



DAMASCUS ROAD

C H U R C H

ROAD 101

Gospel Truth | Gospel Community | Gospel Living

contents

ROAD 101: BASICS EVERYONE NEEDS FOR LIFE ON THE ROAD

SESSION 1 | THE GOSPEL: This first class introduces you to the Gospel of Jesus, and how that Gospel finds expression in our core values. This class answers the questions such as: *What is the Gospel? How does the Gospel transform everything? How is the church Gospel-centered?*

SESSION 2 | THE CHURCH: The second class introduces you to the bride of Jesus—the church. This class aims explore what the Bible defines a church to be and what Jesus has sent it to do. This class answers the questions such as: *What is the church? What is the mission of the church? What must, should, and can a church do? How is Damascus Road fulfilling the mission?*

SESSION 3 | THE ROLES: The third class introduces you to the leadership structure in the church. We will read scriptures regarding how God has designed His church to be organized. In this class, we will share our understanding of how biblical leadership functions. This class answers the questions such as: *What is an elder? What is a deacon? Who is accountable for the church? Who is responsible for the ministry of the church?*

SESSION 4 | THE DOCTRINE: The fourth class introduces you to our basic doctrinal beliefs and theological convictions. This class answers questions such as: *What is theology? What is historic reformed theology? What does it mean to be theologically “reformed” at Damascus Road?*

SESSION 5 | THE COVENANT: The fifth and final class explains covenant membership. We will discuss the meaning of and reasons for covenant membership at the local church. We will also examine the various membership benefits and commitments. This class answers the questions such as: *What is covenant membership? Why become a member of a church? How do I participate as a covenant member of Damascus Road?*

D | ROAD 101

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me

1 Corinthians 15.3-8

SESSION 1

INTRODUCTION & THE GOSPEL

session one

INTRODUCTION & THE GOSPEL

Road 101 | Purpose

This class is designed as an introduction to Damascus Road Church. It is a comprehensive course *offered* to anyone, *suggested* for everyone, and *required* for those who wish to become a covenant member of our family and/or pursue leadership. These five lessons serve as a basic starting point, a basic “101” class that explains who we are, what we do, and why we do it. We trust that this class will answer some commonly asked questions about the Gospel of Christ, the body of Christ (Church), the mission of Christ, and how that all gets lived out through *Damascus Road Church*.

In reading the material provided and discussing it in class, we hope you will gain a clear understanding of our family values, our doctrinal convictions, our philosophy of ministry, and our mission in this world. It is very likely that some of your more specific questions may remain unanswered and new ones will be formulated. Knowing this, we encourage you to freely ask any question during the class for clarification or contact any of the church elders to obtain the answers. We believe that God has brought you here for a purpose, and we are dedicated to helping you discover, cultivate, and fulfill that purpose.

Road 101 | Structure

Below is the class structure for the next five weeks of study. Beginning with week two, please read all of the current week’s materials before our meeting. Additionally, we ask that you answer the provided questions at the end of each session—these will help guide our discussion. During your study, please write down any additional questions you have and bring them to the next class. We will strive to make every one of our gatherings beneficial and hope they feel more like an exploratory discussions than a directed lectures. The outline for the class is as follows:

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Our Church Story | Church Planting Churches

Our story begins in May of 2006, when a small group of friends embarked on a journey of faith. We were not ready as much as willing to respond to the call of Jesus to plant a gospel-centered church in Marysville, WA. No one knew exactly what we were supposed to do, so in faith, we followed Jesus, listened to Jesus, talked to Jesus, and waited for Jesus to gather His people. Using a small handful of seeds, and some broken tools, He planted what has become Damascus Road Church in Marysville.

After joining the **Acts 29 Network**, we began to worship in founding pastor Sam Ford's living room. Within weeks we graduated to a three-car garage, lined with black plastic and filled with lawn chairs. As more families joined our mission, we bought a trailer and set up in the cafeteria of an elementary school in Marysville. We launched public services on **November 5, 2006**. Over the years, as we have matured in Christ, many things have changed—our size, our programs, our buildings, our logos. But the one thing that has remained the same is our conviction that everything is from, by, and for Jesus. Jesus Christ is the motivation, the means, and the model for all we do in life, individually and together.

In September 2011, we planted our first church called **Communion Church** in Mt. Vernon, WA. That same year we founded a regional church network called **3Strand**. This covenanted cooperative provides a greater strength, accountability, and unity for our church and its mission in this region. Because we are committed to fulfilling the Great Commission, we continue to make disciples who make disciples. It is our hope that we will plant more churches because we believe this is the most effective way for us to obey Christ's command.

Within a few months of planting Communion, the Spirit began to stir in the hearts of the leadership. By March 2012, the elders begin planning for a future plant in Snohomish. After much prayer and fasting, the elders decided to launch a dependent church-campus instead of an independent church plant. Uncomfortable with the traditional multi-site model, we launched **Damascus Road Church | Snohomish** in January 2013 with a plan to move the campuses towards cooperative-autonomy in the future, as well as install a lead pastor at each campus. This began a transition away from multi-site campuses toward a more traditional church model. While still related and sharing the same "DNA" each church is now a distinct and autonomous church. The campus in Snohomish officially became **Restoration Road Church** in the summer of 2014 and our campus in Marysville became simply **Damascus Road Church**.



Planted | 2006



Planted | 2011



Planted | 2013



Regional | National | International



Local

Our Church Name | Damascus Road Church

"Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus..." Acts 9:3-5

Names are important. In them we find meaning, identity, and distinction. Some names are unique; others are common. Some names are inherently strong; others are superficially weak. Some names can propel you forward and push you outward; others can hold you back and stunt your growth. All names serve as the introduction, the first impression, the process of setting the stage. A name immediately reveals something to the curious and serves as a monument to the familiar. To the curious, a name provides a glimpse of who or what you are and in some way distinguishes you from who or what you are not. For the familiar, a name provides a history; it retells a story, it serves as a reminder of why we are here.

God has always placed a high value on names. God says that he has a name for every star (Ps. 147.4). Adam is given the authority to name every creature (Gen. 2.19). Throughout the Old Testament, different places, cities, and geographic areas were named to memorialize the events that happened there. Even children were often given names to proclaim something about God's blessing or cursing. The Scriptures also speak about several important men whose very names help further reveal the story of God. Men like Abram (Abraham), Jacob (Israel), and Cephas (Peter) experienced powerful callings and subsequent transformations. ***Their experiences began with a face-to-face encounter with God that climaxed in the bestowal of a new name—a reformed identity.*** Their new names not only embodied their distinctiveness, they anticipated the mission that God would accomplish through them.

We chose Damascus Road Church because we want to preach something by our name. This name finds its origins in the experience of Saul, a man walking north from Jerusalem, on the road to Damascus, as recorded in the ninth chapter of Acts. Saul stepped onto this road hell-bent on finding, imprisoning, and killing people of "the way"—also known as Christians. With every zealous step he unwittingly walked closer to a face-to-face encounter with the one true God he thought he was serving. Without warning, there appeared a light, a voice, and finally a name...Jesus. It was on this road that Saul the Persecutor of Jesus became Paul the Apostle of Jesus, transformed from murderer to future martyr. He left this road a completely transformed man and spent the rest of his life compelled to suffer, serve, and preach the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is why we exist—to see people have unexpected encounters with Jesus and leave changed on mission to serve Him. The Damascus Road experience is a story of complete reformation. And it is noteworthy that, from the beginning, Paul does not walk alone. He is aided by a community of believers beginning with a reluctant Ananias, then an encouraging Barnabas, and finally by a team of fellow workers and apostles. At Damascus Road, we seek to share your journey as we glorify God for the transformation He initiates.

***It is on our own roads destined for destruction where Jesus meets us.
Jesus shows us our sin; we repent, stop trusting ourselves, and trust Jesus.
Jesus gives us a completely new identity and a powerful new mission.
Jesus then walks with us down a new road leading to His glory and our joy.***

The Gospel is...

... the 'good news' of how God accomplished the redemption of man through the Lord Jesus Christ. **The Bible teaches that Jesus, the eternal Son of God, became man without ceasing to be God. In love, he humbled himself, taking the form of a servant that He might redeem sinful, broken, rebellious men who desired evil continually. Jesus lived a sinless life glorifying God in perfect obedience. He died the death we deserved, saving us through His death on the cross; He died in our place, for our sins, as our substitutionary sacrifice, perfect and acceptable to God. Jesus ensured our justification, conquering sin and death, through the literal physical resurrection from the dead three days later. We are, therefore, justified by grace alone, through faith alone in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus alone. On the cross, our old self dies and we are raised to new transformed life as one cleansed of sin, reconciled with God The Father, adopted into His family, imputed with perfection, desiring to worship our King, Jesus. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus then dwells in our hearts, ceaselessly conforming us more and more into His image until we see Him again.**

The Greek term "Gospel" (ev-angelion) distinguished the Christian message from that of other religions. An "ev-angel" was news of a great historical event that changed the listeners' condition and required response (such as a victory in war or the ascension of a new king). **So the Gospel is news of what God has done to accomplish salvation through Jesus Christ in history.** It is not advice about what we must do to reach God. We do not achieve this salvation. We only receive it.¹ **We receive the righteous life we do not deserve as sinless Jesus dies the death that we do for our sin.**

At its simplest form, the gospel is **JESUS IN MY PLACE.** More specifically:

The Gospel is the good news that God became man in Jesus Christ. He lived the life we should have and died the death we should have...in our place. Three days later, He rose from the dead proving that He is the Son of God offering the gift of salvation to all who will repent and put their hope in Him.

The Gospel is | Necessary: Our Need

Our relationship with God was broken as a result of disobedience and the chasm that exists between God and Man is too vast for us to overcome. Because of Adam's sin, we are sinners by nature. Willfully, we have turned our back on God, becoming guilty by choice as we seek to answer questions of identity, purpose, and truth apart from Him. In that pursuit, we are miserable but try to convince ourselves otherwise. Enslaved to sin, we seek our own glory and fall short of God's. We find ourselves indebted to God, sentenced to die, unwilling and unable to pay what is required to save us.

By His grace, God reaches out to those who refused to listen and loves them. By grace, He sacrifices His Son, the perfect sinless one, crucifying Him on a cross for the sins of man, paying the price that we could not. Through His willing sacrifice, Jesus redeems us, atoning for our sins, and through His resurrection frees us from the slavery of darkness and sin. In Christ, we are justified, deemed innocent before God, and declared righteous, as Jesus' own righteousness is imputed to our account. **No longer under the wrath of God, all our sins covered, evil is defeated, death is conquered, as we who were once dead in our sins are made alive through the resurrection Christ.**

By trusting in what Jesus alone has done on the cross for our salvation, not in anything we can achieve or earn, God makes us holy and blameless without stain or wrinkle or any blemish. We are reconciled to God and enter into relationship with Him once again, having been freed from guilt and shame and freed to serve Jesus out of a heart of love and thankfulness.

¹ Adapted from Tim Keller's, [Gospel Christianity](#)

The Gospel is | Important: Our Growth

The Gospel is the 'good news' of God's redemption of mankind. Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1-2) ***The Gospel is not just the A-B-C's, but the A to Z of Christianity. The Gospel is not just the minimum required doctrine necessary to enter the kingdom, but the way we experience the kingdom in our lives here on earth.*** We are not saved by the Gospel and then changed by obedience, but the Gospel itself transforms us (II Cor. 5:17), is the way we grow (Gal. 3:1-3) and are renewed (Col. 1:6). It is the solution to each problem, the key to each closed door, the power through every barrier (Rom. 1:16-17).

