



PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

January 2024

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Introduction

Nowhere in Scripture are we given the idea that we are to use the wisdom and methods of man to run or grow the church. In fact, quite the opposite. Jesus sent the apostles out to proclaim an offensive message (1 Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 5:11) that would not be well received (Matthew 10:22; John 15:18-21). The message and the method has not changed. If we believe that God is sovereign in salvation (John 6:44; Ephesians 2:8) and that He will build His church (Matthew 16:18), then we must trust that by pursuing the priorities of Scripture we are being a faithful church. The metric of success in our culture differs considerably from that of God. His standard of success is faithfulness (“well done good and faithful servant,” Matthew 25:21, 23). The following core principles are key to faithful gospel ministry.

High View of God

God is sovereign (Psalm 115:3, 135:6), holy (Leviticus 19:2, 20:26; Isaiah 6:1-3), righteous and just (Jeremiah 9:24; Micah 6:8), and gloriously transcendent (Romans 11:33; Revelation 4:8-11).

Failure to have a high view of God leads to:

- Tolerating and excusing away sin.
- A devaluing of God’s Word and exalting of man’s opinion.
- A false understanding of salvation and the creation of a man-centered religion.
- A faith that is subjective and based on experience and preference.

A commitment to a high view of God leads us to offer worship that is acceptable and to depend upon the objective truth of His Word as our authority and standard.

High View of Scripture

The Bible is God’s written revelation to man. It is unassailable objective truth (1 Corinthians 2:10-13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). As such, it is the final authority for all faith and practice. We appeal to it as the lens through which to view God, ourselves, and life. 2 Peter 1:3 declares that God has “granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness.” God’s Word is sufficient to lead us in all circumstances of life (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It may not explicitly answer every question we have, but it does give us principles that lead us to glorify God in all aspects of our life.

Failure to have a high view of Scripture leads to:

- Faith that is based on personal experience, current opinion, or what is comfortable. This brand of faith is not saving faith.
- Friendship with the world, rather than hatred of sin.
- A church that has nothing to offer a dying and confused world.

A commitment to a high view of Scripture gives us an anchor for our soul and genuine guidance to navigate through life.

An Accurate View of Man

All of mankind is totally depraved. By nature, there are none who seek after God, none who do good, and none who fear God (Romans 3:10-18). Man's heart is "more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick" (Jeremiah 17:9). Man is described as wicked, and that every intent of our heart is only evil continually (Genesis 6:5).

Failure to have an accurate view of mankind leads to:

- The belief that man is mostly good and that our problems can be solved through politics, society, or self-improvement.
- A false starting point for evangelism.
- A deficient view of grace.

A commitment to an accurate view of man helps us to understand our desperate need for Christ; not only for salvation, but also for day to day battle with sin.

A Right Understanding of the Church

The purpose of the church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21). This is accomplished by its members being built up into a mature faith (Ephesians 4:12-16) through the instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17). The church is where the body ministers to one another through the use of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7). It edifies one another in fellowship (Acts 2:46-47; 1 John 1:3) and through mutual accountability (Galatians 6:1-2). It equips the saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:12) and sends them out to be lights in a dark world in whatever spheres of influence God has placed them (Matthew 5:14-16).

Failure to have a right view of the church leads to:

- A man-centered ministry model.
- A congregation of spectators rather than participants.
- An uncommitted consumeristic approach to church.

A commitment to a right understanding of the church creates a culture of discipleship that deepens our faith, develops our gifts, and gives us a love for the bride of Christ.

Our Philosophy of Ministry is derived from these core principles

Leadership

“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers.” – Ephesians 4:11

Scripture uses synonymous words such as elders, overseers, bishops, and shepherds to describe the office of a church leader; providing a comprehensive meaning to the active “church elder.” To be a church elder, one must first possess the character qualifications that are set by Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Elders must maintain these qualities if they are to stay in their leadership roles. It is important that every godly leader must first understand what God would “have him be,” before he takes steps towards what God would “have him do.”

Christ designed and established elders to lead His church. In His earthly ministry, Jesus appointed specific men and gave them authority to lead and to make decisions for His people (Matthew 18:18-20, 1 Peter 5:1-3). Today, He continues to appoint elders within local churches, so that they would diligently be in the Word and prayer, and for them to bear the responsibility in overseeing all spiritual aspects of the church. This means that elders are to be informed and involved in all spiritual decisions of the church. Scripture clearly teaches that a church is to strive for a plurality of elders (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:22, 23; 20:17; 21:18; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5), and that this office is to be distinctly filled by men (1 Timothy 3:1-2; Titus 1:6). The Bible describes women and men as equal in personhood and spirituality, but unique in their gender roles (Genesis 1:27; 1 Timothy 2:9-15; 1 Corinthians 11:3-11). Since Scripture establishes the role of an elder to be specifically filled by qualified men, elders of GGCC are limited to men. This in no way diminishes the role that women have in the church, but is merely consistent with how the Lord has ordered His church.

