

Covenant Membership

Belong to a body of believers.



The Village Church

Covenant Membership

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COVENANT MEMBERSHIP CHECKLIST

- Register for the membership class.**
- Watch pre-class videos on RightNow Media.**
- Send written copy of testimony to your affirmation leader.**
- Attend the class.**
- Read Church Membership by Jonathan Leeman.**
- Confirm you have been baptized following your salvation.**
- Meet with your table leader(s) to sign the covenant.**

SESSION 1

The Village and the Gospel

HISTORY

- 1845** The Southern Baptist Convention formed a missionary organization to take the gospel out West.
- 1869** Thirteen families settled in the Texas plains and established the Holford Prairie Church.
- 1882** The church grew to 37 people and moved into town, creating First Baptist Church of Lewisville.
- 1962** First Baptist Church of Lewisville planted a church just down the road, Lakeland Baptist Church.
- 1978** Lakeland Baptist Church planted Highland Village First Baptist Church in Highland Village.
- 1985** Ken Dalton becomes the second pastor of Highland Village First Baptist Church.
- 1993** Barry Fikes becomes the third pastor of Highland Village First Baptist Church.
- 2002** Highland Village First Baptist Church became The Village Church after Matt Chandler became lead pastor.
- 2004** A new Constitution and Bylaws is adopted, with elders governing the church.
- 2005** The Village Church planted its first church, Providence Church in Frisco, Texas, under the leadership of Barry Keldie.
- 2006** The Village Church planted its second church, CityView Church in Keller, Texas, with Rick White as the lead pastor.
- 2007** The Village Church and Grace Temple Baptist Church merged into a new congregation, the Denton campus.
- 2009** The Highland Village campus moved to a vacant Albertson's and became the Flower Mound campus.
- 2009** The Village Church formed its third campus, Dallas Northway, with Northway Baptist Church.
- 2011** The Village Church sent Scott Brooks to Coppell, Texas, to start its third church plant, The Door.
- 2013** The Village Church, after purchasing a building the previous year, launched its fourth campus, Fort Worth.
- 2014** The Village Church sent Blake Chilton to plant Declaration Church in Bryan-College Station, Texas, and Steven Lee to plant Redeemer City Church in Washington, D.C.
- 2014** The Village Church purchased a church building in the city of Plano and named Hunter Hall the Plano campus pastor.
- 2015** We officially changed our name from First Baptist Church of Highland Village to The Village Church.
- 2015** After years of prayer and planning, the Denton campus transitioned into an autonomous church, The Village Church Denton, naming Beau Hughes as pastor and creating The Village Church Network.
- 2016** The Village Church launched its sixth campus, naming Rex Cole as the Southlake campus pastor.

OVERVIEW

STRUCTURE

We believe in a biblical form of church government consisting of godly male elders, under the headship of Christ, who are tasked with the responsibility of shepherding the church. As shepherds and overseers of a local church, elders are entrusted with protecting, leading, equipping and caring for the corporate church body and her individual members. The elders set the direction for the teaching, care and equipping of the church at large.

OUR STAFF

God desires that the saints of the church participate in the ministry of reconciliation. Ephesians 4:11-16 teaches that one of the primary roles of a shepherd of the church is to equip the saints for the work of ministry. Our staff is committed to equipping our church body to see the ministry of reconciliation carried out.

FINANCES

Knowing that God wants us to be faithful and generous givers, we counsel, guide and direct our church in the management of finances. Our elders review and analyze monthly financial statements to direct the mission of our church, stewarding well the resources given to the church by our people. Each year, an annual budget is presented to the church body for review, analysis, questions and approval. The operating budget is fundamental to our accountability, transparency and integrity.

GIVING

We have a tremendous opportunity to proclaim the gospel by giving generously. Giving invigorates our devotion to Christ and frees us from the tyranny of consumerism. It provides an outlet for compassion and allows us to proclaim His sufficiency and provision. As people of faith, we give faithfully. We have offering boxes available at the back of the sanctuary for giving. You can also give online or by check in the mail by following the instructions on our website.

COVENANT MEMBERSHIP

Membership is about more than attending church meetings. Members commit to joining a spiritual family who provides encouragement and support. They are called to a biblical degree of responsibility, service and sacrifice. Our elders and leaders pledge to assist our Covenant Members with care, counsel, prayer and teaching.

BAPTISM

Baptism is for the individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work and become His disciple. Water baptism symbolizes a person's union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. It signifies that a former way of life has been put to death and depicts a release from the mastery of sin. The Village practices and teaches believer's baptism.

Before being baptized at The Village, we require you to walk through our Baptism class, which covers the biblical significance of baptism, frequently asked questions and gives you an opportunity to share your testimony. If you were baptized as a believer prior to The Village, we don't require you to be baptized again unless your baptism preceded conversion.

COMMUNION

Communion is to be observed only by those who have become genuine followers of Christ. This ordinance symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of His blood on our behalf and is to be observed repeatedly throughout the Christian life as a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death. As we partake of communion with an attitude of faith and self-examination, we remember and proclaim the death of Christ, receive spiritual nourishment for our souls and signify our unity with other members of Christ's body.

SESSION 2

Covenant Membership

OVERVIEW

WHAT IS COVENANT MEMBERSHIP?

Contemporary Western cultures are enthralled by choice and committed primarily to preserving the freedom to withdraw, move on, reconsider and renegotiate. We are faithful to our spouses until fidelity is uncomfortable and inconvenient. We are loyal to our employers until we get a better offer.

Ours is a culture committed to consumerism, and if Christians are not careful, even our churches will be nothing more than semi-sanctified microcosms of this culture. We will attend when we want, be accountable when we want, submit to authority when we want, give when we want and only to whom we want.

Yet this is not what, how and who the church was created to be. The local church is more than a place. The church is the glorious gathering of the redeemed, the sanctified flock of the great Shepherd, the united household of God, the beautiful body and bride of Christ. It manifests the “manifold wisdom of God” for the display of His glory (Eph. 3:10).

Such an exalted picture of the church seems silly as long as we’re content with superficial relationships and shallow connections. It seems impossible as long as we pursue finite happiness in infinite choice and entertainment.

WHY MEMBERSHIP?

Even a casual reading of Scripture reveals that the commitment of believers to one another is anything but casual. In both descriptive and prescriptive language, the Bible attests to the formal and profound relationship that exists among those who have been reconciled to God and each other.

The Scriptures call us to love one another, outdo one another in showing honor, live in harmony with one another, instruct, greet, comfort, serve, bear the burdens of, forgive, encourage, always seek to do good to, exhort, stir up to love and good works, confess your sins to, pray for and show hospitality to one another.

Believers may pursue these obligations to each other through many avenues, but the primary way we are to fulfill them is within the fold of this messy and beautiful reality called the local church.

Ever since its inception, the Church universal has been arranged into smaller congregations called local churches. Though Christians are divided on the exact relationship that exists between these local churches and other intricate matters of ecclesiology, all have believed that they are essential communities instituted by God for His glory and our good.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul draws on the imagery of a body as a metaphor for the local church. Far from commending self-sufficiency and independence, the apostle upholds a radically countercultural vision of desperate interdependence marked by love, service, humility, sacrifice and sympathy.

As participants in the body are called “members,” participation in the local church body is called membership.

Jonathan Leeman writes:

Church membership is a formal relationship between a Church and a Christian characterized by the church’s affirmation and oversight of a Christian’s discipleship and the Christian’s submission to living out his or her discipleship in the care of the church.

Membership is not about privilege or prestige. It is not some elevated level of access with secret insider benefits. It is not a legal document or means of control. Membership recognizes and responds to the call of discipleship in the context of gospel-centered community. It is an affirmation and agreement to contribute to the good of the body rather than consume from it. It is a formalization of that which already implicitly exists. It is an obligation to sacrificially seek the good of others in the body of Christ by taking the

general call toward service and incarnating it within a particular people.

WHY COVENANT?

When the Bible speaks of formal relationships inside the local church, it uses the concept of a covenant. Some covenants are between people (1 Sam. 18:3, 20:16; 2 Sam. 5:3), while others are between God and man (Gen. 6:18, 9:16, 15:18; Luke 22:20; Heb. 8:6-7). With some covenants, one party binds him or herself to fulfill the obligations of both sides. In others, the parties are reciprocally bound to adhere to the obligations. Though types of covenants vary, the concept saturates the biblical text. Therefore, it seems appropriate to apply the idea of a covenant to membership in a local church.

Covenants also include some type of visible representation. All cultures have symbols to signify comprehension and consent. At times those agreements include cutting animals in two and walking between the pieces (Gen. 15), placing a hand under a thigh (2 Sam. 24), removing and exchanging a sandal (Ruth 4) or instituting and enjoying a ceremonial dinner (Matt. 26:17-29). While the symbol may change, the abiding call to covenant is clear.

Christians commit themselves to each other in the context of the local church in countless ways. At The Village, the current process for membership involves participating in a class, reading a book, meeting with an affirmation leader and completing a form. Far from mere formality, these expressions are important representations of the formal commitment that members make.

CONCLUSION

God calls His people into covenant, not only to Himself but also to each other. He calls us to a life of sacrifice, generosity, service and radical commitment to the good of the body. This happy obligation is most readily pursued within the context of a particular body—a local church. In light of this reality, membership is not merely a responsibility but a blessed opportunity to covenant with a particular people to live out the gospel together.