The Gospel is not that we develop a righteousness apart from God so that we're deemed "good" and then He owes and accepts us, rather, ***He develops a righteousness through Jesus Christ and gives it to us (II Cor. 5:21). The Gospel is not that "it doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you've been good," but that "it doesn't matter if you've been good, as long as you believe in Christ as your Savior."*** The Gospel is not that we go from being irreligious to being religious, it's that we realize that our reasons for both our religiosity (self-righteousness) and our irreligiously (self-indulgence) were essentially the same and essentially wrong. In both, we were seeking EXTERNAL solutions to an INTERNAL problem; we were trying to be our own saviors, develop our own righteousness, and thereby keep control of our own life. When we trust in Christ as our Savior, we turn from trusting either moralism or hedonism.

Yet, the Gospel does not produce "something in the middle." Instead, it produces something different from both. By critiquing both religion and irreligion (Matt. 21:31), ***the Gospel shows us a God far more holy than the legalist can bear (He had to die because we could not satisfy His holy demand), and yet, far more merciful than a humanist can conceive (He chose to die because he loves us).*** Often both religion and irreligion are attempts to work their way to God's acceptance. Many of our feelings of despair, guilt, fear, and anger emerge in our life when we adopt a works-based mentality and allow something other than Jesus (career, family, moral performance, romance) to operate as our *functional savior*.

Disbelief in the Gospel of grace, of course, keeps the unconverted from God. But a lack of deep belief in the Gospel is also the main cause of spiritual deadness, fear, and pride in Christians. Contrary to popular belief, we do not "get saved" by believing the Gospel and then "grow" by trying hard to live according to Biblical principles. ***Believing the Gospel is not only the way to meet God, but also the way to grow into Him—the Gospel must go deeper.***

The Gospel is | Transformational: Our New Identity

By grace, through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, God makes us new creations. Trusting in Jesus' death on the cross means finding our identity in Jesus' life—we are “born again.” ***This means that we are in new and restored relationship with God, others, our self, and the world.***

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2Corinth. 5.17-20).

The following four gospel-identities describe who we are restored to be in Christ. These identities shape every aspect of ministry as they define us, guide us, and correct us as disciples.

We are WORSHIPPERS | Sons & Daughters of God

All of life is worship and everyone worships something...or someone. We were created to worship God. Because of sin, men have a worship disorder—we make idols of creation. The cross of Christ captivates our hearts and restores our worship through His Word by His Spirit. The deeper the gospel goes into our hearts, the wider the worship goes into our lives. We worship God rightly when we know Him more fully as revealed through His Word by His Spirit. **If we are worshippers we must be theologians.** (Jn 4.24; Rom.12.1; 1Cor. 10.31).

We are FAMILY | Brothers & Sisters in Christ

The gospel of Jesus has saved us as individual alienated sinners and brought us into a universal and local family known as the church. Through faith in Christ, we are adopted into the household of God. Community is not option, it is necessary. We are the body of Christ, needed and in need, to be built up together. **If we are family we must be relational and love one another** (1Cor. 12; Eph. 2:19–22).

We are DISCIPLES | Men & Women of the Way

As followers of Christ, we are deeply committed to obeying Jesus. Motivated by the Cross and the Resurrection, we make use of the power of Christ in us in order to live out His character. Over time, we submit more and more aspects of our lives to the Lordship of Jesus. Our identity in Christ transforms the way we think and act. In time, we become in practice (e.g. as husbands, wives, friends, workers, etc.) who we are in position through Christ. **If we are disciples we must be followers of, and centered on, the person and work of Jesus Christ.** (Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 8:28-30).

We are AMBASSADORS | Missionaries to the world

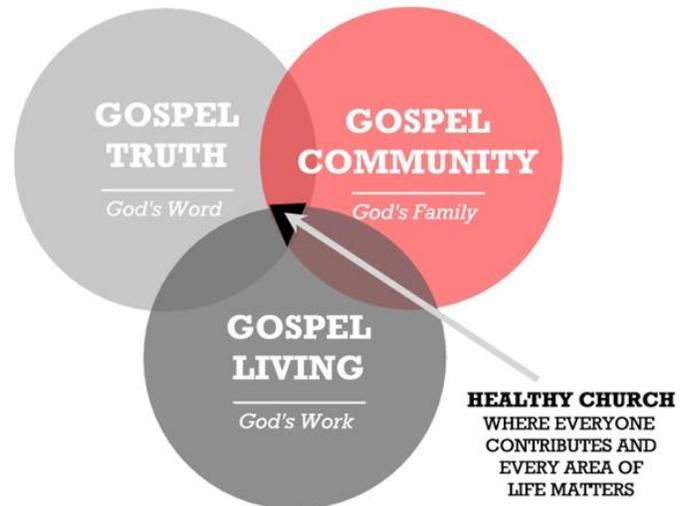
God sent his son, Jesus, to live within the culture. He worked, ate and interacted among the people; living in such a way that those around him could see and experience what God was truly like. Jesus came to restore man's relationship with God. In the same way, this is not our home. We are called out of the world and sent into it. In Christ, we are missionaries sent into our culture to restore all things to God through Jesus. What begins in our homes must extend into our city and beyond. **If we are ambassadors we must be on mission in the world.** (Jn 17.18; Col. 1:19; 2Cor.5:16ff).

The Gospel is | Valuable: Our Core Values

We believe that Gospel Truth, Gospel Community, and Gospel Living summarizes a three-fold pattern the Bible gives every Christian called to follow Jesus. Whenever we undervalue or ignore any one of these areas, we lose our sense of purpose and our source of joy in the life of our church. We believe calling the church to simultaneously pursue these realities creates the necessary tension required to walk in the fullness of the life Jesus saves us to live.

GOSPEL TRUTH | **the truth of Jesus**

Gospel truth brings God and His Word to bear in our lives. God's Word distinguishes the Christian message from other religions, philosophies, or ideologies that make truth claims about meaning and purpose. Gospel truth is not another ideological alternative; it is submission to the absolute truth of God, foundational to all of life. Gospel truth is not purely a set of historical facts, it is truth personified in a man. Gospel truth is news of what God has done to accomplish salvation through Jesus Christ in history. Gospel truth helps us grow in every way, empowers us to overcome any barrier, and equips us to solve every problem we encounter.



GOSPEL COMMUNITY | the family of Jesus

Gospel Community brings people to God. God creates men and women in His image to live in community together, imitating the eternal relationship shared by the **Father, Son and Holy Spirit** in the trinity. Gospel Community is a gathering of people in loving submission to one another, fulfilling their God-intended role to serve as unto the Lord. Gospel Community proclaims their faith in Gospel Truth by how they actively love through fellowship, ministry, and discipline. Gospel Community is where the world hears about the love of God, where it sees the love for God, and where it experiences the love of God's people as they are invited to belong before they believe. Gospel Community exists as an expression of God's Kingdom on earth.

GOSPEL LIVING | the work of Jesus

Gospel Living brings God's Lordship to our lives. God conforms us to the image of His Son, calling us to a life in total submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Gospel living is a life of self-denial lived for the approval of God, not men. Gospel Living is a life of humility, sacrificing the pleasures of the world to love and serve, and in so doing, finding deeper pleasure in God. Gospel Living is a life of continuous worship, glorifying God in everything big and small. Gospel living is a life on mission, fulfilling His call to go into the world and make disciples. Gospel Living is a life where Jesus is the supreme hope and joy in all of life and death.

Family Recipe | Our Vision for a Healthy Church

We believe that the local church is designed to function as a family. And every family has its own style, smell, and core values—the three or four different things that summarily characterize the identity of the family. The experience of Damascus Road embodied in our **name** provides a surface level snapshot of what we value in so far as it demonstrates the transforming power of the Gospel. Reading our **official doctrinal statement** is an important first step in understanding these basic convictions. Deep meditation on the limitless number of implications is helpful to our faith, but such a robust study should not be necessary in order to understand the heart of our church.

Our core values not only state what we believe, but characterize how a member of Damascus Road Church endeavors to live. These core values are the central and most essential qualities of our being. Regardless of culture, context, or how our family grows or changes, these values should remain the same. They embody how the Gospel transforms and guides every aspect of who we are as individuals, families, and a family of families (church). More than hollow words, these phrases define what is most important in guiding our decisions as we actively pursue our vision for the church and accomplish our mission in the community. ***Our core values are what we believe, applied to action.***

Our core values are shaped and informed by the Gospel. We do not simply value truth, community, and living—it is a particular truth, a particular kind of community, and a particular way of living that follows the example of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

What happens when the Gospel is removed from one of these values? | Unhealthy Churches

Gospel Truth + Gospel Community - Gospel Living =

Traditional, Fundamentalist, and Separated Christianity

This is when the church becomes more devoted to themselves, their traditions, programs, and buildings than the gospel. Even though they are doctrinally strong, they are completely separated from the world. They are usually hypocritical, hyper-critical, and self-righteous. Any evangelism they might do is called “outreach” because they are not close enough to be friends with unbelievers to begin with.

Gospel Living + Gospel Community - Gospel Truth =

Liberal, Emergent, and Syncretized Christianity

This is when the church denies the gospel but celebrates community. Essentially, they are so concerned with being cultural relevant that they neglect the gospel. They build a community designed to accommodate sin versus confront it and ultimately end up compromising God's truth. Having rejected the authority of Scripture, they are now governed by the praises or criticisms of culture.

Gospel Truth + Gospel Living - Gospel Community =

Social, cause-focused, and “faith-based” Christianity

This is when the church brings the gospel into the world without bring itself. These are commonly referred to as parachurch organizations. These organizations are missionally successful and often connect people with Jesus, but fail to connect them with Jesus' people. This often fosters a more independent or rogue Christianity that is, at the very least, untrusting of the church and organized religion. Community remains immature and fails to grow and/or witness to the “one-another” love that Jesus commands us to (John 13).

questions

SESSION ONE

1. What thought, idea, or statement in this session stood out to you the most?
2. Briefly, what is the meaning of Damascus Road as a name for this church?
3. What is the Gospel?
4. How has the explanation of the Gospel, and its implications, contrasted with or confirmed what you understood in the past?
5. In your own words, briefly explain the three family traits of Damascus Road Church? In your time here, where have you seen these traits exemplified?

Appendix 1 | Gospel-Rich Scriptures

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” – John 3:16-17

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.” - Romans 3:23-25

“And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,- Romans 4:5

“God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” – Romans 5:8

“The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” – Romans 6:23

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” - Romans 8:1

“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” – Romans 10:9-10

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. ” – 1Corinthians 15:3-4

14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. - 2Corinthians 5:14-15

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” – 2Corinthians 5:21

You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. - 2 Corinthians 8:9

“The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.” – 1Timothy 1:15

*We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified...20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
Galatians 2.15-16, 20*

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. – Ephesians 2.8-9

*“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith” — **Philippians 3:8-9***

*“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,” -**Colossians 1:12-14***

*“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.” - **1Timothy 2:5-6***

*“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,” **Titus 2:11-12***

*“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” – **1Peter 2:24-25***

*“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.” - **1Peter 3:18***

*“In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” - **1 John 4:10***

Appendix 2 | Deeper Meaning of the Gospel

The Gospel affects everything we do at Damascus Road. We assume that most people have not heard or thoughtfully considered the deeper implications of the Gospel. We exist to bring things “in line with the Gospel” (Gal. 2:14) which renews us spiritually, psychologically, corporately, and socially. Here are some of the ways the Gospel changes us:

Gospel Faith

The Gospel centers all truth in the person and work of Jesus. Naturally, we stop being prideful in our own good work or despairing in our bad work. Our faith is not in how we walk or will walk in this life, but in how Jesus already walked in His.