Elders are to be assisted by Biblically qualified deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13). The congregation must nominate those who are already serving the church and the Board of Elders must approve them. Deacons serve in the practical matters of

church life, so as to free up the elders to focus on the spiritual needs of the body (Acts 6:1-6). Their service includes, but is not limited to, the care of all matters pertaining to the physical property of the church, caring for the church's widows and orphans, and administrating the benevolence fund.

Daily management of church administration (such as facilities, maintenance, equipment, etc.), should be handled by deacons, administrative staff, and other faithful leaders. Scripture mandates that every church member is to serve their local church, in accordance with their spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7). Therefore, elders must appoint administrative leaders who will assist them and the deacons in the operations that govern specific church functions. The purpose of having church administrators is to make efficient use of the church's resources in a manner that glorifies God. Church administrators should be spiritually mature and able to work well with others. Also, they should be able to plan, organize, delegate, oversee and evaluate wisely (according to biblical principles and goals) the specific functions of the church.

The Elders are responsible to oversee the Deacons, Church Administrators, and Ministry Leaders.

Prayer

“With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints” – Ephesians 6:18

Scripture commands all believers to pray in the Spirit at all times. We believe that the local church is to have a high view of prayer. The word “prayer” refers to a person's speech to God. Praying is not the same as wishing; the difference being that in prayer we address our communication specifically to God, whereas in wishing we simply voice a desire. Prayer is thus distinguished from mental meditation; in that it is always expressed verbally in a logical language (including silent prayers). Praying to God recognizes Him as having providential control over every molecule throughout history in the universe and acknowledges Him as being the ultimate cause of everything. It also demonstrates our dependence on Him to provide, protect, and care for His people.

Praying involves a personal relationship with God. Genuine prayer regards God as a person who hears and reacts to our prayers. A number of passages

emphasizes the fact that there must be genuine faith in our prayers (Mark 11:24; James 1:5-8). Prayer is to be done by all Christians and at all ages. We understand that prayer does not change God's will, instead it calibrates our will to His. Therefore, a person who prays must be reverent, submissive, sincere, thankful, believing, and obedient.

Church members should be growing in their spiritual discipline of prayer. The success of any church is not to be measured in its glamour, but in its faithfulness. Prayer is essential for church members to be faithful. We believe that prayer should have prominence in worship services and should be a regular aspect of every believer's devotional life. Members should pray for the needs of the church in the following ways: God's will to be done in GGCC, wisdom for the elders and leaders, physical and spiritual health of all church members, protection from the enemy, success in sanctification, forgiveness of sins, visitors, for new conversions, church growth, church unity, Sunday's sermon, special requests, and for other church needs.

We believe that all postures of prayer are acceptable to God; as seen in various passages of Scriptures (praying silently – 1 Samuel 1:12-13, bowed head – Luke 18:13; eyes lifted toward heaven – Matt 14:19; John 11:41; 17:1; sitting – Nehemiah 1:4; 1 Kings 19:4; 2 Samuel 7:18; standing – Mark 11:25; Luke 18:13-14; and kneeling or falling down – Luke 22:41; Matthew 26:39; Acts 9:40; 20:36; 21:5). Elders are to make an assertive effort to promote prayer in the church with their personal example and by encouraging the church body to grow in this area of life.

Preaching and Teaching

“Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.” – 2 Timothy 4:2

Scripture is explicit in that the main priority of a church's worship service is the equipping of the saints, and this can only be accomplished by the preaching and teaching of God's word. Jesus Himself, in His earthly ministry, preached, and thus set for us the example (Matthew 11:1; Luke 4:17). After the day of Pentecost, the apostles preached in the temple and traveled from house to house “teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus” (Acts 5:42). Paul explains in his letter to the Corinthians, that their ministry is not about preaching and teaching popular

theories or Greek mythology; but instead he says, “We preach Christ crucified... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:23-24). Paul tells churches to esteem those who are “laboring” in “preaching and teaching,” and that such elders are to be “considered worthy of double honor” (1 Timothy 5:17). Scripture commands that church life prioritize the preaching and teaching of Scripture; that is why Paul commands Timothy to “Preach the Word!” (2 Timothy 4:2).