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

The Village Church Membership Covenant is birthed out of our love for the church body and its individual members whom we hope will experience the fullness of joy which is found in the presence of the Lord.

The primary purpose of this covenant is to serve as a teaching document with three functions:

- To clarify the biblical obligations and expectations for both the elders of The Village Church and the individual members of The Village Church body.
- To establish teaching and doctrinal parameters for The Village Church body.
- To serve as a tool for reflection and growth toward holiness.

Each of these functions is in accordance with the document's overall vision to provide an accessible explanation of the Scriptures in hopes that The Village Church would grow in the grace and truth of Jesus Christ.

The Village Church Membership Covenant is comprised of a section on the Church, the nature of covenants, the Statement of Faith, the Statement of Theological Distinctives, the obligations of The Village Church elders to The Village Church body and the obligations of members to The Village Church body.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

The church exists for the display of the glory of God because all things exist for His glory. Those of us who trust in and follow Jesus are caught up in something much bigger than ourselves. We have graciously been invited into God's redemptive purposes in the world.

Since the beginning, God has been creating and calling forth His people for the display of His glory in a grand narrative of redemption and reconciliation. Though creation now suffers the curse of Genesis 3, the gospel is the means by which the world is being made right. The gospel also carries with it the promise of ultimate renewal, a restoration even more glorious than Eden, and thus believers eagerly anticipate the

return of Christ. The Church universal (i.e., all believers, everywhere) is the means by which God is fulfilling His purposes in the world (2 Cor. 5:17-20). The Church universal is being used to write God's beautiful and dramatic story of redemption and reconciliation. In light of this reality, the opportunity to join a local church body (i.e., a particular group of believers in a particular locale) is much more than a commitment to consistent attendance or active involvement in community. It is also a sacred call to be involved in the redemptive work of our sovereign God to push back the darkness of a fallen world through the power of the Holy Spirit with the light of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The church is the gathering of the redeemed, the household of God (Eph. 2:19), the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:2, 9) and the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31). 1 Corinthians 12 speaks of many members within the same body. Just as a human body relies upon mutual dependence of individual members for proper functioning, so the body of Christ requires sacrificial and responsible service by its individual members. As the Scriptures say, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'" (1 Cor. 12:21). Likewise, a member of the church cannot say to another member that he or she is unnecessary. We all have gifts that differ according to the gracious provision of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:3-8). Contrary to the beliefs of our culture, we need each other.

Membership at The Village is participation in a family, a microcosm of the universal household of God. All members are united to Christ and thus to each other. Unity within the church is expressed in love for God and a love for others, both those within the family and those who are not. Because of the identification of Christ with His church, Christians are expected to display His gospel in a manner which is worthy of Him (Eph. 4:1).

WHAT IS A COVENANT?

A covenant is generally defined as “a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action.”¹ Within the Scriptures, we find a number of examples of covenants, some between God and man (Gen. 6, 9, 15; Ezek. 20; Hos. 2; Jer. 31; Matt. 26), while others are solely between men (1 Sam. 18, 2 Sam. 5). In some covenants, one party binds his or herself to fulfill the obligations of both sides of the agreement. In others, the parties are reciprocally bound to adhere to the obligations. While God’s covenant with the Church universal is an example of the former, the local church covenant represents the latter. If at any time one of the parties of this church covenant continues in a state of unfaithfulness to its provisions, the other is released from certain obligations.

The covenant of The Village Church contains many conditions that are merely general Christian obligations. For example, all Christians, whether members of The Village Church or elsewhere, are required to submit to the Scriptures, pursue holiness, steward resources, etc. Such requirements are universal obligations for the Christ-follower regardless of any failure on the part of local church to live up to her covenant obligations.

If at any time an individual member feels as though the corporate church body is not remaining faithful to the requirements of the covenant, it is the responsibility of the individual member to lovingly and humbly express concerns to the leadership of the church. If the church elders are unwilling to change and pursue covenant faithfulness, then the member is freed from his or her membership obligations and encouraged to seek membership elsewhere given the church’s disobedience. In addition, certain circumstances may provide sufficient and righteous grounds to transfer membership elsewhere.

While focusing primarily in language on the responsibilities between the individual parties, the corporate church body, her elders and her individual members, the covenant is first and foremost an acknowledgment of general Christian obligations and an agreement to enter into those duties for God’s glory and the good of the body and bride of His Son.

¹ Inc Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Includes Index., 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993).

STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Village Church is a church under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are committed to contending for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3). In unity with the historic Christian church, we believe and confess the Apostles’, Nicene and Chalcedonian Creeds as accurate representations of Scripture’s teaching. In addition to these historic formulations, we are situated within the evangelical, Reformed and Baptist traditions.

The basic doctrines within The Village Church Statement of Faith represent what we believe to be core elements of biblical teaching. We expect all members of The Village Church to affirm these doctrines.

The theological distinctives within The Village Church Statement of Faith reflect what distinguishes The Village Church from other churches who would affirm the basic doctrines. These distinctives indelibly shape the way that The Village Church is led and the direction the church is headed. We do not expect all members to embrace all aspects of these distinctives, but members should expect that the distinctives will be maintained in all ministry environments at The Village Church, and members may not teach contrary to them.

Doctrine of God

We believe in one God eternally existing as one essence and three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, each of whom is fully God, yet there is one God.

We believe in one God eternally existing as one essence and three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Each person is fully, equally and eternally God, yet there is one God. Each person has precisely the same nature and attributes and is worthy of precisely the same worship, honor and praise. The entire Christian faith is bound together with the confession of God’s Trinitarian nature (Matt. 28:18-20).

We believe in God the Father, the Creator of heaven and earth. We believe in the Son, God from God, eternally begotten but not made, who in history assumed to Himself a human nature for the sake of our salvation (John 1:14; Heb. 1:3). He is fully God and fully man. Through Him, all things came into being and were created. He was before all things, and in Him, all things hold together by the word of His power (Col.1:15-20). He

suffered, died, was buried, resurrected, ascended and sits at the right hand of the Father until He returns for the final judgment and consummation of the Kingdom. We believe in the Holy Spirit who eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son and is sent by the Father and Son to give new life (John 15:26-27). The Holy Spirit unites believers to Jesus Christ in faith, brings about the new birth and dwells within the regenerate (Eph. 1:13-14). The Holy Spirit has come to glorify the Son who, in turn, came to glorify the Father. He will lead the Church into a right understanding and rich application of the truth of God's Word. He is to be respected, honored and worshiped as God, the third person of the Trinity.

The triune God, Father, Son and Spirit, is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible. As the immortal and eternal Creator, He sovereignly rules over all of His creation (Ps. 24:1).

Doctrine of Revelation

God has made Himself known to the world in Jesus Christ, the Scriptures and creation.

We believe that God has made Himself known to His creation. He has revealed Himself to us in His Son, the incarnate Word (Heb.1:1-2), in Scripture, the inspired Word (2 Tim. 3:16), and in creation (Ps. 8; Rom. 1:20)

We believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the perfect revelation of who God is. Jesus Christ is the "image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), "the exact imprint of his nature" (Heb. 1:3) and a perfect reflection of God the Father (John 5:19).

We believe the Scriptures, the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, are the inspired Word of God and are therefore without error in their original writings. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and free from error. The Scripture is sufficient for all that God requires for us to believe and do and is therefore to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises (Is. 40:6-8). As God's people hear, believe and obey the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel (Rom. 10:14-17).

Distinctive || Inerrancy

The Bible, being God's inspired and authoritative Word, is God's witness of Himself to humanity. It is therefore free from falsehood and error. We confess that when all the facts are known, and when the Bible is properly interpreted, the original autographs of the Bible will be shown to be completely true in all that they affirm.

Doctrine of Creation and Providence

We believe that God created the world from nothing and governs all things at all times in all places.

God created the whole world from nothing (Gen. 1:1-2; Ps. 24:1). God's creative work is the overflow of the love present within the Trinitarian fellowship. Creation, according to the design of God, was good (Gen. 1:3-31).

God doesn't let the world exist, He makes the world exist. He upholds the universe by the word of His power, and He holds the world together in himself (Col. 1:17).

Doctrine of Humanity

We believe that all humanity is created in the image of God and possess intrinsic dignity and worth.

God made humanity—male and female—in His own image (Gen. 1:27-30). Set apart as His image bearers, every human being is sacred. All men and all women, bearing the image of God, are meant to represent God in His creation (1 Cor. 10:31). God declares the created order to be very good, distinguishing men and women as His agents to care for, manage and govern over it. They enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union in the covenant of marriage that establishes the only God-ordained pattern of sexual relations for men and women. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways.

Distinctive || Complementarianism

Men and women are absolutely equal in essence, dignity and value but are distinct by divine design. As part of God's good created order, men and women are to have different yet complementary roles and

responsibilities in the home and church. As it relates to the church, men and women are both expected to lead; however, the office of elder is reserved for qualified men (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1). For more on this distinctive, read our Women in Ministry Statement (tvresources.net).

Doctrine of Sin

We believe that sin has fractured all things, leaving the world in desperate need for salvation.

Through the temptation of Satan, humanity transgressed the command of God and fell from their original holiness and righteousness (Gen. 3). Now the entire human race inherits a corrupt nature that is opposed to God and His law (Rom. 3:9-20). Therefore, all humans are under condemnation. This depravity is radical and pervasive. It extends to the mind, will, body and affections. Unregenerate humanity lives under the dominion of sin and Satan (Eph. 2:1-3). He is at enmity with God, hostile toward and hateful of God.