Gospel Love

We move from an impersonal “boss-employee” relationship to a personal “Father-child” relationship; from a fear-based, self-interested way to be moral to a love-based desire to delight in our God. All of this comes from the radical love that God proved he had for us on the cross. That love for God, IN Christ, cannot help but overflow into a love for others LIKE Christ—especially for those who believe.

Gospel Hope

The Gospel reminds us that our hope rests in the reality of Jesus’ resurrection and His return. This is not our home, the king is returning, and one day we will live in his presence forever. This truth helps us endure and have patience in all circumstances. The Gospel also teaches us to have hope for non-Christians. No one is ever seen as “too far away,” since every conversion, including your own, is a supernatural miracle of the heart.

Gospel Unity

The Gospel tells us that God did not die for a person, but for a people—the church. Through the cross, we enter into God’s family. And within this Gospel Community, we use all that we have, our experiences, time, talent, and gifts to help build up that body. It is within this community that God intends for us to grow and exhibit His incredible wisdom.

Gospel Obedience

We are saved by His grace at such an infinite cost to Him —one we could never equal. *We no longer obey to be accepted, we are accepted, and so we obey.* He can, therefore, ask anything of us and we can serve Him joyfully. We are convinced that our Father desires only our good, so we rejoice in obedience even when it confronts our emotions, intellects, or experiences.

Gospel Approval

We no longer take our identity from what we or *others* think of us but from what God thinks of us in Christ (I Cor. 4:3-4). The Gospel produces neither an inferiority complex (since we are a treasure in Christ), nor a superiority complex (since we are sinners standing only by grace). This unique boldness and humility at once is a sign of the transforming power of the Gospel.

Gospel Repentance

We approach our sin honestly. The moralist says: “repent, you are not living right”. The Psychologist says: “you must accept yourself just as you are”. The Gospel says: “only Jesus can be your functional savior and give meaning to your reality.” With every problem then, we must consider whether we are looking to something other than Jesus for our meaning, hope, or joy.

Gospel Suffering

We approach suffering with an entirely different perspective. We know that God uses trials to build our faith and make us look more like His Son—that we might glorify him. If we are going to have a life like Christ, it will include suffering in our efforts to glorify God. Because Jesus' suffering was not senseless; neither is ours. We now have the power to follow His example and entrust ourselves to God.

Gospel Relationships

In the Gospel, Christians become a new people of God, united to Christ and to each other like a family. As the Gospel humbles us and assures us of God's love, we are freed from either envy or pride, either inferiority or superiority. We no longer receive our sense of worth through the approval or power of men. We rejoice in our diversity and our relationships become things of beauty, driven by love (Gal. 5:6) in which we are neither using people nor overly "needy" of them. Instead we are freed to serve, affirm, or confront — whatever is best for the moment.

Gospel Healing

The Gospel calls us to repent of ALL of our prejudices big and small. It removes cultural pride and brings down racial identity as a component of identity, making it possible to avoid idolizing one's cultural strengths and appreciating those of others. Essentially, the Gospel makes us humble — which heals the racial/nationality brokenness (Gal. 2:14; Acts 2:1-12). We no longer use our culture's strengths for self-justification (racism). We can look at others who are not like us and who are not even Christians and know that we can learn from them (since we are not saved because of our wisdom or performance, but because of Christ). Christianity becomes the greatest basis for civil relationships in a pluralistic society. Sociologically, all injustice, violence, strife, dependency, intolerance come to the degree that something besides Jesus (wealth, race/blood, the state, human reason) is operating as our functional savior.

Gospel Worship

Worship is the process by which we continually attribute the most worth to Jesus. Many other things compete with Christ for this place of worthiness, and the Bible calls them idols. John Calvin referred to our hearts as "idol factories," constantly manufacturing new objects of worship. As individuals and as a unified body, we highly value the identification of idols that compete with the one true God. Once these idols are identified, they are exposed (repentance) as unworthy and unfulfilling and then destroyed. Driven by faith in Jesus, our worship declares Jesus as more worthy, more valuable, and more fulfilling than anything else.

Gospel Living

Through an emphasis on the Gospel, we seek to promote this ongoing process in the private lives of those we serve. On the corporate level we hope to see people go through this process as we gather to celebrate the "good news." If there is no personal transformation occurring in the body, then corporate worship will be like a lifeless committee meeting instead of an encounter with the living God. If, on the other hand, we are being personally transformed, then our worship will be alive and outsiders will be attracted to what is happening (1 Cor. 14:24,25).

Gospel Respect

The Gospel humbles us, compelling us to have a deep respect for others, especially non-Christians. Since we are saved only by grace, it is our responsibility to humbly demonstrate our own reliance on Christ, and live out our security and peace as we boldly tell His story.

Gospel Forgiveness

The forgiveness we receive through Christ moves us to forgive others. The extent to which we forgive is dictated by the extent to which we understand we have been forgiven.

Gospel Courage

The Gospel keeps us from over-dependence on appearances and in the approval of others. This clears the way for speaking God's truth directly. The Gospel should also prevent us from speaking arrogantly as we remember our own redeemed depravity.

Gospel Evangelism

The Gospel prevents us from defensiveness and the need to win arguments and prove ourselves through witnessing. Not only do we not take things personally, we now evangelize out of a desire to glorify God. In other words, telling God's story becomes primarily an act of praise for what he has done regardless if anyone listens. A secondary (and important) benefit is that people are not saved by our evangelism.

Gospel Power (for mission)

Paul says that the Gospel does not just have power, but rather it is the power of God for salvation (Rom. 1:16-17). We see this power in the gradual, inexorable growth of the kingdom of God (Matt. 11:12, 13:1-23).

Gospel Pastoring

Every believer is a prophet, priest and king — we are a “royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9). At Damascus Road the laity is released to pastor, nurture and minister.

Gospel Teamwork

We aim to plant or support the planting of churches with the same Gospel-based core values into every neighborhood and people group in the city, county, state, and country. It will take more than one church, but a movement of churches, to transform this world and spread the Gospel (see lesson 10).

Gospel Giving

The Gospel makes us generous — which heals the social brokenness. For people with means, it gives us a model of sacrificial giving in Christ (II Cor. 8:2) which we now owe to others (Matt. 18:21-35), even to those who are undeserving, like we were (Is. 64:6; Luke 6:32-35). One of the marks of a heart truly touched by grace is a life poured out in deeds of mercy and justice (Is. 1:10-17; Matt. 25:35-36; Jms. 2:12-14). At the same time, the Gospel empowers the poor to self-sufficiency through its hope (Luke 1:52).

Gospel Work

The Gospel clears out religiosity and makes so called “secular” work as valuable and God-honoring as Christian ministry. When you use your gifts in work — whether by practicing law, tilling the field, mending broken bodies, or nurturing children — you are answering God's calling to serve the human community. The Gospel also shapes and affects the motives and methods we use in our work. In other words, not only does our work matter to God, but God matters in all of our work. We encourage Christians to offer up their work to the God who saved them, transforming their vocational lives by working in line with the Gospel. We do not want Christians to privatize their faith away from their work, nor to express it in terms of subculture. We desire to see growing Christians working in their vocations both with excellence and Christian distinctiveness, thus transforming the culture from the inside out.

The implications for the Gospel are endless. The more we meditate on God's Word, taught by the Spirit, we will learn what it means to apply the Gospel to marriages, parenting, communication, and all other areas of life.

D | ROAD 101

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-47

SESSION 2 THE CHURCH & MISSION

session two

THE CHURCH & MISSION

God and His People

In the first session, we discussed the gospel, namely, what God has done in history, to redeem men through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The plan of redemption was written well before the world was even created (Rev. 13.8). And though a good God created a good world full of good things, the fact that man sinned and rejected His goodness did not take our omniscient God by surprise. **God always had a plan to gather a people for Himself.** Beginning with the garden, we see God's story does not end where it starts—giving men the punishment they deserve. Instead, God gives them a promise of a Savior who would one day restore creation to all the goodness God desired.

The book of Genesis tells us the histories of men like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. More than that, their stories give us a picture of our God in constant pursuit of relationship with His people. The book of Exodus is a wonderful image of God as a warrior-missionary, pursuing and freeing His chosen people from slavery. Not only does He free them, he leads them, covenants with them at Mt. Sinai, and He chooses to commune with them uniquely. God has them construct a temple and build an ark where the glory of his presence would dwell. **They are God's assembly BECAUSE they assembled where the presence of God is.**

This does not mean that His presence does not exist elsewhere, rather, that His presence dwells in a special and powerful way with Israel. And they physically gathered regularly to make sacrifices, to worship, to feast, to pray, ALL intended to remind them WHO THEY WERE. **But it is clear, in the Old Testament, that they forgot...often.** Again, though it grieved Him, it did not surprise our God. And over hundreds of years, God raised up priests, prophets, and kings to call them back into relationship, but they were always imperfect. But the choosing, the redeeming, and the dwelling always had a future and complete restoration in view—a future savior who would set all things right. The people would not always be insulated from the GLORY and God's people would include others: Through the prophet Isaiah, God says: *"I will gather yet others...besides those already gathered."* (Is. 56.8)

And for thousands of years, the redemption that would come through Jesus remained hidden in His relationship with Israel. **And it wasn't until the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus that God revealed the mystery of His church—the beginning of a renewed creation.**

What is the Church?

The church is more than a place where Christians just happen to hang out on Sundays. It is more than a once-a-week event, more than a religious routing, more than a Christian club. The church was not an addendum to God's plan for salvation, in fact, we believe it is central to it. Jesus did not die for a person, he died for a church—a specific group of people—through whom he would continue to restore the world with the gospel. The church is the fellowship of believers, the family of God (a family of families), where the presence of God's Spirit chiefly dwells, and where the wisdom of God is uniquely made manifest. Damascus Road church is not the only expression of God's family. The church is both universal and local, both invisible and visible, both spiritual and physical.

According to Scripture, the universal, invisible, and spiritual church refers to:

All the true Christians around the world past, present, and future. The local, visible, physical church refers to **an assembly of disciples saved by Jesus, unified by their gospel identity, sent into the world on mission to proclaim the gospel, led by biblically qualified elders, committed to proclaiming gospel truth and living as gospel community in the world.**

Some other Biblical descriptions and metaphors for the church include:

⁵ *I am the **vine**; you are the **branches**. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. John 15.5*

⁹ *For we are God's fellow workers. You are **God's field, God's building**. 1Cor 6.9*

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Gal. 6.10

⁹ *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and **members of the household of God**, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into **a holy temple in the Lord**. ²² In him you also are being built together into **a dwelling place for God** by the Spirit. Ephesians 2.19-22*

¹⁰ *so that through the church the manifold **wisdom of God** might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. Ephesians 3.10*

⁴ *As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up **as a spiritual house**, to be a **holy priesthood**, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...⁹ But you are a **chosen race**, a royal priesthood, **a holy nation, a people for his own possession**, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 1Peter 2.4-5,9*

⁶ *but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are **his house** if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope Heb. 3.6*

¹⁵ *if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the **household of God**, which is the **church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth**. 1Timothy 3.15*

¹² *For just as the body is one and has many members, and all **the members of the body, though many, are one body**, so it is with Christ. 1Cor. 12.12ff*

What a church MUST do to be a church

There are many people who view the church as a building or an antiquated institution unimportant to their faith. In fact, there are an increasing number of people who can easily describe why they love Jesus but hate the church. Jesus loved the church. In fact, He loved it so much He gave up everything for her. Not only did He promise to build the church through His death, but He also promised that His love would continue to make the church more beautiful (Ephesians 5.25-33). ***In other words, it is impossible to love Jesus and not His bride—they are inseparable.***

Those who have put their faith in the head of the church have become part of His body. Through our shared identity in Christ, God brings us together into one family through adoption. And as brothers and sisters, He intends to build us together, encourage us together, grow us together, and sanctify us together so that we look more individually like His Son and corporately like His people. And while there is much we CAN do as the church, there are a few things God has commanded we MUST do.