Every church ministry must have the goal of teaching Scripture. Everything else in the church must flow from this main priority. Preaching the Word gives church members the needed knowledge of the truth and produces godliness. Jesus said that the Word sanctifies us (John 17:17), by transforming us into Christlikeness (Romans 8:29), and renews our minds (Romans 12:1-2). Without the preaching and teaching of God’s word, Christians are left to assume and default to their own opinion and preferences. But expositional preaching of God’s Word reveals God’s will for us and encourages us to live in hope; faithfully enduring through all our sufferings (Acts 14:21-22). Preaching the Word is the most essential element of church life and ministry (Titus 2:1). Through the preaching of God’s Word; Christ saves, sanctifies, and strengthens His church. The difference between preaching and teaching is that preaching is a gospel focused heralding of “thus says the Lord,” including a vigorous call for obedience, and does not include a dialog between the speaker and listeners. Teaching, on the other hand, is a more detailed relay of information with the expectation that the listener will respond; there can be a dialog in the form of question/answer and discussion.

Expository preaching can be defined as explaining Scripture by establishing its meaning in its own context, clarifying what is difficult to understand, and then making appropriate application derived from the principle of the specific text (Nehemiah 8:8). This is accomplished by selecting a book of the Bible (either Old or New Testament), and then teaching it in a verse-by-verse manner, chapter by chapter; paying close attention to the literal-grammatical-historical aspect of each passage, seeking to establish the author’s original intention of the passage. There is great value in consecutive exposition through a book of the Bible. It keeps the preaching content in balance with Scripture, meaning that it prevents the pastor from preaching his favorite hobby horse topics more frequently than Scripture allows, and it forces him to deal with passages that are difficult and sensitive to the congregation. It may become appropriate occasionally to preach a topical sermon,

which would address a particular Christian living topic such as: service, fellowship, marriage/family, unity, freedom vs. preference, giving, accountability, etc. However, even topical sermons should derive their content from the truths of Scripture in their context. The main goal of preaching and teaching is for elders to edify the saints and to present the gospel to the lost. We are conscious in the fact that if we please God, it does not matter whom we displease. And if we displease God, it does not matter whom we please. Therefore, we believe that relying upon any ‘worldly methods’ to present the gospel is unacceptable.

Concerning preaching opportunities; we believe that it is mainly the role of the elders to feed the saints in the Sunday morning worship service. However, the elders may decide to give opportunities to other godly men within GGCC who are not yet officially recognized as elders, but who are actively ministering in the church and have proven themselves to be gifted to teach. The elders may also invite other trusted men from outside of GGCC. It is the elders’ task to guard the church from any confusion and/or heresy (Acts 20:28), and therefore they protect the pulpit and who has access to the Lord’s sheep with great care.

Having established the importance of preaching, we call upon believers of GGCC to faithfully and attentively commit themselves to hear and obey the preached Word of God. *“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves”* (James 1:22).

Music Ministry

“Sing to Him a new song; Play skillfully with a shout of joy.” – Psalm 33:3

Scripture explains the importance of music ministry. We believe that it is the church’s responsibility to be striving for musical excellency. There is a difference between professionalism and excellence. Professionalism brings glory to the individual, excellence strives to serve to the best of one’s ability to bring glory to the Lord. He is great and is most worthy of praise (Psalm 48:1; 145:3). Music and singing help us express our thankful hearts. In the book of Colossians, we are told to worship God by singing the Word of Christ (Colossians 3:16). This means that singing engages both the heart and mind and causes us to remember important Biblical truths. Music is a very powerful teaching device and we strive to sing songs that are theologically sound (words matter: the content we sing is what feeds

our souls). The congregation must sing with understanding that it is the “Truth” that drives our affections.

The elders have carefully chosen a spiritually mature man to be the worship leader. The worship leader’s responsibility is to coordinate with the elders to prepare an order of service that fits with the theme of the sermon and leads the congregation in theologically accurate worship that magnifies the Lord.

Those who desire to participate in Sunday’s service with a solo, duet, a musical arrangement, or a group song; must first communicate their desire to the worship leader. The worship leader will then evaluate the song, examine its theology and affirm the musical giftedness of the individual(s). It is the worship leader’s responsibility to maintain the theologically sound and reverent atmosphere of the service. If the worship leader determines that the song or musical arrangement is appropriate, he will determine when it will best fit into the order of worship.