Doctrine of Salvation

We believe that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

We believe that, due to universal death through sin, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless born again (John 3:5-8); that salvation is only by grace through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ; and that all who receive the Lord Jesus Christ through faith are declared righteous by God and become children of God (Heb.10:19-25).

We believe the Scriptures teach that regeneration, or the new birth, is that act of God by which the Holy Spirit imparts a new nature and a new spiritual life, not before possessed, and the person becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus (Gal. 2:20). The mind is given a holy disposition and a new desire to serve God, the dominion of sin is broken, and the heart is transformed from a love of sin and self to a love of holiness and God.

Distinctive || Sovereignty of God in Salvation

The salvation of humanity is fundamentally the work of God. Before the foundation of the world, God elected His people, setting His affection and grace upon them (Rom. 8:29-30). In love God predestined His people for adoption (Eph. 1:4-6).

Faith is a gift of grace that is given by the mercy and pleasure of God, so that no one may boast. Apart from the intervention of God, humanity cannot choose of his own accord to worship God and pursue righteousness (Rom. 3; Eph. 2:1-3). God's sovereignty in salvation is comprehensive: from first to last, all of salvation is the work of God.

Doctrine of the Church

We believe that the Church is the body of Christ sent into the world to shine forth the glory of God.

God, by His Word and Spirit, creates the Church, calling sinful humanity into the fellowship of Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:12-31). By the same Word and Spirit, He guides and preserves that newly redeemed humanity. The Church is made up of those who have become genuine followers of Jesus Christ and have personally appropriated the gospel. The Church exists to worship and glorify God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The ministry of the Church is an extension of the ministry of Jesus in the power of the Spirit.

The ultimate mission of the Church is to bring glory to God by making disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). The Church is called to make disciples through worship, prayer, teaching of the Word, observance of the ordinances, fellowship, the exercise of our gifts and talents, and the proclamation of the gospel both in our community and throughout the world.

We believe there are two ordinances of the Church. One is that of believer's baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the other is the Lord's Supper.

Water baptism is only intended for those who have received the saving benefits of Christ through the new birth of the Holy Spirit. In obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, the Church, oneself and the world, believers are baptized by water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Water baptism is a visual and symbolic demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. It signifies that a former way of life has been put to death and vividly depicts the release from the mastery of Satan, sin and death.

As with water baptism, the Lord's Supper is to be observed only by those who have become genuine

followers of Christ. This ordinance symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of His blood on our behalf and is to be observed repeatedly throughout the Christian life as a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death. As we come to the table with an attitude of faith and self-examination, we remember and proclaim the death of Christ, receive spiritual nourishment for our souls and signify our unity with other members of Christ's body.

Distinctive || Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The gifts of the Holy Spirit that we see on display in the New Testament are still active within the life of the church. These gifts did not end with the close of the New Testament or the death of the last apostle (1 Cor. 12:1-11).

Distinctive || Baptism by Immersion

The precedent we find in the New Testament is baptism following conversion by immersion into water. Baptism by immersion is meant to symbolically depict the believer's real union to Christ in His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-14). (For more on this distinctive, consider attending one of our Baptism classes, held several times throughout the year.)

Doctrine of Resurrection and Consummation of the Kingdom of God

We believe that Jesus Christ is returning to the world in the future to judge the living and the dead.

The consummation of all things includes the future, physical, visible, personal and glorious return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the glorification of those alive in Christ, the judgment of the just and the unjust, and the fulfillment of Christ's kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth. In the consummation, Satan, with his hosts and all those outside Christ, is finally separated from the benevolent presence of God, enduring eternal punishment (Rev. 20:7-15), but the righteous, in glorious bodies, will live and reign with Him forever, serving Him and giving Him unending praise and glory. Then the eager expectation of creation will be fulfilled, and the whole earth shall proclaim the glory of God, who makes all things new (Rev. 21:1-5).

BIBLICAL OBLIGATIONS OF THE VILLAGE CHURCH

ELDERS TO THE VILLAGE CHURCH BODY

As shepherds and overseers of a local church, elders are entrusted with protecting, leading, equipping and caring for the corporate church body and her individual members. The following is a rather extensive overview of the requirements for elders as spelled out within the Scriptures.

The elders covenant...

- **to appoint elders and deacons (including staff members who serve in these offices) according to the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures** (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).
 - **to prayerfully seek God's will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability based on our study of the Scriptures and following of the Spirit** (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).
 - **to care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth and love** (Matt. 28:16-20; Eph. 4:15-16 Col. 1:28; James 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).
 - **to provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture** (Acts 20:27-28; 1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; Titus 2:1).
 - **to equip the members of the church for the work of ministry** (Eph. 4:11-16).
 - **to be on guard against false teachers and teachings** (Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Tim. 1:3-7; 1 John 4:1).
 - **to lovingly exercise discipline when necessary, for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined and the health of the church as a whole** (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1; James 5:19-20).
- **to set an example and join members in fulfilling the obligations of church membership stated below** (Phil. 3:17; 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Pet. 5:3).

MEMBERS TO THE VILLAGE CHURCH BODY

As those who have experienced the grace of a life changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to reflect the character of Christ through the pursuit of certain attitudes and actions and the rejection of others. The Scriptures refer to this reality as "living by the Spirit" (Rom. 8). The requirements of this membership covenant are in no way intended as an addition to the biblical obligations of a believer. Rather, this document functions primarily as an accessible yet non-exhaustive explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the obedience that faith produces.

I covenant...

- **to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues** (Ps. 119; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21).
- **to pursue the Lord Jesus Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of spiritual disciplines** (Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Eph. 5:1-21; 1 Thess. 5:12-22).
- **to follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances prescribed to His Church:**
 - by being baptized after my conversion.
 - by regularly remembering and celebrating the person and work of Christ through communion.
- **to regularly participate in the life of The Village Church by attending weekly services, engaging in gospel-centered community and serving those within and outside of this church** (Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:23-25; Titus 3:14).

- **to steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, spiritual gifts and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful and voluntary** (Matt. 25:14-30; Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 8-9; 1 Pet. 4:10-11).
- **by God's grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk in holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ (1 Pet.1:13-16, 4:1-3). Believers should strive to put certain attitudes and actions to death while stirring and stimulating love and good deeds through the Spirit.**

Below are a few examples of actions addressed in the Scriptures:

- I will practice complete chastity unless married and, if married, complete fidelity within heterosexual and monogamous marriage. Complete chastity and fidelity means, among other things, that regardless of my marital status, I will pursue purity and abstain from sexually immoral practices such as adultery, premarital sex and pornography (Rom. 13:11-14; 1 Cor. 6:15-20; 10:8; Eph. 5:3; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4).
- I will seek to preserve the gift of marriage and agree to walk through the steps of marriage reconciliation at The Village Church before pursuing divorce from my spouse (Matt. 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10-11; for the role of the church in the process of divorce, see Paul's concern for the resolution of legal matters within the assembly of the church in 1 Cor. 6).
- I will refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, gossip and other sinful behavior as the Bible dictates (Rom. 1:28-32; 13:13; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:18; James 3:3-18).

- **to refrain from such activities that the Scriptures would deem foolish** (Rom. 14:14-23).
- **to take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially actions or situations that could present a stumbling block to another** (1 Cor. 8:1-13).

- **to submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit by:**
 - following the biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another—the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration.
 - receiving righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers (Ps. 141:5; Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:9-13; Heb. 12:5-11).
- **to do the following when I sin:**
 - confess my sin to God and to fellow believers .
 - repent and seek help to put my sin to death (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:6-10).
- **to submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church and diligently strive for unity and peace within the church** (Eph. 4:1-3; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:5).
- **to do the following should I leave the church for righteous reasons:**
 - to notify the appropriate staff member on the campus I attend.
 - to seek another church with which I can carry out my biblical responsibilities as a believer.

FAQS

Is Covenant Membership in a local church biblical?

While we do not find explicit texts in Scripture commanding membership in a local church, the New Testament Scriptures are saturated with texts that imply formal membership within local churches. A few examples include:

- The commands for elders of local churches to oversee and shepherd local churches (Acts 20:28-30, 1 Pet. 5:1-4). In order for the elders to be faithful to these commands and held accountable for them (Heb. 13:17), they must have had a listing of who the individual members within their local church were.
- Paul commanded the local church in Corinth to formally remove a man from their congregation (1 Cor. 5:1-13). Formal exclusion presupposes formal inclusion.
- The early church kept a list of widows (1 Tim. 5:9). If widows were listed and kept track of, it is likely that other lists were kept and tracked within the church, possibly including a list of the individual members who formed the local church body.

We believe that a form of formal membership within local churches was understood and present in the early church. In the Bible, to be a part of the universal Church means that you are a part of a local church, as well.

Why do we have a Membership Covenant?

The primary purpose of the covenant is to serve as a teaching document with three functions:

- To clarify the biblical obligations and expectations for both the elders of The Village Church and the individual members to The Village Church body.
- To establish teaching and doctrinal parameters for The Village Church body.
- To serve as a tool for reflection and growth toward holiness.