Protestant Reformer John Calvin identified two distinctive characteristics of a church: “Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists. ... If it has the ministry of the Word and honors it, if it has the administration of the sacraments, it deserves without doubt to be held and considered a church. For it is certain that such things are not without fruit” (*Institutes*, IV.i.9). Calvin’s 16th century description matches the practices of the 1st century church found in Acts 2.42-47:

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. – Acts 2.42-47

A CHURCH MUST | PREACH THE GOSPEL

There is only one gospel. There is only one foundation laid by Jesus Christ alone. We are given the authority to proclaim the one message declaring the TERMS for ENTERING the Kingdom of God AND for living for God’s glory on this earth. We have the authority to speak but not to change the terms of it. And not only do we have the authority, we have the responsibility. We don’t preach in church because we want to—we have to. And though we don’t think preaching should be boring, our aim is not to entertain, but to be faithful to the truth. Jesus preached and he commanded his disciples to preach. ***Preaching is a priority because the Word of God is a priority. We preach God’s Word because there is power in it. We preach God’s Word because God’s Word is central to every aspect of our lives. We preach God’s Word because, if we don’t, we are not doing what Jesus told us to as the church.*** We preach because God’s Word has always been His chosen instrument to create, convict, convert, and conform His people—it is the power of salvation and the way God works. (Romans 1.16; Isaiah 55.10-11)

13 For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” 14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”
Romans 10.13-15

A CHURCH MUST | ADMINISTER COMMUNION

And within a few days, after Pentecost, the disciples began to practice the breaking of bread. **Acts 2.42** ⁴² **And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.** Perhaps it is stretching this verse a bit because they could mean they know Him in the sense that they recognized Him when He broke bread. But, we'd rather argue that it is through COMMUNION that we in fact KNOW Jesus in a way unlike anything else we do:

Through history, there have been arguments between brothers in Christ, about what exactly is happening when we take communion. (1) Some argue that the bread and wine actually change into the body and blood of Christ; (2) others that the elements remain the same while Jesus' presence is really there; (3) and still others believe that the elements are simply representations. Regardless view chosen, the one thing that is shared by all views is that we are **ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING IN SOMETHING!**

1. **NEW LIFE** – Communion reminds us of our REDEMPTION from slavery to sin. **It is a declaration of the eternal truth of the gospel—of the fact that Jesus died in our place for our sins, and he was raised to give us a new life.** Jesus is not crucified every time we take communion, rather, we REMEMBER the work is finished. The shame has been taken, the guilt removed, we are FREE! He suffered once for all, for our sins past, present, and future. We have been freed from our sin, saved from God's wrath, and adopted into the family of the King who is now reigning in victory.
2. **RENEWED LIFE** – Not only is it participating in what God has DONE, but in what He is doing. **It is the very place where we recognize our SANCTIFICATION—that we are in a redeemed work-in-progress.** We do not repent once, we confess and repent ALL THE TIME. The act of communion, unlike any other time or event in our lives, calls Christians to put their sin to death in the light of the fact that Jesus died, **compelling us to examine OURSELVES** and repent before partaking.
3. **SHARED LIFE** – This is not a handi-snack lunch for one—this is a meal where we SHARE in our UNITY. **We participate together in Christ's death for the church—for us.** We see our life born together, as our life growing together, as our sin affecting each other, our faith working itself out together. This is the beauty of the gospel, the unity of God's people. We worship together with our voices in song; we worship together through hearing the Word of God proclaimed; we worship together through giving of our offerings; and we worship together through taking of communion—Jesus dying for the church, forgiving the church, caring for the church. As we participate in this shared meal together, we say to one another...I am your brother in Jesus—I love you in Jesus.
4. **ETERNAL LIFE** – Finally, Jesus told his disciples to do this in remembrance of him. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 11.26** ²⁶ **For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.** It is not only our life, our growth, our unity, it is our HOPE. **This one meal points us toward the future marriage supper where we will sit with Jesus and feast with Him.**

In other words, Communion is more than a meaningless tradition; it is a sacred meal that means something. Through this powerful active experience, we come to know Jesus intimately in a way that sets us apart from the world as genuine believers (Luke 24.25). Not only are we memorializing His death for us, we are proclaiming it. Not only are we proclaiming, we are participating in the benefits of that death. As we receive physical nourishment, the meal gives us spiritual nourishment. As we take the bread and cup individually, we do so in unity with one another. Together, we affirm Jesus' love for us and the blessings that come from that love. Together, and all at once, we affirm our sinfulness and our faith in Jesus to cleanse us from all sins. It is a meal like no other, one filled with joy, thanksgiving, and a deep abiding love (John 6.22-59).

A CHURCH MUST | BAPTIZE DISCIPLES

Once a person accepts Jesus Christ as their Savior and receive the seal of our faith in the person of the Holy Spirit, then the Bible calls us to make our private commitment a public declaration. Baptism is not “magical”, nor does it come before salvation. Simply, Baptism is a visible representation of the invisible change that has occurred in the individual as a result of belief in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A believer is someone who realizes that their sin separates them from God. They know they will never be good enough to reach God through their good works or religious activities. They depend on Jesus Christ's death on the cross alone to pay the debt for their sins, declare them innocent, redeem them from slavery, appease the wrath of God on their behalf and, ultimately, bring them back into right relationship with our Creator.

Baptism is a physical act with spiritual meaning. The act of Baptism is the literal immersing of a believer under water and then bringing him forth out of the water. Symbolically, the person being baptized is plunged beneath the waters and brought forth in the same way that Jesus was buried in the earth and raised on their behalf in forgiveness of their sins. It symbolizes a union with Christ in His death and resurrection. (Romans 6:1–10; Colossians 2:12).

In summary:

- **First, Baptism is an act of obedience** to the command of Christ, fulfilled by individuals who have received His forgiveness and submitted themselves to His leadership (Matt 28.19-20).
- **Second, Baptism is a symbolic representation** of repentance and purification. In essence, Baptism is a public funeral symbolizing the individuals crucifixion with Christ and a public celebration of new life in Jesus Christ who now reigns as Lord and King in the life of the individual (Gal.2.20).
- **Third, Baptism is public identification** with Jesus. It provides an opportunity for believers to make a formal profession of their faith before the church and the world (Acts 10:48; Rom 6:3; Gal. 3:27).
- **Fourth, Baptism is a biblical rite of initiation** into the universal church (1Cor 12.13) as well membership in the local church (Acts 2.41).

A CHURCH MUST | BE ON MISSION

The stated mission of Damascus Road Church is simply the **Great Commission** the command which the resurrected Jesus gave His disciples in Matthew 28.19-20 before he ascended to heaven:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Matthew 28.19-20

“GO THEREFORE”

The word GO reminds us that building a community of believers has a purpose: it is a means to an end, not the end itself. Sometimes, however, we confuse church for the mission. The church does not have a mission, the mission has a church. God's mission has been the redemption of His people since time began. We do not separate ourselves from the world to avoid living worldly - which is disobedience to God. We do not ATTRACT. Like Jesus, we INCARNATE into the world, find where He is already at work, and join forces with Him.

“MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS”

Our engagement of the world has a purpose. It has been said that "everything preaches." The truth of the gospel should permeate all that we do, from our advertising to our preaching. Jesus is the beginning and end of all things, the hero of every story, the aim of all of our efforts and praise. We are not saved by the gospel and then changed by obedience, but the gospel itself transforms us into a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), it is the way we grow (Gal. 3:1-3) and are renewed (Col. 1:6). It is the solution to each problem, the key to each closed door, the power through every barrier (Rom. 1:16-17).

“BAPTIZING THEM INTO THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT”

We are not in this alone. The purpose of proclaiming the gospel is not simply to call people to change, but to bring them into a new family (Galatians 3:4-7), the church. This new family is unified by a shared purpose and belief in the redemptive work of God (Ephesians 4:3-6). This family supports each other financially and spiritually (Acts 2:42-45), rejoicing with one another, (Romans 12:15), and regularly meeting (Acts 2:46-47) to partake in the sacraments and share in the benefits of the gathered saints (Hebrews 10:24-25).

“TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THAT I HAVE COMMANDED”

God's objective in this life is to make us look more like Jesus. We aim to live like Jesus as He lived in and among the people. Specifically, we live NO MORE than Jesus and NO LESS than Jesus. By no more, we mean that we do not build self-righteous rules that are simply attempts to work our way back to Jesus and minimize the need for the atonement. We also recognize God will not accept less than Jesus and requires perfection. In our dependence upon the cross alone and Jesus living in us (Galatians 2:20), we avoid both self-righteousness and self-indulgence.

A CHURCH MUST | REPRODUCE - PLANT CHURCHES

Healthy discipleship should be involved in reproducing disciples, and healthy churches should be involved in reproducing churches. Because we truly believe in the Great Commission, we believe in church planting. Jesus' essential call was to plant churches. Virtually all the great evangelistic challenges of the New Testament are basically calls to plant churches, not simply to share the faith. The 'Great Commission' (Matt.28: 18-20) is not just a call to 'make disciples' but to 'baptize'. In Acts and elsewhere, it is clear that baptism means incorporation into a worshipping community with accountability and boundaries (cf. Acts 2:41-47). The only way to be truly sure you are increasing the number of Christians in a town is to increase the number of churches.

Planting churches is not only an effective means to reach people, it is the means that God commanded and the apostles practiced. The vigorous, continual planting of new congregations is the single most crucial strategy for:

- 1) the numerical growth of the Body of Christ, and
- 2) the continual corporate renewal and revival of the existing churches.

questions

SESSION TWO

1. What thought, idea, or statement in this session most impressed you?
2. In your own words, what is the church?
3. Which of the descriptions of or the metaphors for the church most impress you? How do they change your view of the church? (John 15.5, Romans 11.17-24, 1Cor 3.9, John 4.35, 1Peter 2.4-8, Heb. 3.6, 1Timothy 3.15, 1Cor. 12.12-27)
4. In your opinion, what is “good” preaching and what is “bad” preaching? What is biblical preaching? (See 2Corinthians 4.-6).
5. At Damascus Road, we take Communion every week. The practice of most of the church throughout its history is to celebrate the Lord’s Supper every week when believers gather. However, in many Protestant groups since the Reformation, there has been a less frequent celebration of the Lord’s Supper—sometimes once a month or twice a month, or, in many Reformed churches, only four times a year. Discuss your experiences and opinions? (See 1Corinthians 11.26)
6. In your own words, what is the primary mission of the church? In Ephesians 5.7-13, what does Paul state are additional purposes of the church? Where or how do we see this?
7. If you are a confessed believe, have you been baptized? If no, why not? If yes, how would you explain to someone why you chose to?
8. What **MUST** a church do to be a “true church?” We **SHOULD** they do? What **CAN** they do? Have you ever been a member of a church that you would think to be a false church?
9. Why does Damascus Road Church believe in planting churches? How do you think this commitment might affect the programs and priorities of the church?