Our worship services are systematically structured so that songs and music assist us to worship God. The goal of our music ministry is to glorify God, edify one another, and prepare our hearts for the preaching of God’s Word. An example of a typical church service is to begin with a reading of a Psalm (as a call to worship), which is then followed by a prayer, and is then followed by two or three songs about the affirmations of our faith (acknowledging God’s greatness, acknowledging man’s sinfulness, and praising God for His grace), then the reading of Scripture and a pastoral prayer by one of the elders, then a song and/or musical arrangement while the offering is being collected. The main aspect of our worship service is the preaching of Scripture. Immediately after the sermon and the pastor’s prayer; the worship leader leads us in a concluding congregational song that speaks of the assurance of our pardon. At the conclusion of our service, one of the elders gives a benediction.

Our goal is to promote the unity of the church. We acknowledge that there are many styles of music. At the same time, we acknowledge that the style of music is a “preferential issue.” We believe that the vast variety of songs cannot be embodied into one musical form or style. Scripture also instructs us to praise God by utilizing tastefully all kinds of instruments: the brass, the strings, the woodwinds, the percussion, and everything else in between, in an orderly manner that makes melodious music (Psalm 98:5-6; 150:3-5). In worship, “content” is the most important thing. Jesus said that God is looking for worshipers who are

worshiping Him in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:23-24). This means that our songs must acknowledge who God is, exalting the cross and the greatness of Jesus Christ. Acceptable music is reverent, beautiful in melody, orderly, and made for congregational participation.

Children's Ministry

“Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward.” – Psalm 127:3

We believe that God is the designer of the family (Genesis 1:27-28) and that He entrusts children to a father and mother with the responsibility to raise them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). This means that both parents are to be godly examples in their home, disciplining their children and instructing them in what God's Word requires of them. Christian parents are to be the primary influence on their own children (Ephesians 6:4), making them “set apart” from the contaminating influences of modern culture (1 Corinthians 7:14). Children are born sinners (Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:10, 5:12), therefore they will automatically rebel against their parents, which is ultimately against the Lord (Proverbs 22:15; Romans 3:10-12). Parents must lovingly administer discipline, guiding their children to turn from sin to Christ (Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 23:13-14). Scripture exhorts parents, not only to pray for their children, but to also give instruction concerning God's Law (Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

We believe that it is one of our tasks to encourage our church's children to trust and obey God from their earliest days (Matthew 21:15-16; Mark 10:13-16). Samuel is a good example for children to follow, who grew *“in stature and in favor both with the Lord and with men”* (1 Samuel 2:26).

Children are commanded to obey their parents in the Lord and to honor their father and mother (Colossians 3:20; Ephesians 6:1-3). Scripture describes a life of blessing and longevity for children who keep the Biblical truths that have been taught by their parents (*Proverbs 3:1-4*). Obedience to Scripture will gain children the *“wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”* (2 Timothy 3:15).

We acknowledge that children of all ages are capable of hearing biblical exposition. However, it is also beneficial to have Biblical truth presented at an age-appropriate level without compromising the message. This means that Children's

Ministry teachers must be engaging while also emphasizing the gospel in their lessons. The gospel must never be watered down or made “easier” for children than for adults (i.e. ask Jesus into your heart); instead it must be presented in a complete and accurate way (i.e. God is holy, man is sinful, you must deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus – Matthew 16:24).

It is important to not coerce children or manipulate them to respond by “making a decision” for God. Man-centered methods (such as altar calls, raising your hand, coming forward, etc.), are not to be used. Children can feel a great sense of peer pressure and consequently be given a false assurance of salvation. Teachers, sharing the gospel, are to encourage children to ask questions and to talk to them, their parents, or the elders about their concern for salvation. When conducting Children’s Ministry lessons; teachers are to be very discerning about the songs that they lead the children through, making sure that they are gospel focused and that they teach great truths about God and not just fun songs to sing. The main purpose of Children’s Ministry is not to just have fun activities (even though there is nothing wrong in making learning about God fun), but to expose the children to the gospel.

Youth Ministry

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word.” – Psalm 119:9

Scripture explains that the only way a youth will keep his/her way pure; is by living in accordance with God’s Word! We believe that many of the same aspects that pertain to children’s ministry, also pertain to youth ministry. Parents have the same obligation to model, instruct, and discipline their teen(s) in righteousness as they did when their children were younger. Youth are commanded to obey their parents as being obedient to the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-3). We desire to assist parents by teaching and preaching Scripture. It is the youth’s responsibility to obey God’s word and live in a way that is pleasing to the Lord. We believe that it is important to not neglect our youth and to provide them an atmosphere where they can learn together and be challenged to walk in accordance to God’s Word.

The youth leaders are intentional in shepherding and praying with the youth. We understand that there is a mixture of saved and unsaved that attend youth

meetings, so all youth activities are gospel driven; we desire for the saved to continue in their sanctification and for the unsaved to be exposed to the gospel.