There are many benefits that come from signing the covenant:

- It provides a spiritual family to support and encourage you in your walk with Christ (Eph. 2:19-20).
- It gives you a place to discover and use your gifts of ministry (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4).
- It places you under the care of spiritual leaders (1 Pet. 5:1-4).
- It provides you with the accountability to grow in the grace of God (Heb. 13:17).

Can I break the Covenant?

The covenant states, "Some covenants are unconditional, meaning that two or more parties obligate themselves in such a way that the obligation of each party is not dependent on the faithfulness of the other." In other words, there is a pledge to be faithful to the covenant regardless of the other person's faithfulness. Other covenants are conditional, meaning that the obligation of one party is at least in part dependent upon the faithfulness of the other. While God's gracious covenant with the Church universal is unconditional, the local church covenant is in part conditioned upon the faithfulness of each party.

If at any time an individual member feels as though the corporate church body is not remaining faithful to the requirements of the covenant, it is the responsibility of the individual member to lovingly and humbly express concerns to the leadership of the church. If the church elders are unwilling to change and pursue covenant faithfulness, the member is freed from his or her membership obligations and encouraged to seek membership elsewhere given the church's disobedience. In addition, certain circumstances may provide sufficient and righteous grounds to transfer membership elsewhere.

Examples of righteous grounds to transfer membership:

- A breaking of the covenant by the elders of the church
- Moving to a new city
- Getting married
- Finding a healthy church closer to your own neighborhood

Examples of unrighteous grounds to transfer membership:

- Leaving the church out of a spirit of consumerism
- Leaving during a time of sin and rebellion
- Leaving in a state of hurt or offense

What is the process of making revisions to this covenant?

The process for making revisions to this Membership Covenant would be the same as when we revised the original. We would discern that there is a legitimate need for revision, make the revision, gain elder consensus and implement the change. All proposed revisions are taken seriously, but are not necessarily ultimately implemented.

What is an example of a failure on the part of the elders'/members' disobedience?

We hope and pray that both leadership and members will respectively remain faithful to the calling to which we have been called by the Lord. In the event that one of these parties is unfaithful to the covenant, meaning they are being disobedient to the Scriptures, which the covenant expounds, the other party has the right and responsibility to engage the other in regard to their particular error. It is expected that this engagement would follow all of the appropriate levels of discipline according to the dictates of Scripture. If one party continues in unrepentant and habitual sin, it might become appropriate to separate from fellowship.

An example of how the church elders might fail in such a way as to lead a member to engage and ultimately leave the church would be doctrinal error. If the leadership of the church begins to teach heterodox (as opposed to orthodox) theology, the members are encouraged to confront us and seek our turning from error. If we were to be unwilling to repent of doctrinal error, we sincerely hope you would leave and find a place that preaches the true gospel.

An example of how an individual member might fail in such a way as to lead the church to engage and ultimately ask a member to leave would include unrepentant immorality. If a member of the church were involved in adultery, for example, the church would approach him or her to seek repentance and reconciliation. If that member were unwilling to acknowledge and repent from the sin, the discipline might ultimately escalate to the point where he or she was no longer allowed to participate in life here at The Village Church until such a time of repentance and the pursuit healing and restoration.

How does divorce affect the qualification of an individual for leadership?

Divorce is a painful and tragic result of the collision of sin in the lives of fallen individuals. It should always be avoided as sacrificial and selfless love, forgiveness and reconciliation are exalted as the greatest path for the believer.

Given the continued struggle with the flesh in this fallen world, divorce is an unfortunate reality, even within the Church. How divorce affects a man or woman for leadership within a particular local church is complex and depends greatly upon the exact circumstances leading up to and continuing on as a result of the divorce. The Scriptures nowhere directly state that a man or woman who has been divorced is universally prohibited from holding positions of leadership within a local church.² That said, one's continued sinful response to a divorce (bitterness, unforgiveness, unwillingness to pursue reconciliation, etc.) or the circumstances surrounding that divorce may certainly do so.

Members of The Village Church who have been divorced and now desire positions of leadership are encouraged to speak with a pastor for help in wading through these intricate issues. Our desire is in no way to condemn or discourage but rather to encourage whatever repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation are necessary because only in obedience will true joy be found.

² It is our belief that the biblical requirement that elders be "the husband of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6) does not refer to divorce but rather to unfaithfulness to one's current wife.

What is the distinction between the terms elder, pastor, minister and deacon?

Although an oversimplification of the biblical offices within the church, the definitions below provide clarity around how these titles are used at The Village:

- **Central Elders** – Oversee church theology, philosophy, direction, vision, finances, constitution, campuses, church plants, intellectual property, strategic partnerships, campus elders, lead pastors and campus pastors.
- **Campus Elders** – Oversee campus staff, membership, missionaries, contextualization, implementation, deacons, finances and discipleship.
- **Pastors** – Oversee campus staff, membership, missionaries, contextualization, implementation, deacons, finances, discipleship and teaching.
- **Ministers** – Assist campus elders and pastors in carrying out the mission of the church.
- **Deacons** – Assist campus elders, pastors and ministers in carrying out the mission of the church.

Why do we list certain behaviors and not others in our covenant?

There are two equally dangerous errors within churches. First is a tendency to promote rules at the expense of grace to such a degree as to give rise to legalism. Second is a tendency to ignore rules while using grace as a license to sin. Both are clearly rejected in the Scriptures and are to be avoided by those who love the Lord and His Word.

The Scriptures explicitly state that certain behaviors and attitudes are proper and others improper among God's children. Where the Scriptures speak on the matter, we want to do the same. That said, if we were to list out every single attitude and action promoted or prohibited in the Scriptures, this section of the covenant would be quite lengthy. We therefore provide instruction on behaviors that are explicitly required or rejected in the Scriptures and especially those relevant to our culture.

While the Scriptures emphasize matters of the heart more than external behavior, we chose to not require commands such as love, humility, and forgiveness because we believe these attitudes are immeasurable. Our hope behind this document is to give our members tangible evidences of God's grace so they might see

if their lives are in accordance with the Scriptures, which do this same thing. In 1 John, while describing the necessity of the attitude of love, the author realizes the inherent ambiguity of such a word and therefore gives clarity. Rather than merely saying "love one another," he gives a real life, pastoral example to qualify the command. He makes the overarching command tangible by speaking of our generosity toward others as an evidence of our love (1 John 3:16-18). The goal is love, but generosity and giving are a test to determine the validity of our love. In this way, all of the moral obligations are merely our way of helping to paint a picture of what it looks like to put to death the old manner of life and clothe ourselves with the newness of life that comes through the Spirit.

What happens if I break the covenant?

Given the remaining corruption of the flesh in the life of a believer, it is expected that each and every member of The Village Church will break the covenant. While this disobedience is not encouraged, it is an unfortunate reality of the present struggle with sin. Our expectation for members is not perfection but rather the passionate, humble and repentant pursuit of holiness.

The proper response to a break in the covenant is repentance, but depending on the way the covenant is broken, repentance might be sought in a number of ways. The proper response might merely include confession to a trusted friend. For example, if a member were to go out one night and drink to the point of drunkenness, that individual is expected to confess that action and whatever attitudes might lie behind that action to those with whom they walk in community. If the drunkenness was not isolated, confession should also be accompanied by seeking out further help, such as participation in Recovery Groups.

The proper response to other breaks in the covenant could include not only confession to a member's particular community but also a conversation with the pastoral staff. For example, if a member were engaged in gossip about a fellow member or pastor and this gossip led to division in the church, it is appropriate for the member who has erred to confess their role in the strife to the church. Such honesty not only displays humility, but it also gives the church leadership

the knowledge of the circumstances of the division necessary to bring light into the issue and promote unity.

Is baptismal mode essential?

The Baptist tradition has historically required two elements to baptism. First, the baptized must be a believer. Second, the mode of baptism must be by immersion. The Village Church differs slightly from our Baptist tradition.

We require baptism following a profession of faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ for the purpose of membership. This is commonly called “believer’s baptism” given that we are only baptizing those who openly profess to be believers. This is opposed to what is called infant baptism (paedobaptism); on this point, we agree with the Scriptures and our Baptist tradition.

Given that there is overwhelming evidence in the Scriptures for baptism by immersion, the mode of baptism practiced within the context of our body is immersion. This mode is opposed to sprinkling or pouring, which are common in some churches, and is in agreement with the Scriptures and our Baptist tradition. What is perhaps not in agreement with our tradition is that we have not made mode a requisite for membership. Individuals sprinkled or poured with water following a profession of faith are not required to undergo another baptism (immersion) in order to become members at The Village.

For a thorough explanation of why we believe baptism is to be after conversion and by immersion, we offer baptism classes throughout the year.

Where can we celebrate communion?

On the subject of communion, the Scriptures say little about the when and the where. Instead the emphasis is on the who and the why. The focus of the Lord’s Supper is not on the location where it takes place or the frequency it is held. The main factors in celebrating communion are those involved and why it is being observed.

The first observance of the Lord’s Supper is found in the Gospels. Jesus and His disciples observe it around a table, during a meal together. It took place in a very

relational and informal setting. The local church eventually observed a more formalized, corporate version of communion during its worship services, based on Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 11. Yet there is no evidence that they stopped observing it “day by day, from house to house” as described in Acts 2.

