay the rent" is far less attractive than saying, "Your gifts to the Lord are allowing us to establish a thriving Bible teaching church that is changing our community." Communicate a compelling God inspired vision and people will support it.*

### **LIFEWORk**

Do some soul-searching about the issue of giving. Honestly examine whether you have been faithful in giving your financial resources to your local church and to advance God's kingdom. How can you expect people to do something their leaders are unwilling to do?

## 16. Global Missions

Develop a philosophy of ministry that supports and encourages the church to be actively involved in God's global ministry. Jesus foretold an expanding sphere of influence for His church as empowered by the Holy Spirit, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the outermost parts of the world." [Ac.1:8]. As God is moving in the local church your ministry expands beyond your city, county, and region; and soon you are sending finances, short-term, and long-term missionaries to the field. You'll receive hundreds of requests for support, as Jesus declared, "the poor you will have with you always" so it is necessary to have a philosophy to use as a matrix to guide decisions.

**a. Support Bible teaching churches:** Prioritize Bible teaching churches as recipients of support. In developing countries the material needs are overwhelming. The desire to impact those needs via social programs such as orphanages, medical clinics, feeding programs, home building programs, etc. is good and noble. Yet, if those programs do not bring people into relationship with Jesus resulting in everlasting life, they miss the mark. In essence, we have minimized some physical hardship but have failed to address the greatest need – Jesus. The advantage of supporting Bible teaching churches is that they are designed to create and develop relationships with Jesus. There is no other institution that can impact a community like a church. As an ideal, the social programs flow out of the activity of a local church that you support rather than as an alternative to them.

**b. Seek to create short-term mission trip opportunities for multitudes:** In this facet the goal is to get as many people exposed to global missions as possible. Create opportunities to go to the mission field for the multitudes by considering logistics: cost, duration, geographic proximity, family or youth friendliness, the work(s) to be performed, etc. For example, we organize summer trips designed to reach the multitudes by traveling from Southern California to Baja Mexico. The geographic proximity of a six to eight hour drive significantly reduces the cost when compared to expensive airfare. The relatively brief round-trip travel allows the team to accomplish much even if the trip is of limited duration [e.g. five days]. We design the trip to be family and youth friendly by creating opportunities for a family or youth to serve such as a kid's bible camp outreach. This would be in contrast with a trip whose only purpose was a building project that would be effectively limited to those with construction skills. By creating a positive experience for many to a short-term mission we expand the interest in the church towards global missions. The key is to find a partner church with a scope of ministry that fits this plan. Otherwise, your trip becomes a burden to the indigenous church rather than supporting their ministry. The goal is to support the indigenous church's needs not fulfill the sending church's agenda [e.g. doing a major outreach event may be counter-productive to a 1-2 yr old church of 50 people].

**c. Create opportunities for short-term trips to support the churches you support in more distant areas:** Our approach to short-term trips to support churches in distant areas is impacted by the logistical issues. For example, the cost of travel tends to extend the duration of the trip [e.g.10-14 days]. These factors tend to limit the number of people who can go. Our vision is to determine the needs, primarily leadership needs, of the indigenous church. Team members

should be able to provide support for the lead pastor, train and develop other church leaders. For example if a church in Africa needs help with youth, women's ministry and tech send team members who can train in those areas. If the need is for construction, ideally bring someone who can do the work and help train others to do future work. The aim is to support leadership from the top down so that indigenous leaders are better equipped to carry-on the work of ministry when the team departs.

**d. Leverage and influence:** It is wise to invest where you believe that you are getting the best return on your investment in regard to advancing the kingdom. Invest resources in missionaries and local churches that you believe are making a recognizable difference in advancing Christ in a community. Also, it may be advantageous to invest more resources in fewer missions than minimizing resources to each recipient in an effort to "place more pins around the globe." It is the problem of an inch deep and a mile long. Also, look for places where your investment makes a difference. For example, some well-known missionary organization may not need your support since they are able to receive support from so many others, but there may be a particular work where your strategic support is significant.

**i. Consider promoting a missionary/work each month:** By highlighting a particular ministry each month you make the congregation aware that the local church is global in perspective and make the church more aware of how resources are being used to impact the kingdom.