We believe that there should not be a disconnect between the ministry goals for adults and youth. We do not agree with the premise that only the “adult ministry” is to pursue Biblical depth, while “youth ministry” is more Bible-lite and entertainment driven. We believe that teens are more than capable of understanding rich Biblical truth and that it is essential for them to have sound Biblical teaching. This means that the focus of our times together is the Scriptures, and that youth are expected to engage their time of study with the same reverence as is expected in adult ministry.

It is important to not coerce the youth or manipulate them to respond to God’s offer of salvation. Man-centered methods (such as altar calls, raising hands, coming forward, etc.) are not to be used. Youth can feel a great sense of peer pressure and consequently be given a false assurance of salvation. Instead, the pure gospel is to be taught under the presumption of Acts 13:48; which assures us that all who are appointed to eternal life will believe. It is not the job of leaders to save the youth; instead, God appointed the gospel as the means by which He saves, and we are to simply continue to faithfully teach it! We believe that our youth will one day replace us; therefore, it is profitable for GGCC to invest in them.

Adult Ministry

“Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’” – 1 Peter 1:13-16

Scripture calls believers to serve one another and to strive together for holiness. Scripture also makes it clear that a Biblically driven ministry cultivates fellowship with one another in the Body of Christ (1 John 1:5-7). We believe that the local church is a gathering designed for members to be reminded, equipped, and challenged to reach those goals. The purpose of ministering to adults is to promote continuous change; if Christians are going to be more like Christ, then they’re going to change. This change Scripture calls “the process of sanctification,”

and it can only be achieved by God's truth (John 17:17). We believe that expository teaching is essential for Christian adults. As a result of adult ministry, the church will have a high view of God, a biblical fear of God, a right understanding of man, and a correct view of salvation. Our various adult studies are designed to teach Scripture so that "we may present every man complete in Christ" (Colossians 1:28) and to "equip the saints for the work of service" (Ephesians 4:12).

Scripture reveals that God has given the church some as pastors and teachers, *"for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ"* (Ephesians 4:11-14). We believe that every believer has been given a special gift, which is to be used to edify the local church body (1 Peter 4:10; Romans 12:3-8). Since Scripture reveals to us that every member of the church is a minister, it is expected that each member will seek opportunities to use their gifts within the body, and to serve and care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:1-25). Believers are also to serve outside the church as "salt" and "light" (Matthew 5:13-16), and in the process, proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. With every believer serving in some capacity; the church will be built up in love for one another, unity, and spiritual maturity so that it will be a healthy and effective testimony to the community of the Lord's grace.

Biblical Counseling

"Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." - 2 Peter 1:3-4

2 Peter 1:3 states clearly and simply that God has "granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness." This is a broad and sweeping declaration about the complete sufficiency of Scripture; however, it is limited by many to only be applicable to the spiritual aspects of life. There is a dichotomy between religious stuff and "real" life. This reveals a poor understanding of the purpose of our lives and the root cause of life's problems. We were made to glorify God, but have been

tainted by sin and separated from the holiness of God. Scripture teaches us how to be put back into a right relationship with God and how to live for His glory as we were created to do. Life's problems stem from sin - ours, someone else's, or just a consequence of the fall. The Word of God is adequate to pinpoint the problem and help guide us in how to resolve the problem or respond in a way that will make us more like Christ and bring glory to God.

It is often remarked that this is a simplistic and naive approach and that life is more complex than that. Paul didn't think so. The world of 2 Timothy is described as “*lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God*” (2 Timothy 3:2-4). That is a pretty accurate description of the problems of modern society, and yet Paul instructs Timothy to continue in the things that he learned and has known since his childhood. He says, “*you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work*” (2 Timothy 3:15-17). Wayne Mack comments on Paul's point saying, “Paul tells us that Scripture contains the resources we need for ministering to people who live in a 2 Timothy 3:1-13 society. In concise and direct terms, he extols the Bible's total adequacy for ministering to people whose lives are characterized by the things mentioned in verses 1-13.”¹

Unfortunately, despite the total sufficiency of Scripture, many Christians turn to psychology to help them with their problems. Psychology is based on the depraved and futile reasoning (Ephesians 4:17-18) of men to look inside man for answers to man's problems. This is a subjective approach at best, and ignores the fact that sin blinds us to the root of our problem and prevents us from being able to gain any clarity on the issues. We need an outside source that can clearly discern the problem and guide us objectively into truth. Hebrews 4:12 says that the Word of God is a precise tool that is “*able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*” Scripture is sufficient to help us establish a proper ethic and make life decisions based on God's unchanging Word, rather than the vacillating rights and wrongs of society and the anecdotal advice of men. The Bible may not directly speak to every issue of modern life, but there are Biblical principles that give guidance on the proper attitude and actions which should be taken.