We should not diminish the weight of this ordinance in the life of the church. Besides the active preaching of the gospel, observing communion is another important means by which we “proclaim the Lord’s death to the world until He comes.” Care should be taken when sharing in the Lord’s Supper. It should be an opportunity for believers (the who) to proclaim Christ’s death, engage in personal repentance and emphasize the unity of all believers (the why). While ordained clergy or selected church officers do not need to be present, Wayne Grudem notes: “To guard against abuse of the Lord’s Supper, a responsible leader ought to be in charge of administering it.”

The Village regularly observes the Lord’s Supper during corporate worship gatherings including our weekly services and monthly Elder-Led Prayer. We also encourage our members to consider sharing “believers-only” communion with family and friends during special times such as holidays, group meetings, weddings, etc. However, the atmosphere should be Christ-centered, and the leaders should take care to explain the meaning and importance of this ordinance in case unbelievers are present.

For more information on this topic, check out:

- The Lord’s Supper, Chapter 28 in *Bible Doctrine* by Wayne Grudem
- *The Lord’s Supper* by Beau Hughes, Denton campus pastor
- *The Lord’s Supper* by Thomas Schreiner

How are we defining gospel-centered community and how do we engage in it?

The Village wants its members to live “Christianly.” We want to be distinct in the way we work, speak, think, rest and play. We want to do that which glorifies our gracious Lord and Savior. To properly reflect His communal nature and to follow His communal commands, we must as a people engage in fellowship that is sacrificially loving, consistent, worshipful and

authentically transparent. In this way, we seek to “do life together.” A gospel-centered community demonstrates sacrificial love, meets consistently, worships corporately and is authentically transparent about sin, sorrow, joy and triumph.

There are many ways at The Village to engage in gospel-centered community. Our primary means for adults is through Home Groups and Recovery Groups.

Are Home Groups or Recovery Groups required for membership?

The hope for members is engagement in gospel-centered community, not exclusively Home Groups or Recovery Groups. We do believe that these groups provide a viable and valuable opportunity to engage in gospel-centered community; however, we do not believe it is the only means to engage in it.

Therefore, Home Groups or Recovery Groups are not required for Covenant Membership. They are the recommended vehicles we have provided as the main opportunity for people to find gospel-centered community, but they are not the only available option. Essentially, membership at The Village means, in part, that you have agreed to be engaged in gospel-centered community, which occurs in Home Groups and Recovery Groups but in other settings, as well.

What are actions that are foolish but not necessarily sinful?

There is great freedom in the gospel. We are no longer under law but grace (Rom. 6:14). This truth means that there is an incredible amount of liberty in regard to the actions of a believer. We can partake with thanksgiving in many things that have historically been restricted. This does not however mean that anything goes.

The Scriptures state that there are two types of actions that are inappropriate for believers. The first are those behaviors explicitly prohibited as sin within the Scriptures. The second are those behaviors not explicitly prohibited yet wisdom would deem them foolish in particular circumstances. Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8-9 speak of this second type of prohibited behavior. Both passages clarify the general call for the believer to give up his or her own personal rights for the sake

of the promotion of the gospel and the good of others. From giving up alcohol in the presence of an alcoholic, to giving up television where you find yourself enslaved to it, true freedom is found not in grasping for our rights but in seeking the glory and renown of Jesus Christ, who is glorified in us as we more closely mirror Him.

All our behaviors are to be toward the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). Anything that does not stir our affections for Him and provide in some manner for us to better exalt the Lord and promote His gospel is to be gladly avoided. With single-minded focus, we are to pursue His glory, joyfully denying ourselves the lesser pleasures that the world offers for the lasting pleasure of the presence of Christ.

What sins do I confess to a fellow believer?

1 John 1:9 states, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Confession of sin is a crucial element of discipleship and spiritual formation. When men and women came forward to be baptized by John the Baptist, they confessed their sins (Matt. 3:6, Mark 1:5). When the city of Ephesus was being turned upside down by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the teaching of Paul, the people who came to fear God did so in part by confessing their sins (Acts 19:18). Confession is a natural response of the heart and mind that understands the horror of sin against a perfectly holy and good God.

All sin should then be confessed to God because all sin is an affront to Him. It is also wise to pray for the recognition of sin that is not currently visible that we might continue to root out and put to death, by the Spirit, that corruption which remains (Ps. 19:12-14).

While the Scriptures also tell us to confess our sins to each other (James 5:16), they never give explicit practical insight into what this practice looks like. Based upon the full revelation of Scripture, it seems appropriate to have varying degrees of public confession. For some sins, confession to another might merely include telling your spouse or one other trusted friend for the sake of your own humility and as a safeguard against that sin taking root. For other sins, it might be appropriate to confess to everyone in your gospel-centered community. For example, if you find that you struggle with anger, it

would be prudent to confess a particular incident for the sake of accountability and prayer within the group. Still, other sins would wisely be confessed in the context of church leadership. For example, sins that have caused division within the church should be communicated to leaders so that they might be appropriately informed to best fight strife and promote unity.

As a general rule, the extent of the confession should probably correspond to the extent of the sin.

What do I need to do in order to become a Covenant Member?

- Register for the membership class.
- Watch pre-class videos on RightNow Media.
- Send written copy of testimony to your affirmation leader.
- Attend the class.
- Read *Church Membership* by Jonathan Leeman.
- Confirm you have been baptized following your salvation.
- Meet with your table leader(s) to sign the covenant.

MEMBERSHIP AFFIRMATION MEETING

Membership at The Village is a three-step process of class, preparation and affirmation. Membership is not complete until you finish the membership class, read and view the appropriate membership materials and complete an affirmation meeting.

Your campus representative should fill you in during the membership class on the exact process of affirmation, but it will involve a meeting between you, your spouse if applicable, and a Covenant Member of the church. This will provide us an opportunity to personally interact with you and hear your individual story of the circumstances surrounding your conversion and what led you to The Village. It will also allow you to ask further questions regarding membership.

To prepare for that meeting, please read the entirety of this membership booklet and Jonathan Leeman's short book entitled *Church Membership* handed out during the class. Also, spend some time thinking about your testimony as you will be asked to share the story of God's grace in your life during the affirmation meeting.

SHARING YOUR TESTIMONY

We want to help you think about all the Lord has done in your life and rejoice in the transformation of your heart by Jesus Christ. A testimony is a witness and proclamation of who God is, what He has done, as well as what we believe and how those beliefs changed us. The point is to glorify God, not make it all about us. We hope these questions aid you in thinking through how God revealed Himself to you and changed your life.

Life Before Christ

1. We all have different journeys to Jesus. Before we knew His saving grace, we desperately needed His saving grace. What did your life look like before knowing Christ?
2. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" What internal sin and pain were you walking in before knowing Christ?

Conversion

1. Though we lead different lives leading up to Christ, we all reach that point when we realize our need for salvation. What brought you to this moment?
2. What did God do in your life that led you to consider Christ? When did you begin sensing His call?
3. How have your beliefs changed?
4. What has God revealed to you about who He is? How has that changed you?

Life With Christ

1. After salvation, the Holy Spirit begins the work of sanctification. He begins to mold us and chip away at our lives and hearts so that we might better imitate Christ. How have you seen fruit in your life and evidences of the Holy Spirit working in you?
2. What external changes have you seen? How has your heart changed?

COVENANT MEMBER MEETINGS

Periodically, each campus will call a Covenant Member Meeting. These meetings, led by campus pastors, will typically follow Elder-Led Prayer and serve as an occasion to be more intentional with how we function as Covenant Members and provide opportunities to celebrate and communicate with our people.

Our hope and prayer is that Covenant Membership will go much deeper with us and take on significant levels of responsibility and accountability that accompany active participation in the local church.

We hope that you will make every effort to attend these meetings. Please check the Events section of our website for dates and details.

COVENANT MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Once you become a Covenant Member, we will ask you to participate periodically in our Covenant Membership Renewal process. This online process gives each of us the opportunity to reconsider the weight and responsibility of church membership. It also provides the staff and leadership the occasion to be reminded of what God has asked of us as we lead and shepherd the flock of God among us.

Another benefit of Covenant Membership Renewal is that we can get an accurate assessment of how many members we actually have. Members are asked to give updated contact information, provide feedback, etc. These logistical details are essential to our desire to know and love the people the Lord has entrusted to us.

Covenant Membership Renewal will take place online. We ask all members to complete this process and to take seriously the chance to be reminded of our roles and responsibilities as members of the body of Christ. We encourage you to set aside a period of time to not just check the requirement off a to-do list but rather to read and prayerfully consider the opportunities and responsibilities that accompany membership in a local church.

COMMUNICATION

CONNECTION CENTRAL

Located in the main lobby, Connection Central is a hub for people to learn more about the church and how to get involved in ministry. It is a place for questions and help as our volunteers and pastors steer you toward getting connected into life at The Village.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Twitter: @villagechurchtx

Instagram: @villagechurchtx

Facebook: facebook.com/thevillagechurch

YouTube: youtube.com/villagechurchtx

Pinterest: pinterest.com/villagechurchtx

WEBSITE AND APP

thevillagechurch.net

The Village Church Resources

tvresources.net

Download The Village Church app on the App Store or on Google Play.

MY ACCOUNT

Through your personal account with The Village, you can update profile information, schedule online giving, access the church's Membership Directory and change your email newsletter settings. Staying up-to-date with your account helps our pastors and elders better minister to our members.

To sign up for an account or to access your account, scroll to the bottom of our website on any page. You'll see a button that says "My Account."

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

Our website features an online Membership Directory. Covenant Members will receive an email with instructions for opting into this directory.