**ii. Common support:** We want to encourage church's in our association to support common works/missionaries to increase our leverage and influence. Also, whenever possible, **Calvary Chapel** churches will seek to support a long-term [6+ mos.] missionary sent-out by a network church.

**e. Encourage "staff" to experience global missions:** Encourage lay and paid staff, especially pastors to experience what God is doing in the world. It will broaden perspective generally and help develop a missional perspective for foreign and local missions. We typically pay expenses for at least two staff members to go on every mission trip. Also if additional staff members desire to go we support them by not counting the time away from the church against their paid vacation benefits.

**Lead pastor & global missions:** I believe all lead pastors, especially church planters, should experience missions for the reasons described above and also because of the need for adventure. Most planters tend to be adventurous entrepreneurial types. Mission trips allow you to experience adventure and remain faithful to your "home church."

**f. Calvary Chapel Missions Policy Manual:** A detailed manual describing missions policies and guidelines is available to all **Calvary Chapel** church planters.

**A Pastor's Perspective:** *I've been traveling annually to Baja, Mexico; Managua, Nicaragua; or Nairobi, Kenya for 10 to 15 years. I try to take one to two trips a year. Each time I glean new perspectives on what God is doing in the world. The pastors and leaders of these churches are people that I greatly respect, and our relationship has been a blessing. Many pastors I speak with in other parts of the world tell me that they seldom receive visits from lead pastors. If possible, seek to travel and strengthen other pastors in different parts of the world where you*

*develop relationships. It will not only bless the other pastors but will undoubtedly enrich you and the various fellowships.*

## **LIFEWOR**

Consider your global missions perspective.

1. Describe your missions experience:
2. Plan a short-term missions experience during your church planter training. Try to visit [or return to a place] where you would like to develop or strengthen a relationship between an existing church, you and your soon to be newly planted church.

## 17. Community Service / Servant Evangelism

**a. Purpose:** To demonstrate the love of God to your community in tangible ways through acts of service evangelism; and to mobilize the local church to live their faith on mission beyond Sundays.

**b. Large-scale quarterly projects:** The goal is to mobilize large groups of people on a quarterly basis. Create projects that are suited to multitudes of people becoming involved with opportunities that do not require specialized training or expertise. If possible, the projects should be kid friendly so that families can serve together. By mobilizing large groups it helps to increase the visibility and impact to the community; and also encourages the body.

**c. Smaller-scale on-going projects:** These are on-going service projects that mobilize the local church to impact its community. Some potential ideas to consider include: senior centers, meals, incarcerated youth, pregnancy centers, rescue mission, food pantry, moving and home repairs, car repairs, transportation, tech support and disaster relief.

**d. Youth center:** The youth center is a great way to reach the next generation and impact a community for Jesus. The goal is to provide a place for students to gather after school. Provide activities such as art, spiritual life coaching [mentoring], music/dance lessons, sports, tutoring, energy lounge, computer lab, game room, etc. Decide on a target demographic such as elementary, middle or high school students, and create a space for that group.

**i. Chapel time:** We offer a Chapel every day of the week to encourage all the students to know Christ, grow in Him, and make Him known to others.

**ii. Staff & volunteers:** By mobilizing volunteers to serve in various areas, and having minimal paid staff [e.g. part-time director] you can offer the youth center at a nominal cost or free to students and parents.

**e. Forms, templates, planning documents and matrixes are available to Calvary Chapel Church Planters**

**A Pastor's Perspective:** *our vision for beyond sunday was birthed one afternoon when our staff pastors were stuck in traffic returning from a retreat and I had the idea that if three hundred volunteers contributed eight hours of work four times a year it resulted in almost 10,000 hours of community service to our city. As we talked about the idea it resonated with our staff pastors, and one of them suggested the name "beyond sunday" to reflect the vision of showing the love of God to our community in tangible ways beyond Sunday. This ministry has been great in helping people connect with Christ and our church, and to grow in Him as they serve God by serving others. Also, I believe that community service will continue to be very attractive to the next generation and should be part of our effort to impact our communities for Christ.*

### LIFEWORk

Make a list of community service projects including large-scale and smaller ongoing projects that are particularly attractive to you, and that you would like to implement in your church plant:



## 18. Membership

**a. Is church membership biblical?** The Bible does not specifically prescribe “membership” as we know it, other than the membership of the one Church of Jesus Christ. The scriptures never divide the local assembly into two groups, the “members” and the “non-members” or make any other distinction between believers for that matter. In the Bible, when a person believed the gospel, they were immediately baptized, and began to fellowship with the saints in their geographical region. The saints would accept them, on the basis of their profession of Christ, and that was it. The Bible speaks of no oaths, or commitments. The commitment and allegiance was to Christ, and the fellowship and commitment to other believers was a natural result of the believer's fellowship with the Lord. The assumption is that regenerate believers are the true church and are united in Christ. Nevertheless, it appears that believers are to be in relationship with other believers in a local assembly.