We believe that the church is to provide Biblical counseling to its members who are struggling to navigate the various issues of life. This means Christians

¹. Wayne A. Mack, "The Sufficiency Of Scripture In Counseling", *The Master's Seminary Journal* 09, no. 1 (1998): 79.

already have the needed support and the wise counsel in their own church body. Therefore, it is every church member's responsibility to seek out counseling when they struggle to overcome specific issues (sin, conflicts, depression, parenting, marriage, etc.).

The task of counseling is not only limited to pastors and elders. In Romans 15:14, Paul reminds the church *"Concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to admonish one another."* This means that all members of the church, who have been regenerated, are to engage in caring and helping fellow believers with pursuing holiness. But any counsel that is given; must be in accord with Scripture, with no integration of any philosophical or psychological methods. This means that Biblical Counseling is more than just behavior modification, instead it is the actual process of sanctification; which deals specifically with the heart. Because of Biblical counseling, the church will grow together in maturity and sanctification.

Discipleship

"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." – 2 Timothy 2:2

Scripture explains that godly men and women should always be striving to invest themselves into others. Jesus's great commission commanded disciples to make disciples of others (Matthew 28:18-20). The author of Hebrews instructed believers to be *"imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises"* (Heb 6:12; 13:7). Paul's instruction to the Corinthians was, *"be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ"* (1 Corinthians 11:1). Following these examples, we believe that it is the responsibility of mature Christian men to invest themselves in discipling younger men, and likewise, mature Christian women to invest themselves in discipling younger women. It is through discipleship, that believers mature in their faith, and are helped to grow more and more into Christlikeness.

Discipleship is an intentional relationship for the stimulation of spiritual growth. Elders, leaders, and more mature Christians are to purposefully build relationships with younger believers to shepherd them in their walk with the Lord.

All discipleship is to be based in Scripture, theologically sound, and practical in helping the disciple grow in their practical holiness.

The purpose of discipleship is to teach younger believers to study the Scriptures, to be more committed to Christ (rejecting idols and fleeing sin), to build up godly character (being honest about sin and weakness), and to build unity in the church body. Discipleship is also a great way for mature men and women to model what a Christian marriage looks like, and what it means to be a Christian parent (proper training of their kids). Those who disciple others must never compromise truth; but be faithful in being obedient to the truth as good examples.

Those who are being discipled, must understand that they have the responsibility to grow in the knowledge of the Lord and in sanctification. It is also expected of those who are being discipled, that they are involving themselves in ministry to serve others. Disciples are expected to prioritize and be committed to the discipleship process, make every effort to be in church weekly, and build meaningful relationships within the church. Through discipleship, the church will grow in maturity and raise up new leaders.

Evangelism

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”- 1Peter 1:9

Scripture explains that we are a chosen people for God’s own possession “so that” we may “proclaim the excellencies of Him.” We believe that this proclamation is one of the most important responsibilities of the church. Evangelism is explicitly taught by Jesus Himself, who instructed His disciples to go and “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:18-20). The god of this world has “blinded the minds of unbelievers” (2 Cor. 4:4). The purpose of evangelism is to proclaim the Gospel message so that the blind would gain sight. The only thing that is going to open blind eyes and minds is God’s sovereign regeneration through the proclamation of His Gospel (Rom. 10:17).

We believe that the corporate worship service is the gathering of the saints, and therefore not generally intended to be the place for purely “evangelistic” sermons. That being said, the gospel is proclaimed in our confession of sin and dependence on Christ in our prayers, songs, and preaching. The practical

implications of the gospel is brought out in the exposition of Scripture so that believers are refreshed in their spirit, strengthened in their faith, and helped in their spiritual growth. We believe that the more the gospel impacts our hearts and changes our lives, it will give us opportunities in the spheres of influence (family, work, hobbies, etc.) that the Lord has placed us to have opportunities to share the gospel. Unbelievers who attend our services will hear the gospel, but we do not give altar calls or the like. We believe that regeneration/salvation is a work of the Holy Spirit and cannot be manipulated (Titus 3:5).

We believe that the church must also engage in global missions by identifying and training men called to take the gospel to other parts of the world. The church should be willing to support adequate (seminary level) training, as well as ongoing spiritual, financial, and practical support in the field. In the event that the church does not have missionaries to send out from the local church, it should seek to find faithful like-minded men that they can support.