NEWSLETTERS

We have two newsletters we send out regularly through email. If you're not receiving these emails, you can sign up on our website.

- *The Village News* – This is a twice-a-month email to our church at large with resources, news, event information and more.
- *Campus Update* – This is a weekly campus-specific email with a word from your pastors, event information and more.

NOTES

SESSION 3

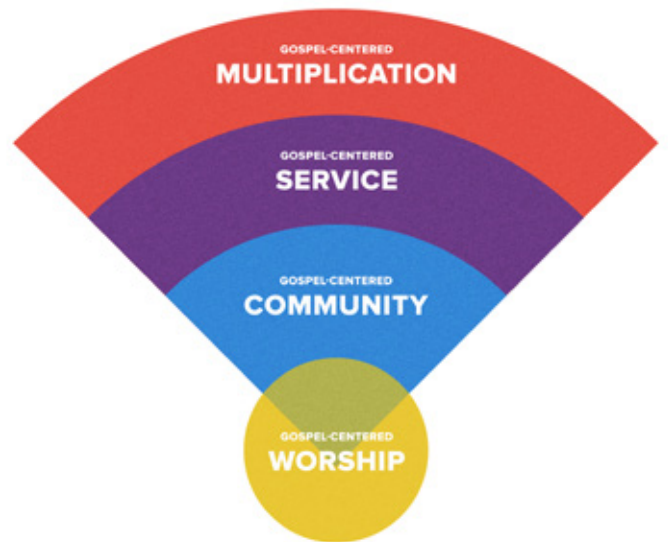
Mission and Ministry

MISSION OF...

GOD: GLORY

THE CHURCH: MAKE DISCIPLES

THE VILLAGE: TO BRING GLORY TO GOD BY MAKING DISCIPLES THROUGH...



MISSION

THE MISSION OF GOD

All things exist and are being worked according to the triune God's passion, pleasure and plan (Eph. 1:11), which is the demonstration of His own intrinsic glory. God creates, calls, rescues, redeems, saves, restores, restrains and grants all to the end that He might be praised.

His desire, which He will surely fulfill, is that the knowledge of His glory would cover the earth as the waters do the sea (Hab. 2:14). God's mission is the manifestation of His magnificence. His mission is glory.

What is the glory of God? The glory of God is the gravity that keeps those who see and savor it from spinning off into the spacious trivialities of sin. God's desire is that He might be known and enjoyed for His nature and character. He seeks to be recognized as supremely valuable, supremely worthy and supremely splendid. God's glory is sensed when we feel the reality of His presence, goodness and superiority.

Isaiah 48:9-11, Ephesians 1:3-14, Isaiah 43:6-7, Ezekiel 20:14

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The mission of the Church universal is to glorify God by making disciples through the gospel of Jesus Christ. God's mission and the mission of His Church are inseparably linked. If God's mission is to be glorified through the redemption and reconciliation of a people, the Church's mission must orient around the glory of God and seek to glorify Him through redemption and reconciliation.

The mission of the Church is highlighted in 2 Corinthians 5. As those who have been reconciled to God through the gospel of Jesus Christ, we are now ambassadors of reconciliation to a lost and broken world. We plead, urge, implore, reason, pray, serve, preach, teach and gather to see God glorified through reconciliation.

THE MISSION OF THE VILLAGE CHURCH

At The Village Church, the means by which we pursue the glory of God in the making of disciples is four-fold. Our mission is *to bring glory to God by making disciples through gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service and gospel-centered multiplication.*

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

To explain the gospel fully, it takes a combination of two perspectives—the global work of God to reconcile all things to Himself and the life, death, resurrection and future return of Jesus Christ. The combination of the two perspectives provides a crisp, clear and lifelike expression of the story.

The gospel is the historical narrative of the triune God orchestrating the reconciliation and redemption of a broken creation and fallen creatures, from Satan, sin and its effects to the Father and each other through the life, death, resurrection and future return of the substitutionary Son by the power of the Spirit for God's glory and the Church's joy.

WHY GOSPEL-CENTERED?

We are gospel-centered because the gospel is God's redemptive plan, and in it we see Him most clearly for who He is and what He has done.

Our mission statement intentionally emphasizes the centrality of the gospel in all that we do. We never graduate from or outgrow the gospel. It is the very work of God for salvation from beginning to end (Rom. 1:16-17).

If the ultimate purpose of God is His glory and if the Church's underlying purpose is to bring Him glory, why are we "gospel-centered" and not "glory-centered" or "God-centered"? We are "gospel-centered" to show the centrality of the gospel in the mission of the Church. In the gospel we see the most vivid and comprehensive demonstration of God's glory. It is the very manifestation of His glory. In it, we see more clearly the love, justice,

wrath, grace, mercy, holiness and patience of God. We see the humility of the Son, and we experience grace.

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

A disciple is a person who has been reconciled into relationship with God through new birth by trust in the gospel and is subsequently growing in a love for God and love for others.

In giving the command to “make disciples” in Matthew 28, Jesus gives two qualifications. The first is baptism, which is the ceremonial initiation into the Christian life as a symbol of entering into the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The second is teaching for the sake of obedience to all that Christ commanded.

What did Christ command? The Scriptures summarize the teaching of Christ in two inseparably-linked ways: belief and love. A person who truly trusts or believes the gospel will love, and that person loves because he or she has first entered into relationship with God through faith.

At The Village, we link this vision to our mission by saying that a disciple is a believer in Jesus Christ learning to grow in gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service and gospel-centered multiplication. In short, disciples worship, belong, serve and multiply.

WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

Discipleship is the holistic process of growth in gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service and gospel-centered multiplication. This process occurs as people respond to the gospel, creating worship in a community serving others to see Christ multiplied.

GOSPEL-CENTERED WORSHIP

Life consists of constant worship. Every thought, word, desire and deed involves the ascribing of worth and value—glory. Each attitude, affection and activity is an expression of our allegiance, whether to our Creator or His creation. God alone is worthy of our worship.

Worship is related to every area of our lives. We are called to eat, drink, speak, think and work to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). Worship cannot be narrowed down to a particular time and place as if God does

not claim authority over certain aspects of our lives. There are no neutral desires or deeds; everything is an expression of worship.

Gospel-centered worship is the fuel for discipleship.

It is nurtured through the gathering of the saints in a corporate service—primarily weekend worship services and Elder-Led Prayer. Within these venues, we worship God by remembering the gospel through preaching, teaching, singing, praying and celebrating the ordinances of baptism and communion. Each presents an opportunity for the church to receive, remember, respond and rejoice in the work of our great King.

1 Corinthians 10:31, Psalm 145:1-21, Isaiah 43:6-7, Colossians 3:1-17

GOSPEL-CENTERED COMMUNITY

We worship a triune God, who has eternally existed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In identifying the tri-unity of God, we recognize that God is communal. Bearing the image of God, mankind is called to reflect this reality.

Though each Christian has a personal relationship with God, that relationship is not individual or private. The Christian faith is not intended to be lived in isolation. We were made for community—relationship with God and with each other. The local church is not merely a place that we attend but a people to whom we belong. The Bible calls us members of the body (1 Cor. 12:12-31) with the expectation that we contribute to the body for the glory of God and the good of His people.

Gospel-centered community is a radical call amid a culture of mere attendance and casual involvement. It involves mutual love, care, consistency and authenticity as we seek to adorn the person and work of Christ with our lives.

Gospel-centered community is the context for discipleship.

Home Groups and Recovery Groups are two examples of places where our people can connect to the church body. Groups are not perfect and those who participate in them will find them messy at times. However, our hope is that group members will be radically committed to reform from within. This takes time, prayer, effort, patience, love, trust and hope.

Acts 2:42-47, Hebrews 3:12-13, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

GOSPEL-CENTERED SERVICE

In John 13:1-20, we read the account of Jesus washing His disciples' feet. This was no regular rabbinical task, but was instead reserved for the lowest of all servants. Here was the anointed King, the eternal Son of God, the blessed Lord, doing the inconceivable.

By humbly cleansing the feet of His disciples, Jesus gave an abiding example of service and issued a command for us to follow in His steps. We were saved that we might now serve.

Gospel-centered service is the overflow of discipleship. It is motivated by the reconciling work of God and seeks to extend His grace and mercy to others for His glory and not our own. It is an expression of love and stewardship of grace marked by humility, generosity and hospitality and empowered by a passion for the glory of God.

Service can and should be pursued in various ways by all recipients of varied grace. Those who have been impacted by the gospel have countless opportunities—both formal and informal—to serve others by greeting at the doors of the church, volunteering in one of our Next Generation ministries, teaching, singing, serving communion, giving financially to the needs of others, opening their homes to their neighbors, etc.

John 13:1-20, 1 Peter 3:8-11, 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15

GOSPEL-CENTERED MULTIPLICATION

In perhaps the most famous passage on discipleship, Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus issues the Great Commission for the Church, which involves multiplication. We are to become better disciples through love for God and love for others by equipping and empowering others to do the same. We are called to growth as we extend the gospel of life to a dead world.

Gospel-centered multiplication is the result of discipleship. God has determined the exact time and place in which you live, work and play for His glory (Acts 17:26). God was intentional in directing our lives, so we should live with intentionality in all that we pursue.