**b. How should believers relate to a local church?** The church was instituted by Jesus [Mt. 16:18], and although the noun is singular (ekklesia) it refers to a collected group (assembly, congregation). We are reminded that the individual Christian does not live out the life of faith alone, but as a part of that much larger Body [Acts 2:41]. Although originally birthed in Jerusalem at Pentecost as a result of the Holy Spirit's work following Peter's sermon, the church quickly spread to additional cities as believers returned to their homes and continued meeting together in Jesus' name [Acts 8:1; Acts 13:1; Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:2; Eph. 1:1; etc.]. The single Body which was first seen in Jerusalem soon multiplied into local manifestations found in numerous cities. And while initially there may have been only one church in a city, today we have multiple churches in numerous localities. The natural, automatic relationship between the individual and “the” church in his city has now evolved into a choice the believer must make as to which of many churches in his locale he will choose to associate with and make himself accountable to.

There is an expressed expectation that each individual believer will maintain an ongoing relationship with the congregation of believers with which he or she normally associates [Heb 10:23-25]. There appears to be a mutual responsibility of commitment between believers within each local Body, whether through the use of spiritual gifts [Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:7, 12, 18, 27] or in the application of church discipline [Mt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:11-13]. This mutual responsibility demands some sort of ongoing, mutually accountable relationship between individual believers. Lastly, the New Testament clearly states the responsibilities of leaders to the believers they serve [Jn. 21:15-17; Acts 20:28], as well as the responsibilities of individual believers to those who lead them [Hebrews 13:17]. These passages express the required stewardship of leadership and the expected submission of followers. Such responsibilities would be difficult if not impossible to fulfill outside of committed relationship among believers.

**c. Is membership the means to establish and maintain the relationship?** If committed relationship can be established and maintained by well fed and loved people then there would not be a need for a covenant resulting in membership status. Generally, membership requires a covenant [oath, pledge, commitment or promise] addressing foundational matters such as:

attend regularly, give regularly, serve regularly, and participate in any business meetings, communion, or classes regularly. This commitment may offer certain privileges that are not available to non-members.

**d. Conclusion:** We believe that the best way to motivate a healthy relationship to a local body is to love people and feed them a healthy diet of the word of God. Help people to understand what is expected of believers in authentic community. The case for “membership” as we use the term as a biblical concept is ambiguous at best. The tendency to abuse membership as an inappropriate means of exercising control or manipulation can be avoided by creating healthy biblical relationship motivated by fellowship in Christ, love, and spiritual maturity. Furthermore, potential legal issues creating potential liability may be avoided by simply not having membership status. Accordingly, we would recommend that you do not adopt membership status.

**A Pastor’s Perspective:** *My greatest objection to the concept of membership is the tendency of church leaders to utilize same to manipulate or control members to do something they are not feeling led by God to do, or to inhibit the exercise of Christian liberty including the freedom to select another local assembly as a place to grow. Furthermore, since the “membership covenant” is essentially a mutual agreement [e.g. contract] it is fair to assume that in many, if not most, cases when the “member” wants to leave they feel that the church has not met their end of the agreement. If the member feels that way, the church should at the very least be willing to consider and respect that they may have “breached” the agreement thereby excusing the member from performing their obligations. Dialogue between a leader and a member should avoid being heavy-handed. For example, a leader should generally avoid asserting that the member is, “rebellious, not submitted to biblical authority, or is in sin” without a clear biblical basis beyond the member’s desire to associate with another healthy local church.*

## **LIFEWOR**

Consider the above perspective on membership as well as your own experiences.

1. What is your view about membership in a local church?
2. Talk to three local pastors outside of your movement about church membership. Determine: whether they use it or not, the conditions for membership, and the reasons why. how did this impact your view about membership?