Baptism

“Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” - Romans 6:4

Every believer is baptized by the Spirit of God at the point of conversion (1 Cor. 12:13) into the Church at large, made up of all believers. The Holy Spirit regenerates the dead heart giving the believer spiritual life (Eph. 2:5, 8), faith (Titus 3:5), and sealing them in the Bride of Christ, the Church (Eph. 1:13). This is a work of God in the life of a believer. However, Jesus left a command that believers are to make a public declaration of their faith through water baptism (Matt. 28:19). The Christian faith is not a personal experience that one is to keep to themselves (Matt. 5:14-16). Every believer is commanded to publicly glorify the Lord for what He has done in their heart and life by the testimony of water baptism.

Romans 6 explains that believers have been baptized into the death of Christ (6:3), and just as Jesus was raised from the dead, believers have been given a new life (6:4). When a believer is immersed in the waters of baptism, it represents the death of their old life of sin and shame. When they are brought up out of the water, it represents their rebirth to a new life free from slavery to sin and committed to faithfully follow Christ (6:11). This symbolism, along with the NT description of immersion, leads us to believe that baptism should be by immersion unless there

are special circumstances that require consideration. It is important to note that baptism has no bearing on a person's salvation; however, it is an act of obedience to the Lord's command.

In order for the church to allow one to be baptized, the elders must get to know the concerned Christian and confirm, to the best of their ability, that he/she has lived through the act of regeneration. Then the person who desires to be baptized, must willingly go through the membership process and agree to adhere to GGCC's statement of faith, philosophy of ministry, bylaws, and stated ordinances. In addition, those who will be baptized in GGCC, are required to attend all of the classes that will be provided for water baptism.

After baptism, the person is then accepted as a new member of the church, and as a new creation they are expected to pursue holiness and a life of sanctification (2 Cor. 5:17). Even though Scripture does not give an age requirement for baptism, unless there are irregular circumstances, children should wait until they are 15 years of age to become official members of the local church.

Communion

“And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.” – 1 Corinthians 11:24-26

Scripture explicitly shows how Jesus left two ordinances for His church to fulfill. These ordinances are baptism and communion. The purpose of communion on the day of Passover was that Jesus identified Himself as the Passover Lamb; thus the ultimate Lamb! We believe that the elements of communion did not change during the Lord's last supper; nor do they change now during our ceremony. The bread remains bread and the wine remains wine; there is no spiritual change that occurs to these elements, neither after prayer, nor after they are ingested by us. Communion is only symbolic and identifies us with Christ's suffering and reminds us that Christ is present within us.

Scripture shows that the first apostolic church frequently practiced communion (Acts 2:42, 20:7). At the same time, it does not command us when or how frequently we are to celebrate it. Thus the Lord allows the local church to decide for themselves as to when and how often to conduct communion. We

believe that if communion is done too often (i.e. every service), it will lose an aspect of its significance. At the same time, it is evident that Scripture shows that the first church did indeed conduct it often (i.e. more than just once a year). It is also clear that Paul instructs the churches to do it as an act of remembrance that will benefit the church body, and we are to do it until Christ's return (1 Cor. 11:23-26). Therefore, we conclude that it is right to conduct communion on a monthly basis, usually every first Lord's day of the month. We invite any visiting believer to participate in communion with us, as long as they are in good standing with their local church.

While communion is a means of fellowship with one another and Christ, it is also a means by which church discipline is enforced (Scripture teaches withholding communion to rebellious members). If a church member has an unrepented sin, he should not participate in communion (as is evident in the severe consequences of 1 Corinthians 11:27-32). Members of the church are strongly encouraged to frequently examine themselves and thereby participate in communion.

Church Membership

“For the body is not one member, but many...But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body.” – 1 Corinthians 12:14-19

Scripture explains that the church body consists of individual members who are committed to love and minister to each other (1 Peter 4:10-11). Each member has been given a spiritual gift(s) that is to be used to build up the local body (1 Cor. 12:7). Outside of church membership, these gifts are left unused and the church is weaker for it. In addition, joining a church is an act of obedience to the command in Hebrews 13:17 to submit yourself to the elders of the local church. It also defines whom the elders are accountable to the Lord for, and for whom they should prioritize their time in shepherding, counseling, etc. By joining a local church, a person is placing themselves under the shepherding and accountability of the elders, as well as the accountability of the other members.