Appendix 3 | WHY PLANT CHURCHES

Nothing else--not crusades, outreach programs, para-church ministries, growing mega-churches, congregational consulting, nor church renewal processes--will have the consistent impact of dynamic, extensive church planting. This is an eyebrow raising statement. But to those who have done any study at all, it is not even controversial. The normal response to discussions about church planting is something like this:

- We already have plenty of churches that have lots and lots of room for all the new people who have come to the area. Let's get them filled before we go off building any new ones.
- Every church in this community used to be fuller than it is now. The church going public is a 'shrinking pie'. A new church here will just take people from churches already hurting and weaken every church we already have. We need better churches, not more churches.
- Help the churches that are struggling first. A new church doesn't help the ones that are barely keeping their "heads" above water.

These statements appear to be 'common sense' to many people, but they rest on several wrong assumptions. The error of this thinking will become clear if we ask 'Why is church planting so crucially important?' It is important because—

#1 WE WANT TO BE TRUE TO THE BIBLICAL MANDATE

Jesus' essential call was to plant churches. Virtually all the great evangelistic challenges of the New Testament are basically calls to plant churches, not simply to share the faith. The 'Great Commission' (Matt.28: 18-20) is not just a call to 'make disciples' but to 'baptize'. In Acts and elsewhere, it is clear that baptism means incorporation into a worshipping community with accountability and boundaries (cf. Acts 2:41-47). The only way to be truly sure you are increasing the number of Christians in a town is to increase the number of churches. Why? Much traditional evangelism aims to get a 'decision' for Christ. Experience, however, shows us that many of these 'decisions' disappear and never result in changed lives. Why? Many, many decisions are not really conversions, but often only the beginning of a journey of seeking God. (Other decisions are very definitely the moment of a 'new birth', but this differs from person to person.) Only a person who is being 'evangelized' in the context of an on-going worshipping and shepherding community can be sure of finally coming home into vital, saving faith. This is why a leading missiologist C.Peter Wagner can say, "Planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic methodology known under heaven. *C.Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Growth* (Glendale: Regal, 1987), p. 168.

#2 WE WANT TO BE TRUE TO THE GREAT COMMISSION

New churches best reach new people groups. Younger adults have always been disproportionately found in newer congregations. Long-established congregations develop traditions (such as time of worship, length of service, emotional responsiveness, sermon topics, leadership-style, emotional atmosphere, and thousands of other tiny customs and mores), which reflect the sensibilities of long-time leaders from the older generations who have the influence and money to control the church life. This does not reach younger generations. New congregations empower new people and new peoples much more quickly and readily than can older churches. Thus they always have and always will reach them with greater facility than long-established bodies. This means, of course, that church planting is not only for 'frontier regions' or 'pagan' countries that we are trying to see become Christian. Christian countries will have to maintain vigorous, extensive church planting simply to stay Christian!

New churches best reach the unchurched. Dozens of denominational studies have confirmed that the average new church gains most of its new members (60-80%) from the ranks of people who are not attending any worshipping body, while churches over 10-15 years of age gain 80-90% of new members by transfer from other congregations.(3) This means that the average new congregation will bring 6-8 times more new people into the life of the Body of Christ than an older congregation of the same size. So though established congregations provide many things that newer churches often cannot, older churches in general will never be able to match the effectiveness of new bodies in reaching people for the kingdom. Why would this be? As a congregation ages, powerful internal institutional pressures lead it to allocate most of its resources and energy toward the concerns of its members and constituents, rather than toward those outside its walls. This is natural and to a great degree desirable. Older congregations therefore have a stability and steadiness that many people thrive on and need. This does not mean that established churches cannot win new people. In fact, many non-Christians will only be reached by churches with long roots in the community and the trappings of stability and respectability.

However, new congregations, in general, are forced to focus on the needs of its nonmembers, simply in order to get off the ground. Because so many of its leaders have come very recently from the ranks of the un-churched, the congregation is far more sensitive to the concerns of the non-believer. Also, in the first two years of our Christian walk, we have far more close, face-to-face relationships with non-Christians than we do later. Thus a congregation filled with people fresh from the ranks of the un-churched will have the power to invite and attract many more non-believers into the events and life of the church than will the members of the typical established body.

#3 WE WANT TO RENEW THE WHOLE BODY OF CHRIST

It is a great mistake to think that we have to choose between church planting and church renewal. Strange as it may seem, the planting of new churches in a city is one of the very best ways to revitalize many older churches in the vicinity and renew the whole Body of Christ.

The new churches bring new ideas to the whole Body. There is plenty of resistance to the idea that we need to plant new churches to reach the constant stream of 'new' groups and generations and residents. Many congregations insist that all available resources should be used to find ways of helping existing churches reach them. However, there is no better way to teach older congregations about new skills and methods for reaching new people groups than by planting new churches. It is the new churches that will have freedom to be innovative and they become the 'Research and Development' department for the whole Body in the city. Often the older congregations are too timid to try a particular approach, or are absolutely sure it would not work here. But when the new church in town succeeds wildly with some new method, the other churches eventually take notice and gain the courage to try it themselves.

New churches are one of the best ways to surface creative, strong leaders for the whole Body. In older congregations, leaders emphasize tradition, tenure, routine, and kinship ties. New congregations, on the other hand, attract a higher percentage of venturesome people who value creativity, risk, innovation and future orientation. Many of these men and women would never be attracted or compelled into significant ministry apart from the appearance of these new bodies. Often older churches 'box out' many people with strong leadership skills who cannot work in more traditional settings. New churches thus attract and harness many people in the city whose gifts would otherwise not be utilized in the work of the Body. These new leaders benefit the whole city-Body eventually.

New churches challenge other churches to self-examination. The "success" of new churches often challenges older congregations in general to evaluate themselves in substantial ways. Sometimes it is only in contrast with a new church that older churches can finally define their own vision, specialties, and identity. Often the growth of the new congregation gives the older churches hope that 'it can be done', and may even bring about humility and repentance for defeatist and pessimistic attitudes. Sometimes, new congregations can partner with older churches to mount ministries that neither could do by themselves.

The new church may be an 'evangelistic feeder' for a whole community. The new church often produces many converts who end up in older churches for a variety of reasons. Sometimes the new church is very exciting and outward facing, but is also very unstable or immature in its leadership. Thus some converts cannot stand the tumultuous changes that regularly come through the new church and they move to an existing church. Sometimes the new church reaches a person for Christ, but the new convert quickly discovers that he or she does not 'fit' the socio-economic make-up of the new congregation, and gravitates to an established congregation where the customs and culture feels more familiar. Typically, the new churches of a city produce new people not only for themselves, but for the older bodies as well.

#4 ITS AN EXERCISE IN KINGDOM-MINDEDNESS

All in all, church planting helps an existing church best when the new congregation is voluntarily 'birthed' by an older 'mother' congregation. Often the excitement of new leaders and new ministries and additional members and income 'washes back' into the mother church in various ways and strengthens and renews it. Though there is some pain in seeing good friends and strong leaders go away to form a new church, the mother church usually experiences a surge of high self-esteem and an influx of new enthusiastic leaders and members.

However, a new church in the community usually confronts churches with a major issue--the issue of 'kingdom-mindedness'. New churches, as we have seen, draw most of their new members (up to 80%) from the ranks of the unchurched, but they will always attract some people out of existing churches. That is inevitable. At this point, the existing churches, in a sense, have a question posed to them: "Are we going to rejoice in the 80%--the new people that the kingdom has gained through this new church, or are we going to bemoan and resent the three families we lost to it?" In other words, our attitude to new church development is a test of whether our mindset is geared to our own institutional turf, or to the overall health and prosperity of the kingdom of God in the city.

Any church that is more upset by their own small losses rather than the kingdom's larger gains is revealing its narrow man-centered interests. Yet, as we have seen, the benefits of new church planting to older congregations is very great, even if that may not be obvious initially. New church planting is the only way that we can be sure we are going to increase the number of believers in a city and one of the best ways to renew the whole Body of Christ. The evidence for this statement is strong--Biblically, sociologically, and historically. In the end, a lack of kingdom-mindedness may simply blind us to all this evidence.

Gospel-centered churches never forget that the church doesn't have a mission, rather, the mission has a church.

D | ROAD 101

¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
Ephesians 4.11-13

SESSION 3 THE ROLES & LEADERS

session three

THE ROLES & LEADERS

How is the church like a family?

Last session, we discussed what the church is and what a church must do in order to be considered genuine. The church is by definition the family of God, and by nature a family of families living out their shared belief in the gospel together. Having been made in the image of God, the relationships within the church should imitate the eternal relationship shared by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In essence, the people of the church live in loving submission to one another, fulfilling their God-given roles, using their God-given talents, gifts, and experiences to glorify God. Through the life of the church, the world should hear, see, and experience the “manifold wisdom” of God.

How is the church family to be organized?

In Ephesians 3.8-10 the apostle Paul states his two-fold job description:

⁸ To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, ¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

Paul states that his job is to 1) preach to the gentiles and 2) bring to light what is the plan (oikonomos) of the mystery—which is Jews and Gentiles together. The word for plan, often translated administration, comes from two words: OIKOS meaning “House” and NOMOS meaning “LAW”. Together, the word for plan means house law or management of a household.

Through his letters, one of Paul’s primary concerns is to give instructions for proper living within the household of God (a local church family). He writes to young pastor Timothy:

¹⁴ I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, ¹⁵ if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. (1 Timothy 3.14-15).

In other words, God intends for the church to be organized and He has not left us without guidelines on how to do that.

Who is the head (Shepherd) of God’s house? | JESUS

Supreme to Paul’s instructions is the truth that Jesus Christ is the head of the church, the one who plants, builds, and sustains it until He sees fit to end it (Matt.16.18, Eph. 1.9, 1.22-23, 4.15, 5.23, Col. 1.17, Heb. 3.1, Rev. 2.5). Jesus is the Lord of the universe, and He is the Lord of the church. Just like God’s first creation of the world, his tool for re-creation of that world, the church, is also made through by Jesus, by Jesus, for Jesus, and is held together by Jesus.

Without a head, a body cannot live, it cannot grow, and it cannot function as designed. You can have gatherings. You can have traditions. You can have religion. You can have buildings. You can even have preachers, programs, and a sense of community. But without Jesus it is all meaningless and it will one day begin to stink like a rotting corpse without a head. Therefore, the title of Senior pastor is reserved for Jesus as it connotes a sense of age, immeasurable wisdom, and final authority—He’s Dad.

What are the roles in the house | who does the chores?

Viewing the church as the “household of God” helps us to understand what the life of the church is supposed to look and feel like. This concept also helps the church to function properly and to be effective in the ministry it has to do. The ordering of the church is not simply a matter of personal preference. Harmony and fruitfulness in our individual lives, our family life, and the life of our church are all dependent upon following God’s principles.

Contrary to popular belief, the “work of ministry” (Eph. 4.1) in the life of the church is not the sole responsibility of the pastors. Scripture teaches that God has organized the people of His church into different roles in the church, each with different responsibilities. Specifically, Paul states that the church is full of **members, deacons, and elders** (Phil. 1.1-2). All three of these support one another in fulfilling the “work of ministry”.