We multiply the kingdom by living with the purpose to make God known and enjoyed. From missional living in interacting with neighbors and coworkers to missional outreach or short or long-term mission trips, our lives have been infused with purpose and meaning. The disciple's call is multiplication and replication through the gospel—for the glory of our God.

2 Corinthians 5:11-2, Matthew 28:18-20

MINISTRIES, EVENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

As believers, we are called to both celebrate and imitate Christ. This means ministry isn't limited to the confines of a church building. Like Christ came into this world to make disciples, we are called to do the same. So while we do minister to one another, our deepest desire is to equip and encourage our church body to bring the gospel to their families, workplaces, neighborhoods and communities.

NEXT GEN

Our Next Generation ministries include children and students ages 0-18, preschool through high school. In all these ministries, we have the same mission: to bring glory to God by making disciples through gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service and gospel-centered multiplication. Because we believe that Scripture is clear that parents are the primary disciple-makers in the lives of their children, our hope is to partner with parents in their pursuit of this mission, coming alongside them in the discipleship process. We do this in many ways, but especially through the various resources that we create. These resources help build a strong, gospel-centered foundation for their kids.

Preschool (Birth – K)

In our Preschool Ministry, we strive to create the first building blocks of a strong, gospel-centered foundation for our children. We teach from the Scriptures and help parents proclaim to their kids who God is and what He has done in the person and work of Jesus Christ. During the weekends, in Little Village, we sing, dance and teach the Bible to the kids, focusing on our five foundational truths: God made everything, God is in charge of everything, God is good, Jesus came to save sinners, and God wants to talk with us.

Elementary (1st – 5th)

In our Elementary Ministry, we work to continue building up a strong, gospel-centered foundation for our children. We do this by teaching our kids about the nature and character of God—that He is wise,

generous, loving and good. Our hope is to partner with parents in the discipleship of their children by creating environments, curriculum and resources that center on the gospel of Jesus Christ. On the weekends, in Kids Village, we worship through song, tell stories from the Bible and gather in small groups by age to talk about Scripture together.

Middle School (6th – 8th)

In our Middle School Ministry, we seek to increase that strong, gospel-centered foundation in our students through learning and studying the Word of God and living out biblical community in small groups. Middle school is where our students get their first experience of what group life is like within the church. Our hope is to partner with parents in helping students go deeper with each other, their leaders and, most importantly, God. This ministry looks a little differently at each campus, but what we seek to accomplish is the same.

High School (9th – 12th)

In our High School Ministry, we seek to keep building gospel maturity in our students and help them grow in deeper relationships with each other, their leaders and, most importantly, the Lord. On a weekly basis, our students meet in small groups that are broken up by age and gender and, sometimes, location to learn and study God's Word and to foster biblical community at a young age. It looks a little different at each campus, but what we seek to accomplish is the same.

Family Baptism Class

We treat the baptism of children with special care and have created a class to help parents of 1st – 5th graders walk through the process with their children. The class lasts three weeks, and you must attend all three classes.

Family Discipleship

God calls the family to play a vital role in discipling the next generation. Because of this charge, we want to come alongside our parents and help them in the process. We encourage you to use the language of

time, moments and milestones as a framework for family discipleship.

*Create family discipleship **time**.*

Parents build intentional time into the rhythm of family life for the purpose of thinking about, talking about and living out the gospel. Parents who leverage time prioritize gathering their family in the home regularly—daily or weekly—to read Scripture or pray, to learn about a missionary and to sing praise songs together. Depending on the ages of the children, this regularly occurring time might vary in what it emphasizes and accomplishes.

*Capture family discipleship **moments**.*

Parents capture and leverage opportunities in the course of everyday life for the purpose of gospel-centered conversations. Parents who leverage moments might use a good grade on a test to talk about how God gives us gifts to be used to build His kingdom. They might use an argument between siblings as a chance to talk about mutual submission to one another out of love. Parents who make use of moments look for ways to connect everyday ups and downs to gospel truths.

*Recognize and remember family discipleship **milestones**.*

Parents mark and make occasions to celebrate and commemorate significant spiritual milestones of God's work in the life of the family and child. This might be occasions we make and create, like an orchestrated family rite of passage ceremony. On the other hand, it could be occasions we mark, like a yearly remembrance of a birth or death that was significant to the family.

GROUPS

Home Groups

We pursue and live out gospel-centered community through Home Groups. Made up of men and women from all generations of life, these groups meet throughout the week for fellowship, care, prayer, accountability, sharing stories and studying God's Word. They're a place where we work to consider each other over ourselves. No group is perfect, and no two groups are exactly the same. We don't expect them to be. Because people are messy, groups are messy.

GroupConnect

Through out the year, we host an event at each campus called GroupConnect. This event look a little different from campus to campus, but across the board, the hope is the same: to connect you into a Home Group where you can find a place to live out gospel-centered community. GroupConnect gives you the opportunity to meet different Home Group leaders and to sign up for a Home Group in your area.

Lead a Group

As the Lord grows our church, we continue to need new Home Group leaders. If you are interested in leading a Home Group, we encourage you to fill out an application on our website.

Recovery Groups

We also pursue and live out gospel-centered community through Recovery Groups. These groups give men and women a safe place to pursue redemption in Christ from sin and suffering. We meet for two hours every week at each campus. The first hour includes worship through song and a biblically based lesson or testimony. The second hour includes small groups that address specific issues and struggles.

The issues addressed in these groups fall into three broad categories: suffering primarily as a result of a person's sin (ex. addictions), suffering primarily as a result of a person being sinned against (ex. abuse) and suffering primarily as a result of a person living in a fallen world (ex. infertility).

THE VILLAGE CHURCH INSTITUTE

The Village Church Institute desires to make whole disciples who worship, serve, belong and multiply, following three steps:

Learn God's story through His Word. In order to understand who God is, you become more familiar with the Bible and what He has done to reconcile the world to Himself in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Know how that story informs your beliefs. As you learn more about God through His Word, you also think through major biblical doctrines and how, as a result, your beliefs are shaped by them.

Apply those beliefs to every sphere of your life. With biblical knowledge and rightly rooted beliefs, you live out God's story in your day-to-day, becoming a more whole disciple of Jesus Christ.

The Institute trains and grows disciples through classes, forums and the Training Program.

Classes

We believe that the Bible is for everyone. Our classes give you a place to learn about God's Word and a people to grow with along the way. All classes last 11 weeks and meet for 1-2 hours each week. During that time, you'll hear teaching from The Village staff and trained teachers and discuss what you're learning within a small group.

Forums

Our forums usually last one day and give you an opportunity to learn about relevant, cultural topics and issues in a large group setting. In forums, we address issues like homosexuality, parenting, marriage, singleness and many other important topics. Typically, forums last 2-3 hours with a significant portion devoted to teaching and Q&A. Led by staff and experts both inside and outside The Village, forums are offered churchwide and at the campus level throughout the year.

Training Program

The Training Program is for anyone who wants to know more about God, His story and how they fit into it. You'll learn about this by going through God's Word—the Bible—within community, and as your knowledge of God increases, your love for Him grows. Then, you'll know how God's story shapes your beliefs and see how to live out His plan for reconciling and redeeming the world in your own life. Our goal in the Training Program is to train God's people so that they may be sent into the world as a disciple who worships, serves, belongs and multiplies.

Led by pastors and staff at The Village, the Training Program is currently offered at our Flower Mound campus and Dallas Northway campus, but any person from any campus can come and learn with us. And if you are a seminary student (or hope to be one), you can receive credit toward a degree at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The program lasts one year, with a fall semester (August – December) and a spring semester (January – May). We realize the Training Program is a big commitment, and we ask all participants to attend each week and complete any work required outside of class time.

ASSISTANCE

Although groups and ministries for children and students are the main avenues of spiritual formation at The Village, we offer other forms of assistance, including:

- Biblical counseling
- Deaf & Hard of Hearing Community
- Special Needs ministry
- Financial assistance
- Funerals
- Hospital and home visits
- Premarital counseling
- Weddings

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Gospel-centered service is the overflow of discipleship, serving those in and outside the church. One of the ways we pursue and live out this discipleship trait is through volunteer opportunities, including:

- Connections
- Preschool
- Elementary
- Middle School
- High School
- Facilities
- Production
- Groups
- Worship
- Member Ministries

EVENTS

Throughout the year, we have several events that are very significant in the life of our church.

Elder-Led Prayer

Every month, each campus gathers together to worship and bring petitions to the Lord. This is one of the most important events in the life of our church, and we strongly encourage all members and attendees to come.

Covenant Member Meeting

God calls us to a life of sacrifice, generosity, service and radical commitment to the good of the body. Here at The Village, membership recognizes and responds to the call of discipleship in the context of gospel-centered community. It is an affirmation and agreement to contribute to the good of the body rather than consume from it.

Usually every month or every other month, Covenant Member Meetings are held following Elder-Led Prayer. Covenant Members are encouraged to attend because we discuss important information in the life of the church.

OUTREACH

God has graciously allowed us to be part of what he is doing in our city, country and world. We have been given the privilege to send out missionaries and church planters and partner with and support churches and organizations—all to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Through short-term mission trips, various community ministries and partnerships, we have opportunities to be ministers of reconciliation and spread the good news of the gospel.