In order for one to join the first century church in Jerusalem, which was continuing to endure under persecution, one needed to make a public identification with the church through a public act of baptism. Jesus Himself said “Everyone who

confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32-33). The act of fulfilling the Lord’s commandment to be baptized (Matthew 28:19-20) would often cause the believer to be detested by their family and friends. However, in the act of baptism, the Christian would be fulfilling the ordinance of God, openly declaring his faith, and simultaneously joining to a local body of believers. We believe that baptism is essential to becoming a member of a local church. A believer who has lived through a supernatural act of regeneration should desire to fulfill the Lord’s ordinance, and be excited in proclaiming publicly his new identity in Christ.

To become a member of GGCC, one must have a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ, be baptized by immersion in obedience to Matt. 28:19-20, and go through the membership process.

Church Discipline

Scripture requires both elders and church members to help hold one another accountable to their profession of faith and the standards of a life that is being sanctified (Gal. 6:1). If a member of the church does not walk in accordance to God’s Word, elders of the church must carefully apply principles from Scripture to assess the person’s membership, and if necessary, remove him from membership. Jesus prescribed the proper steps of conducting church discipline in (Matthew 18:15-17). We believe that when a member of the church is caught in sin, the member who saw him must first humbly confront him to show him his fault in private; if the sinning member repents, no further disciplinary actions are to be taken; instead there is renewed unity and restoration. But if the sinning member does not repent; then the member who saw the member sinning, must get one or two others, and again address the situation personally with the sinning member. If the sinning member repents, no further disciplinary actions are to be taken; instead there is renewed unity and restoration. But if the sinning member does not repent; then this sin must be told to the church (first to elders of the church), so that the elders can address the issue with the sinning member privately. But if he does not listen even to the elders, then the church must be notified of the sinning member, and the church as a whole body must attempt to call the sinning member to repentance. If after a set time, determined by the elders, the sinning member does

not repent, he must be excommunicated. This means that this sinner has been disfellowshipped from the congregation. He is therefore to be treated as one who rejects the gospel of Christ. This does not mean that there is no more hope for this individual; but it does mean that every member of the church, that comes into contact with him, will tell him of the consequences of his actions, and exhort him to come to a saving relationship with Christ as he once professed. If the person repents; he must come to the elders to initiate restoration with the church. After a season of evaluation to determine the validity of his repentance, when true repentance is confirmed (2 Cor. 7:10-11), he will be restored to fellowship in a public meeting. Once a disciplined member has been restored, he will regain all the rights, duties, privileges, and responsibilities of fellowship and membership.

We believe that according to Scripture, a Biblical church is required to practice member discipline and restoration for the purpose of maintaining the purity of the church and her worship; therefore, every member has the responsibility to lovingly confront any other member when they see that the believer has sinned. In addition to Matthew 18:15-20, other passages speak of discipline in varying forms (Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; Titus 1:13, 2:15, 3:10). The goal of this process is always the restoration of the offender. When a disciplined member is restored, it is a great joy and celebration for the whole church body and heaven (Luke 15:7, 10).

Fellowship

“And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” – Hebrews 10:24-25

Scripture emphasizes that believers are to be in consistent fellowship where they can grow and mature together. One of the purposes of a local church is so that fellow believers have the opportunity to stimulate one another to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24). In order for this to be effective, it is essential for church members to develop quality relationships; where spiritual and physical needs are met, where the members are being built up, and where Christ’s character is being displayed. This means that we must surround ourselves with believers who are striving to pursue holiness, and committed to the same goals of faithfulness. To

create fruitful relationships, church members must be committed to spending time together and prioritize participation in body life.

By being together as a church body each member will have an opportunity to serve each other with the gifts that the Lord has given them to edify the body (1 Peter 4:10). Fellowship involves spending time together, loving one another, listening to each other's concerns and encouraging them with Biblical truth, praying for one another's needs, etc. The purpose of Christian fellowship is to help each member grow into spiritual maturity and the church as a whole to be a faithful witness of Christ.

Programs

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.” – Philippians 4:8

Scriptures instructs believers to think about the things that are true, honorable, right, pure, and lovely. Before the local church launches a program, elders are to give special attention in evaluating the spiritual benefit and need of a program. The purpose of the local church is to teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in our hearts (Colossians 3:16); to equip the saints (Ephesians 4:11-12); to grow and be built into a holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-5); to encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 10:25); to pray for one another (James 5:16); and to proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9-10). All programs are to be driven by these principles. A failure to correctly understand the purpose of the church leads to superficial and counterfeit ministry, resulting in disunity, where man's concept of “success” is prioritized over God's standard of faithfulness (Matt. 25:21, 23). This does not mean that programs are inherently bad, just that they must support the Biblically defined purpose of the church. Programs that are authorized by the elders should not become canonized into the life of the church. Some programs have a natural lifespan and will be allowed to continue for a season, until the elders decide that they no longer fit the needs and purposes of the church.