ELDERS | Servants who Lead

Elders lead and manage the church family, to which they have been entrusted, shepherding and caring for believers, being careful not to lord their office over them, but rather seeking to be an example in family, in community life, and in character. The men must be skillful handlers of the Word of God and use it to protect the church by defending sound doctrine as well as refuting those who contradict. They must be vitally involved in development, recognizing, and commending of new leaders and young “ministers of the gospel” as their lives are tested and giftedness made evident. They are responsible to appoint more elders and deacons and approve of new members.

Biblical passages such as 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 describe elders’ responsibilities explicitly. Other tasks can be inferred through various passages describing the leaders of the church. The Scriptures illustrate how Elders serve by leading with their primary focus as the spiritual oversight of the congregation. In addition to being called and qualified, an elder must competently and consistently accomplish the biblical duties of an elder as listed by Scripture:

- *Prayer and Scripture study (Acts 6.4)*
- *Ruling and Leading the church (1 Timothy 5.17)*
- *Managing the church (1 Timothy 3.4-5)*
- *Caring for people in the church (1 Peter 5.2-5)*
- *Giving account to God for the church (Hebrews 13.17)*
- *Living exemplary lives (Hebrews 13.7)*
- *Rightly using the authority God has given them (Acts 20.28)*
- *Teaching the Bible correctly (Ephesians 4.11; 1 Timothy 3.2)*
- *Preaching (1 Timothy 5.17)*
- *Praying for the sick (James 5.13-15)*
- *Teaching sound doctrine and refuting false teachings (Titus 1.9)*
- *Working hard (1 Thessalonians 5.12)*
- *Rightly using money and power (1 Peter 5.1-3)*
- *Protecting the church from false teachers (Acts 20.17-31)*
- *Disciplining unrepentant Christians (Matthew 18.15-17)*

DEACONS | Leaders who Serve

The name deacon, or *diakonos*, is translated to mean: "servant", "waiting-man," "minister" or "messenger." Deacons are only explicitly mentioned in two places in the New Testament, both in relation to elders, because the two groups of leaders work so closely together (Phil 1.1; 1 Tim 3.8-13). Most scholars refer to the narrative at the beginning of Acts 6 as the appointment of the first deacons, though the word itself is never used there. The Acts narrative is at times descriptive versus prescriptive (it tells us what happened but does not tell us exactly what we should do) in what it teaches.

The text of Acts 6 does not explicitly mention "deacons", therefore, we must be careful to use these verses as a model and not as dogmatic principles. In other words, *when senior spiritual leadership is overburdened to the degree that they are unable to simultaneously get time for prayer, Bible study, and care of needy people, they are free to appoint pastoral assistants to help alleviate some of their burden—even if that burden is not the same one described in Acts 6.* Deacons serve the church, being faithful to carry out the responsibilities entrusted to them by the elders, recognizing that at times they will be given special tasks of meeting community-wide needs and finding solutions to problems. This demands character, faithfulness, and not being double-tongued (1Tim. 3.8-13; Acts 6.1-6). Deacons are an example to the church and heralds of the mission, possessing a clear understanding of the faith, living consistently with the truths, especially in ordering their lives and families in accordance with God's principles.

MEMBERS | Family Relationships and Responsibilities

One does not have to be an elder or a deacon in order to contribute to the "work of ministry." In fact, the life of the church is more dependent upon individual members living a gospel centered life more than its leaders running programs, starting ministries, or teaching Bible studies. **Some members will be called to godly leadership, but all members are called to godly living.** Scripture provides clear guidelines for how individual members without office or title, can fulfill their role in the church:

- **Older Men:** Set an example of faithfulness and perseverance within the church as godly men, husbands, fathers, and members. Continue on in faith and remain sound in it, growing in the Word, and modeling the living of a life that is ordered under biblical principles so the community might be strengthened as it relates as an extended family (1 Timothy 5.1; Titus 2.2).
- **Older Women:** Set an example of respectful behavior in the life of the community, evidently both toward the leaders in the church as well as for younger women toward their husbands and family responsibilities. Continue to be devoted to good works, using their homes to meet needs in the church and in the world. Anything they teach must have soundness to it that is marked by good works and is oriented toward assisting younger women to orient themselves to godly living as women, wives, mothers, and members (1 Timothy 2.9-10, 5.9-10; Titus 2.3-5,9-10).
- **Younger Women:** Be devoted to their husbands and children and to laboring hard to make their homes a powerful witness to the beauty of the Word of God. They are to be known for good deeds by using their homes as a base for meeting needs in the believing

community and in the city, as well as assisting those in distress (1 Timothy 5.9-10; 1 Tim 2.9-10; Titus 2.3-5).

- **Younger Men:** Seek to show themselves as an example of good deeds, watching their speech so as not to get caught in youthful lusts, which is so often connected with the tongue. They must also labor, like an athlete in a gym, to become established and sound in their faith, learning both from God's Word and from the older men in the church (2 Tim 2.22-26; Titus 2.6-8).
- **Widows/Single Moms:** Younger widows should seek to remarry and invest in the types of responsibilities listed for younger women. Older widows should seek to devote themselves fully to the needs of the household of faith, even to the extent of being supported if they are in need and their children cannot support them (1 Tim. 5.3-16).*

The gospel-centered family is a God-given model for the Church family. Therefore, Damascus Road Church believes that building strong families with godly men, women, husbands, wives, mothers, fathers and children is essential to the health of the church and the effectiveness of our mission.

How do elders manage the household of God?

Due to a tremendous amount of confusion and corruption in the history of church leadership, we feel it necessary to explain how our leadership functions and aligns with Scripture. The contemporary, church-board concept of eldership is irreconcilably at odds with the New Testament's definition of eldership. The term pastor-elder is used to distinguish the eldership from unbiblical "board elders" modeled after corporate America.

The leaders of God's household are more accurately described as "pastor-elder", "shepherd-elder" or the like. To use biblical terms, the elders *shepherd, oversee, lead, and care* for the local church. In that sense, Damascus Road is an elder-led church. All of our elders are considered pastors, men called by God to shepherd and lead this local expression of God's church. According to Hebrews 13.17, these men will have to give an account for those in their charge. To this end, they meet regularly to ensure they protect, lead, and nurture the church to the glory of God.

The following describe the key elements which characterize our view of biblical eldership:

- **Qualifications of Eldership:** The qualifications of eldership are clearly spelled out in Scripture (1 Tim 3.2-7; Titus 1.6-9; 1 Peter 5.1-3). The primary qualifications deal specifically with character. Elders are distinguished from other leaders in their mandate to teach doctrine, manage their household properly, and maintain an overall life of temperance and godliness. (See Selection of Elders)
- **Plurality of Eldership:** Both the O.T. and the N.T. evidence a plurality of eldership in churches. There is a cooperative team as opposed to polarization around one man (Acts 11.30, 14.23, 15, 20.17-38, 21.17-26; Phil 1.1, 1 Tim 3.1-7).
- **Equality of Eldership:** The elders share the position, authority, and responsibility of the office of eldership. There should be no official or unofficial distinction between

pastors, elders, or lay elders. This principle emphasizes “gift-based diversity” within the eldership.

- **Leadership within Eldership:** Within the board, we believe that the lead pastor is a ‘leader among leaders’ or a ‘first among equals’. He is the primary speaker, motivator, leader, visionary, and energizer. He does not do all the thinking or decision making but often points the direction.
- **Male Eldership:** Biblically, only men are qualified to be elders. This should not be received as a condemnation of women in leadership, rather, embraced as an upholding of biblically assigned roles (Titus 1:6, 1Tim. 3:2). There are three different views of women in ministry related to this topic:
 - 1) Hierarchical View (Conservative) – women should be relegated to women’s and children’s ministries.
 - 2) Egalitarian View (Liberal) – men and women are partners together in every arena of ministry. All ministries and offices in the church are open to all qualified men and women.
 - 3) Complementarian View (Moderate) – Men and women are partners together in every arena of ministry. All ministries in the church are open to all qualified men and women with the singular exception of the office of elder, which Scripture requires to be a male-only office. **This is the view of Damascus Road Church.**

Who is the “lead” under-shepherd of the house?

Even though all the elders share in carrying the burden of equipping the church, we also believe that among the elder board there is one primary elder leading in this respect, and that is the Lead Pastor. **We believe that the lead pastor is a ‘leader among leaders’ or ‘a first among equals.’** He is the primary, not solitary, speaker, motivator, leader, visionary, and energizer. He has greater responsibility NOT authority. He is in no way autonomous nor should this additional responsibility enhance his authority. He serves a role fully in submission to Jesus Christ and under the authority of the elder board. His role is as a servant-leader, submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and not a tyrant. There are three reasons for holding this position:

- Old Testament History: Clearly, biblical history illustrates God’s use of one man as a leader of his people. Some of these leaders among leaders include: *Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Elisha, Ezra, Nehemiah, etc.* Even while oppressed in Egypt, the children of Israel still were led by a group of elders (Ex. 3:16, 18; 4:29). When God called Moses to lead, his leadership was made effective by the elders’ representation of the people.
- New Testament Church: In the N.T., the book of Acts is replete with new churches led by a plurality of elders. Yet, there also exist “leaders” like Peter and Timothy who appear to hold unique positions in those churches as the primary shepherd.
- Church Planting: The office of the apostle was constrained to a small group of men. The spiritual gifting of the apostle, however, has carried over *in some sense* just as the gifts of prophecy and evangelism. The original apostles appeared to be a fixed number of 12 men (Matt 10.1; Mark 3.13.19) all of whom accompanied Jesus during his earthly ministry

through the resurrection (Acts 2.21). With few exceptions, this office referred to those Jesus personally commissioned and sent on mission. The term “apostle” refers to someone on mission. Today, the term has been used, in a unique sense, to describe the unique gifting as a missionary or a lead church planter.

Who is qualified to be an elder in the house of God?

The New Testament elders were chosen and installed by other elders (Acts 14.23; Titus 1.5). Paul warns us in 1 Timothy 5.22 to not be quick or hasty to install elders as these are the leaders of the church, examples in every aspect of life. They are ordinary men; but they are ordinary men are called to an extraordinary task. Biblically, they must be able to teach but they are not required to have M.DIV as their last name. The term “ordination” is often used to prove a man is qualified to pastor a church, although it does not appear anywhere in the N.T. The word maintains a modern ecclesiastical sense where an unbiblical line is drawn between laity and clergy.