In the Community

We have the opportunity to serve and minister to those in our community through several local ministries and organizations, including:

- Chin Refugee Ministry
- Seek the Peace
- International Student Fellowship
- Champions of Hope
- Communities in Schools
- Christian Community in Action

Short-Term Trips

Through short-term mission trips, we minister to and with churches, organizations and missionaries in places all around the world, including:

- Ghana
- Guatemala
- India
- Kenya
- Taiwan
- Japan
- Ecuador

OUR PARTNERSHIPS

Our partnerships with different churches and organizations are united together under one vision: to bring glory to God by making disciples of Jesus Christ. We are invested, involved and connected in these relationships for the long run, learning from one another and ministering to one another. We initiate all partnerships and maintain them by a mutual agreement. Outside our partnerships, we have support relationships that allow us to resource and assist churches and organizations. These relationships are not necessarily relationally driven, formalized or holistic. They simply give us the privilege of blessing others.

Churches

Apostles Church NYC – New York City
Casa de Libertad – Guatemala
City on a Hill – Boston
Epiphany Fellowship – Philadelphia
EPC of South Sudan – South Sudan
Rift Valley Fellowship – Kenya

Organizations

Acts 29 – Global
Campus Outreach – UNT and UTD
Champions of Hope – South Dallas
Communities in Schools – Denton County
Fellowship Associates – United States
Seek the Peace – Dallas
Involved for Life – Dallas
Reconciliation Outreach – Dallas
Young Life – Global

ADDITIONAL READING

GIVING

God gives. No truth is more readily apparent in Scripture than the generosity, grace and gifts of God. He delights in giving.

As those being conformed to the image of Christ, we should equally delight in giving. And it isn't just giving in general that is expected; it is selfless and sacrificial giving that overflows from a heart responding to the generosity of the gospel.

Rather than prescribing a tithe of 10%, we encourage a lifestyle marked by generous and sacrificial giving in general for God's glory and our joy. Christians have a tremendous opportunity to proclaim the gospel by giving generously. Giving invigorates our devotion to Christ and frees us from the tyranny of consumerism. It provides an outlet for compassion and allows us to proclaim His sufficiency and provision. As people of faith, we give faithfully and generously.

As we pursue this opportunity to participate in the grace of giving (2 Cor. 8:7), here are a few principles to consider:

1. GIVE GENEROUSLY.

Consider 2 Corinthians 8-9. If you want to grasp giving, read those chapters and read them again. Not just the "God loves the cheerful giver" section, but the whole thing. The Macedonians gave generously, "beyond their means," and begged earnestly for "the favor" of doing so. This is radical giving, not just throwing some pocket change in the plate as it passes by.

2. GIVE CHEERFULLY.

There is a reward for giving, but it is dependent upon a heart free from a lust for the temporal rewards of this earth (Matt. 6:1-4). Gospel giving is cheerful and voluntary because it trusts that every deposit into the kingdom will earn eternal interest.

If you can't give cheerfully, give anyway (don't compound your internal sin with external sin), but as you do, confess your struggle, seek clarity on the disconnect between your heart and the gospel, pray for joy and walk in repentance.

3. GIVE SACRIFICIALLY.

This is probably the most underappreciated and underapplied principle for Christian giving today. It inconveniences us, and the flesh is quick to offer excuses and justification, but the gospel calls us to deep and radical sacrifice.

In 1 John 3:16-17, the apostle exhorts the Church to care for brothers in need as an overflow and implication of gospel love, the type of love that lays down one's life for another. Do we actually give to the point that we feel it and the feeling stings? Does the call to take up our cross (Matt. 16:24-26) not also carry the charge to lay down our checkbooks?

4. GIVE SPONTANEOUSLY.

A heart freed by the gospel does not wait for opportunities to give. It intentionally seeks them out. Gospel giving looks for chances to bless others and listens to the needs of those near and far.

Gospel generosity gives to those who beg (Matt. 5:42), risking the gift might not be used properly (which is not to say that it is not righteous and wise to occasionally withhold support for some greater purpose). Those walking in the light of the gospel engage in good deeds and meet pressing needs anytime and anywhere they arise.

5. GIVE REGULARLY.

Though we should give as need arises, we should also be consistent and disciplined in giving. Giving is linked with prayer and fasting (Matt. 6:1-18), and both should contain some element of discipline and regularity.

In 1 Corinthians 16:2, the apostle Paul explicitly commends a disciplined and orderly form of giving in addition to whatever spontaneous offerings and gifts we might be compelled to give.

6. GIVE SECRETLY.

Jesus doesn't necessarily intend for us to sign Christmas cards "John Doe," but there is a general theme of secret giving for the sake of eternal reward. The flesh craves the praise of man, and thus we need to beware the hypocrisy and tendency to give in an effort to purchase the acclaim, attention and affection of others (Matt. 6:2-4).

7. GIVE THANKFULLY.

Grace is the basis for gratitude. As those who have received grace, we should gratefully extend it to others.

Knowing how we should give in principle, we see that Scripture calls us to give to:

1. Our local church
2. Our spiritual family
3. Our biological family
4. Our neighbors
5. Our enemies

Though the law of the tithe as understood in its Old Testament context is no longer mandatory for believers, we argue strongly that giving a regular, set amount to your local church is a healthy and helpful principle. God commands the church members to support those who explicitly labor for the sake of the kingdom (1 Tim. 5:17-18; 1 Cor. 9:3-12), and the church leaders often have a greater picture of the church's and the community's needs.

Within the New Testament, we see the early church selling their possessions and laying the proceeds at the feet of the apostles (Acts 4:32-37), trusting them to discern how to best steward the gifts. In the same way, you should entrust a major portion of your giving to your local church. If you are not currently covenanted with a church whose leadership you trust, you have a responsibility to honestly consider the motivations of your own heart and humbly dialogue through your concerns with your leaders. If, after taking these steps,

your mistrust is found to be appropriate, go elsewhere. If you can't trust your pastors with your giving, you probably shouldn't trust them with your growth in Christ.

In addition to giving to a local church, there are many missionaries and ministries in need of funding, as well as countless family, friends, neighbors, enemies, widows, orphans, and the impoverished and oppressed. Such need requires attentive hearts. It is hard to be generous and compassionate without being observant and aware of the needs around us.

Informed by gospel lenses, we should not think of giving as a mere responsibility, but an opportunity. In view of this reality, 10% should not be the goal. We should continue to think through how we can afford to give more and more. The gospel compels us to give, confronting our fleshly tendencies toward greed, control, comfort and convenience.

What if a raise or bonus provided an opportunity to further advance the gospel rather than buy a bigger house? What if where we ate and traveled and what we wore and drove were all filtered through kingdom lenses? What if we sought to give not 10% but 25% or 50% or more?

Forget the tithe. Are you giving generously, cheerfully, sacrificially, spontaneously, regularly, secretly and thankfully? If not, why not?

RESOURCES

Our desire is to provide the church body with various tools and resources for spiritual formation, as well as training for the work of ministry. We invite you to take full advantage of these resources as you, by God's grace, grow in gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service and gospel-centered multiplication.

WHO GETS THE MONEY FROM ALL THESE RESOURCES?

As a church, we strive to be transparent in all that we do. We also seek to be good stewards of the resources that God has graciously given us. This fleshes itself out in a variety of ways in a variety of areas. For example, when it comes to finances, we make our financial data available online and regularly review and analyze monthly financial statements to direct the mission of our church.

Because the Lord has begun to bless us with more and more opportunities for resourcing, from books to albums to curriculum, we developed a new IP (intellectual property) policy that we wanted to make you aware of. The hope of this policy is to shepherd well not only our resources but also the hearts and minds of those involved in and impacted by our ministry.

The policy itself is simple. Each work is evaluated by the creator and an intellectual property committee, and all ownership options are discussed. When a work falls under the scope of a staff member's job description, the church will become the owner of that work and hold the rights associated with it. The church will support the work, allowing the individual to use church time and resources in its creation. If leadership decides that a work does not fall under an employee's job description, the decision will be documented in writing, and that individual will agree to complete the work with personal resources and on personal time.

To date we've had several encouraging IP meetings about projects, and the Lord has blessed those

discussions with open hands and hearts of all involved. A few of our resources include the books *The Explicit Gospel*, *Creature of the Word* and *Recovering Redemption* and the albums *Raging Strong* and *Beneath the Canopy*. That means that everyone who participated in these works turned over all rights to The Village. Matt Chandler, Josh Patterson, Isaac Wimberley, John Warren and several others have in essence said, "We are doing this for the sake of His kingdom and under the direction of The Village," thereby entrusting our church to steward the process and the financial benefits.

There have been and will continue to be other works where the decisions will be different. In these cases, the creator will still be doing the work for the sake of His kingdom, yet the individual will be entrusted to individually steward the opportunity and financial benefits.

This IP policy exists to extend grace and freedom to staff members in future opportunities while helping protect the entire staff from division, idolatry and sin. We recognize that God has blessed us with many creative employees and an incredible reach, and we want to be good stewards of that reach in a generous, biblical manner. That is our heart and prayer.

THE VILLAGE CHURCH RESOURCES

TVC Resources helps men and women—those inside and outside The Village Church—worship, belong, serve and multiply through discipleship resources such as sermons, albums, videos, articles and more. We cover topics as diverse as practical helps for parenting to testimonies of life change to theological questions and answers. We hope these resources inform your mind and inspire your heart, helping you find your place in God's story so that you might practice and proclaim the gospel in the everyday. For more information, visit www.tvcrestresources.net.

For more information, visit our website at www.thevillagechurch.net.



The Village Church

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