We believe the utmost care, caution, prayer, and assessment must be undertaken to assure that only called, qualified, and competent men are appointed to this position of leadership. The guidelines for selecting “qualified” men include:

- 1. Must Desire Eldership:** One cannot, and should not, force someone to be a leader. Men qualified for eldership will have an innate desire to lead. Men can ask or be asked to consider eldership, but eldership should never be pursued by any man motivated by power, guilt, or regard.
- 2. Must Possess Exemplary Character Qualities:** More often than not, leaders cannot do anything but lead. They are first recognized as leaders by the way they live their lives. No one becomes a leader overnight; but true leaders exhibit exemplary character over a long period of time. In Deuteronomy 1.13, Moses instructed the Israelites to, “choose some wise, understanding, and respectable men from among each of your tribes and I will set them over you.” **The Israelites were to find men who met more than just the minimum requirements.** These were to be men who possessed wisdom (not just knowledge), understanding (record of decision-making), and respect (from in and outside their tribe). Men qualified for eldership will have the respect of their families, friends, and even strangers in their personal, business, and spiritual lives. The best test for any elder candidate is to ask some very simple questions: (1) Would I want my son to follow this man’s example of a godly husband, father, and follower of Jesus? (2) Would I want my daughter to use this man as an example for her future husband? (3) Would I trust this man to take care of my bride and family? (4) Is this man pastoring his “first church” at home?
- 3. Must Fulfill Biblical Requirements:** To be considered for eldership, a man must exhibit the highest of Christian character according to the qualifications of Scripture (1 Timothy 3.1-7; Titus 1.5-9). In simple summary: ***the elder’s call is to nurture his relationship with God, maintain his household well, and teach and defend the truth SO THAT he might manage the church, shepherd the people, and provide a model of Christian living for others to follow.*** We believe that God equips those He calls. In other words, the qualifications listed in Scripture are not traits to be developed as much as they are traits to be identified. Some of the qualifications listed by Scripture require interpretation. The elders of the local church are empowered with the collective authority and wisdom to discern who is qualified and who is not.

- **Relation to God**
 - *A man – masculine leader*
 - *Above reproach – without any character defect*
 - *Not a new convert – mature in the faith*
 - *Holding Firm to the Word – knows doctrine, able to refute false truth*

- **Relation to Family**
 - *Husband of one wife – a one-woman man; sexually pure*
 - *Has obedient children – successful father as prophet, priest, and king*
 - *Manages family well – provides for, leads, organizes, loves*

- **Relation to Self**
 - *Temperate – mentally and emotionally stable*
 - *Self-controlled – not quick tempered but measured, sound in decision-making*
 - *Sober-minded – able to communicate*
 - *Disciplined – lives an ordered life emotionally, physically, spiritually*
 - *Not given to drunkenness – without addictions*
 - *Not a lover of money – Financially content, responsible, and upright*

- **Relation to Others**
 - *Respectable – worth following and imitating*
 - *Hospitable – welcomes strangers, non-Christians for evangelism*
 - *Not Violent – even tempered*
 - *Gentle – kind, gracious, loving*
 - *Not Contentious – peaceable, not quarrelsome or divisive*
 - *Good reputation with others – respected by non-Christians*

4. Must be able to teach: One of the qualifications that distinguish an elder from other church leaders is the “ability to teach” (2Tim 2.24). The ability to teach should not be confused with the gift of teaching. There will be some elders who are more skilled at communicating than others. This phrase, however, does identify a major responsibility for all the elders and their charge to be able to teach and disciple others in the core biblical doctrines of the faith. An elder that doesn’t know the scriptures is not qualified to lead a church, and in fact, puts the church in danger. This being said, the elder candidate must participate in intensive training to ensure he knows the scripture, essential doctrine, as well as understand the philosophy and mission of the church.

5. Must Be a Strong Example: The elders are the primary models for the church congregation. Ultimately, what is seen will be modeled by an entire generation of people watching. Potential elders must be passionately committed to serving Jesus. Specifically, the Lordship of Jesus must be evident in ALL aspects of their private and public life. They must commit to sacrificing for the work of God while preserving their commitments to their families. They do not answer to a congregation, but they answer to Jesus Christ, the builder of the church. As the elders seek and listen to the whisper and shouts of God, their decisions must evidence a strong sense of conviction, commitment to vision, wisdom, and clarity.

How do the elders make decisions?

The principle of philosophical purity guides the decisions of the elder board. This principle refers to an agreement, especially among elders, but extending to the congregation, concerning: 1) The purposes, goals, and products of the church, 2) The priority of certain ministries over others, 3) The methods used to reach those objectives.

Philosophical purity means oneness-of-mind—a harmonious **agreement**. It is an agreement founded on the principle of consensus, but it is not necessarily unanimity (Phil 1.27; 2.2; 1 Cor 1.10). Unity occurs when there is a working agreement based on a common objective. Practically speaking, this means there is **no voting** other than what is required by the state to fulfill our legal obligations to function as a non-profit. For purposes of goals and methodology, if the goal is mutual submission to one another, voting seems to work against such a goal by allowing abstention, formal dissent, and division, all of which can lead to bitterness. Since all elders are all in agreement with the mission, vision, core values, and doctrines of the church, this model works well when they decide more practical issues.

To this end, all elders, including the lead pastor, **submit to each other** to make decisions. If the group cannot come to an exact agreement on an issue, then it is the role of the Lead Pastor to decide whether the issue is tabled at that time, or whether the church should go forward in a specific direction. After any decision is made, whether by the group or (if needed) the Lead Pastor alone, the elders unite around the decision and support it privately and publicly. **For all practical purposes and with few exceptions, our goal is consensus, not necessarily unanimity** (Phil. 1:27; 1 Cor. 1:10). As leaders in the church, hard decisions have to be made. There are not always clear biblical passages to define what the best decision is. However, there are some basic convictions of thought that are laced in every decision that we make concerning the church. Here are some of the philosophical priorities that the leadership uses in its decision making.

- **Everything preaches:** We believe that everything we do communicates something about our understanding of who God is and His salvation. From the sermon, to the music, to the chairs, to the bulletin, to our ads, everything either preaches truth about God or falsehood. Our first question, in all decisions, is how well or poorly it reflects the truth of the Gospel.
- **Faith over Fear:** Calculated risks are necessary. Big risk does not necessarily demonstrate big faith. But too little risk, often in the guise of “wisdom”, can often demonstrate too little faith. Ours is a spiritual endeavor dependent upon the grace of God, not our abilities to “figure it out.” We do not have all the answers but take steps of faith with the ones we have (2Tim 1.7; Heb 11.6).
- **Progress over Programs:** When you are no longer willing to change, you are no longer willing to grow. We never do anything because “everyone else is” or because “we always have.” We do not fear change; we fear stagnation and dogmatic attachment to routine. A growing church makes changes, even difficult ones at times. Change in direction is good if we find ourselves misaligned with what God has called us to. We avoid making changes for the wrong reasons. Change is never made based on the personal preferences. We know we cannot please everyone, so the leadership must determine a particular direction and act, praying for wisdom and, in faith, believing God has given it (Phil 3.14, James 1.5).

- **Quality over Complacency:** We believe there are very few “have to’s”. We do not start programs, have activities, or begin other ministries because there is a need if we can’t satisfy that need with quality. Having an abundance of “church stuff” to put on a church bulletin does little to minister to those who need it if their sole motivation is so that we feel better that we offer XYZ. Mediocrity is not acceptable. Everything we do, we do to the glory of Jesus with excellence. We would rather have two songs sung with quality than 10 songs brutalized. We would rather have no children’s programs than an inadequate one. We would rather speak for 10 minutes to an audience of three on a topic with authority than three hours before 3,000 people without a clue.
- **Releasing over Restraining:** We believe that ministry is messy. We also believe that there is too much ministry to be done by a few ‘professional’ pastors. This means that the lay people are expected to do more than traditionally practiced. We aim to equip people and release them to minister without a million hoops to jump through in order to “prove themselves.” This does not mean that anyone can become an elder, deacon, or even member. It does mean that we encourage involvement and all people to “fail forward” as they learn to lead and live God’s mission.
- **Approval of God over Approval of Men:** We aim to ensure our decisions are God-directed as opposed to man-directed. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Prov 1.7). God’s will for the individual and the church is discerned by His word, prayer, other believer’s circumstances, and the Holy Spirit. Decisions driven by the approval of men do little than appease the personal preferences of a person or people who happen to dislike some aspect of the church. Our responsibility is not to determine what a majority, target audience, or an individual would like, rather, what God would have us do. This is discovered by walking in the Spirit that we might be led by the Spirit.
- **Reaching over Keeping:** Quite simply, if a church focuses on keeping people happy, it will always fall short. The emphasis of the great commission is to GO into the world and make disciples, not make disciples happy. We believe that leadership decisions should prioritize ways to reach the lost people in the community for Jesus OVER making existing members comfortable.

What *outside* accountability to the elders have?

The 3Strand Church Network is a group of independent like-minded churches who formally covenant together in order to more effectively live out the Great Commandment and fulfilling the Great Commission. This network exists in order to strengthen the local church and plant churches. The three components of 3Strand mission are **Covenant, Communion, and Commission**:



COVENANT

3Strand churches covenant together in solemn agreement. This covenant defines our relationship and helps to guide our shared decision-making. By covenant then, we unify around a common identity (see core values), common belief (see doctrinal statement), a common mission, and a common philosophy of ministry. This commitment binds the elders of member churches together in a mutually accountable relationship characterized by loyalty, courage, respect, humility, and forgiveness.

COMMUNION

3Strand churches work to build gospel community in and between their churches. This is an intentional effort to emphasize the existence and glory of the larger Church family outside of our own individual churches. Gospel Community is accomplished through joint events, conferences, retreats, and other cooperative ministries. Our goal is to model a mutual dependence upon on “one another” as church families in the same way we are commanded to do as individual brothers.

COMMISSION

3Strand churches go on mission together by developing leaders, sending missionaries, and planting churches. The board of 3Strand, representing our respective elder boards and churches, serve as an apostolic team similar to what we find in the book of Acts. This team exists to affirm the local church as the initiating, commissioning, and sending authority for mission.

The 3strand Network provides the necessary accountability for church leaders and its members. While the accountability provided is not legally binding, the strength of the network is based on the relationships as defined by a biblically binding covenant each church signs. 3Strand exists to protect the integrity of our leadership, the purity of our churches, and the strength of our witness to this region.

The 3strand Network also provides opportunity for regional cooperation. The proximity of the churches allows for our church bodies to fellowship and work together on mission. The churches work together to reach the region. Reaching the region includes shared planning of retreats or conferences as well as shared sacrifice to plant more churches.

To locate and learn about member churches go to our website: www.3strand.org/our-churches

questions

SESSION THREE

1. What thought, idea, or statement in this session most impressed you?
2. Who is the head of the church? Why is this so important?
3. Why is it helpful (and biblical) to view the church as a family or the “household of God”?
4. What is the difference between an elder, a deacon, and a member?
5. As a member, what role can you play in building the church community right now?
6. As a member, what is the most important thing (but not the only thing) for you to work toward to help protect the health of our church (family of families) and the effectiveness of our mission?
7. What characterizes “biblical eldership?” How did this description compare or contrast with your previous understanding or experience?
8. Where do we find the qualifications for eldership? Which of the items listed as qualifications for a pastor impressed you? Why? Are there any NOT there that surprised you?
9. If the elders in a church do not live up to these qualifications, what will the health of the church be? Who or what determines whether a man is qualified?
10. Which of the “decision-making” priorities resonates with you?

Appendix 4 | Elder Covenant



Eldership Covenant

I _____, believing that God has called me to be an overseer of Damascus Road Church, His church which He purchased with His own blood, make this covenant:

I will first care for and tend to my own relationship with God through the spiritual disciplines provided by God to glorify Him, to enjoy Him, and to protect the integrity of the council of elders.

I will second, pastor and care for my own family, understanding that if I don't manage my own home well, I am in no position to care for God's church.

I will third, pastor and care for the church. I will remember the way in which God gently, graciously, and patiently shepherds me as I live out my calling as an under-shepherd of God's people seeking to gently, graciously, and patiently shepherd them.

I will seek to pastor and teach through my own brokenness by the power of the Holy Spirit in order that in all things we may boast in God and He may receive all the glory.

I will seek to preach and teach God's Word in such a way that God is glorified through the gospel, God's people are equipped with the gospel, and non-Christians are saved by the gospel.

I will hold to and contend for the essential doctrines of God as summarized in our church's Statement of Faith. I will protect the flock from false teachers and, if needed, protect the truth from the flock.

I will remember the love God shows for me in His discipline and correction as I seek to lovingly carry out the discipline and correction of God's people in this local church.

I will humbly and thankfully accept correction and rebuke myself, believing that God uses His people to sharpen one another for their good and His glory.

I will graciously submit to and support the opinions and decisions of the council of elders.

Signature _____

Date _____

D | ROAD 101

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure ⁿsound³ teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

2Timothy 4.1-5

SESSION 4

THE DOCTRINE & THEOLOGY

session four

THE DOCTRINE & THEOLOGY

What is theology?

Theology is the study of God and all He has revealed. A systematic or structured approach to Theology is any study that seeks to answer the question, “What does the whole Bible teach us today about any given topic?” (Grudem). Answers relative to each topic are called DOCTRINES.

Whatever doctrines we hold to, biblical or not, form a view of the reality called a “worldview”. One’s worldview answers questions such as:

- What do you believe about God?
- What is His overall purpose in the universe?
- What is the purpose of human existence?
- Are humans born essentially good or essentially evil?
- What do you believe about the Bible?
- What do you believe about salvation?
- What do you believe is the way a Christian should live?

At some level everyone has a basic theology and a system of doctrines. Anytime you study Scripture and come to conclusions that are used to support other passages of Scripture, you are developing a Theology.

Why talk about theology?

Since Damascus Road Church is not part of a denomination, we feel it important to identify what Damascus Road believes and teaches theologically. The purpose of teaching basic theology is for your awareness as a member of Damascus Road Church. We do not expect you to fully understand or believe every aspect of Damascus Road’s Theology to be a member; but do expect you to be willing to not be divisive concerning the teaching. Because theological belief is not a requirement for membership, the goal of this class is not to convince you of a particular theology nor tell you why we believe what we do, but to just try to identify and explain our beliefs.

If nothing else, we hope that this class will affirm the importance of every individual to know the major and minor theological doctrines of the Christian faith because:

1. **Theology CONFIRMS our faith:** By confirms we mean that it proves that our faith is alive and not dead. Jesus taught while He was alive. After He rose and ascended to heaven, the Bible says that Jesus continued to teach through His apostles (Acts 1.1). The Great Commission, given by Jesus, was not just a charge to evangelize the world; it was a command to learn what Jesus taught. In other words, it is an act of faithful obedience.

2. **Theology PROTECTS our faith:** As we read throughout all of the New Testament, there are many false teachers and false truths. 2Corinthians 11:4 tells us there is another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel. Learning theology helps us to overcome the teaching of a darkened world.
3. **Theology TESTS our faith:** The truth is we all have a theology, a set of doctrinal beliefs about men, relationships, God, etc. that govern our behavior. Some of our theology is good, some is bad. Studying the truth of God tests our “personal doctrines” to see whether what we believe is actually biblical. Refusing to test ourselves is disobedient (2Cor. 13:5).
4. **Theology ESTABLISHES our faith:** Like a strong plant, studying theology helps to establish deep roots in our faith. Deep roots in any plant ensures health and beauty. But cultivating an understanding of theology takes work—it is work with a reward. We cannot drink milk forever, we must move to meat. A life of milk only will never provide the necessary nourishment.
5. **Theology EXPANDS our faith:** By expanding our faith, what we mean to say is that a study of theology actually expands God’s Lordship in our lives. A study of theology opens our eyes to all of the little parts of our lives God is concerned with. Without studying theology, we may limit the “topics of doctrine to the essentials of Christianity. God has something to say about all aspects of our lives (e.g theology of parenting, theology of money, theology of work, etc.).
6. **Theology EQUIPS our faith:** A study of theology not only protects us from attacks, it strengthens our confidence in what we believe. Anyone who falls into a pool of water will be able to flail around and stay afloat for a while. They are not swimming, however, they are surviving. Learning to swim gives that same person a confidence, even a joy, in being in the water. Concentrated study of theology equips us so we don’t have to do the doctrine-dog paddle.
7. **Theology GUIDES our faith:** Studying theology helps us to make better decisions. Without Scripture as our guide, we will often default into depending on emotion, intellect, or experience. Our decision-making is to be governed by the Word of God—it lights our paths. Theology impacts behavior and Paul makes a point to connect bad theology with ungodliness and good theology with godliness (1.Tim 1:10; 6:3) . In essence, God’s Word helps us to bring glory to God in all that we do and protects us from wrongly worshipping creation.
8. **Theology GROWS our faith:** By growing our faith, we mean to say, a study of theology grows us in our relationship with God—it brings us closer to Him. John 17:3 says that eternal life is defined by knowing God, an intimacy akin to a married couple. Knowing God means loving God, and the more we know about God, the more we see there is to love, and the more we want to know Him.
9. **Theology INSPIRES our faith:** A study of theology nourishes us and inspires new joy in us. Time and time again, the Psalmist speaks about delighting in the Word of God. Jesus compared the Word of God to the bread on which men live. The Word of God is what brings ultimate satisfaction and contentment. Therefore, as our theological understanding of God grows, so should our joy. Jesus told His disciples that His teaching was intended to make them full of joy (John 15:11).
10. **Theology MULTIPLIES our faith:** Finally, our study of theology prepares us to teach others. As we learn to feast on God ourselves, we are able to feed others whether they are our children, our friends, or the non-believing world. We are not only learners; we are ambassadors of the King. Sound doctrine, is a precious deposit that we are to guard and entrust to others.

How would we describe ourselves theologically?

1. We are first **Christian** (WE LOVE JESUS)
2. We are second **Evangelical** (WE PREACH JESUS)
3. We are third **Missional** (WE LIVE LIKE JESUS)
4. We are fourth **Reformed** (JESUS GETS THE CREDIT FOR EVERYTHING)

What is Historic (Reformed) Theology?

Christianity is divided into four main divisions today: 1) Eastern Orthodox 2) Roman Catholic 3) Protestant 4) "Christian" Cults. **Damascus Road church is Protestant in our theology.** Within the Protestant group there are primarily two theological schools of thought:

1. **Dispensational theology:** A system of Protestant Theology that began in the 19th century with the writings of J.N. Darby. Among the general doctrines of this system are the distinction between Israel and the church as two groups in God's overall plan, the pre-tribulation rapture of the church, a future literal fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel, and the dividing of Biblical history into seven periods or "dispensations" of God's way of relating to His people.
2. **Historic (Reformed) theology.** Reformed theology is Protestant theology, but as it was developed during the time of the Protestant Reformation, as opposed to Protestant theology developed in the last 100 years. Among the general doctrines of this system are the emphasis of God's sovereignty in salvation and all of life, God having one people and one church (since the beginning) for which there is one plan, a variety of end times views including a-, pre-, and post- millennial, and the division of Biblical history according to the various covenants of God and His story (creation, fall, redemption, and consummation). **Damascus Road Church is reformed in our theology.**

History of the Reformation

In the 1st century, very soon after the completion of the Scriptural letters of the early church, other men such as Clement of Rome and Polycarp began to write about and defend the Christian faith. Over the next several hundred years, various battles were fought over the nature of Christ and the gospel which resulted in official councils that met to protect the early church from heresy including Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (451). From these councils we have a wealth of literature as well as various creeds and confessions such as:

NICEAN CREED (325) | *I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.*

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

CHALCEDON DEFINITION (451) | *We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood;*

One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.*

Unfortunately, over several hundred years, the Roman Catholic Church became corrupt in its teachings, most notably their doctrine of salvation by works. In the 16th century, controversy and an ensuing division began to form between the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and the true teachings of Scripture. The formal rejection of corrupt Christian doctrine and the passionate return to historic sound doctrine was called the **Protestant Reformation**. Some of the important leaders of the Reformation included:

- **John Knox** led the Scottish Reformation (1505).
- **William Tyndale** translated the New Testament into English (1526).
- **Erasmus** translated a Greek version of the New Testament, which showed the corruption of the Latin vulgate (1516).
- German-born **Martin Luther** published the 95 Thesis (1517) as a protest against the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church.
- **Miles Coverdale**, along with Tyndale translated the entire Bible into English (1535).
- Some more specific aspects of Reformed theology can also be found in the writings of the French-born pastor **John Calvin** (1510-1564).

Reformed theology was the primary belief system of Protestants from the various denominations springing from the Reformation (Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Anabaptists) for the next several hundred years. Christian leaders such as George Whitfield, Jonathon Edwards, C.H. Spurgeon, and Charles Hodge all held this view. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) and the Baptist Confession of Faith (1689) both evidence strong Reformed roots.

What does “Reformed Protestant” mean at our church?

What we believe today is not new, it is very old. We believe that every generation must engage in theology study so as to understand how to apply gospel doctrine in their culture. At the same time, the core of what we believe as Protestants was fought for by our Christian brothers and sisters. We build on a foundation established by Jesus, given to his apostles, and protected through the church. Although we do not put the Church Fathers, confessions, councils, or creeds above the teachings of Scripture, we value the rich heritage of historic orthodox writings, and frequently use them in our studies. We value ancient worship traditions by adapting doctrinal hymn lyrics and reforming liturgical elements to fit our church’s culture.

In other words, like the Reformers, we value church history and take it very seriously. The church is called to be *semper reformanda*, “**always reforming.**” We recognize that every Christian community, in every generation, creates its own subculture and traditions. It is critical that we regularly examine our own traditions to ensure they remain in line with the apostolic traditions.

What are the basic teachings from the Reformation?

Below is a basic summary of the five SOLAS’s that characterize the theological heart of the Reformation. They represent a direct challenge to the corruption that crept into the Catholic Church and serve as a guide for testing our theology today:

“*Sola Scriptura*” | Scripture Alone

- 1) We believe that all of Scripture can be trusted. The truth that is conveyed is accurate with what was intended by the original writings. The copies we have were not tampered with to any extent as to change original meaning. (For more information see “Chicago Statement of Faith”) The Scripture we have is not simply the opinions of men, but was given through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit (II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21; John 16:12-13; 1 Thess. 2:13). We do not devalue the writings of any of the authors, for they carry the words of God.
- 2) We believe that Scripture is the sole standard by which we live (II Pet. 1:3-4; Rom. 16:25-26). This means that we should not live a life that adds to Scripture, or takes away from scripture (Matt. 15:7-9; Mark 7:5-8; Rev. 22:18, 19; Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Josh. 1:7; John 5:39).

“*Solus Christus*” | Christ Alone

- 1) We believe Christ is the central focus of Scripture in both the Old and the New Testaments (Gen. 3:15; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Gal. 3:16-18).
- 2) We believe Christ alone accomplished the work of redemption for mankind. This means He alone is to be trusted for salvation, and He alone acts as our mediator (Matt. 1:21-23; Luke 1:35; John 1:1, 14; Romans 3:24-25; I Peter 2:24; Ephesians 1:7; I Peter 1:3-5; Acts 1:9-10; Hebrews 9:24; Romans 8:34; I John 2:1-2; Acts 4:12; John 14:6).

“Sola Gratia” | Grace Alone

- 1) We believe salvation is not simply an assent to intellectual facts, but the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that completely changes who we are through regeneration (Titus 3:5; Eph. 2:1-5; 8-9; Rom. 3:23-24).
- 2) We believe our choosing of salvation was a result of God’s supernatural grace working in us (John 6:44; I Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:13; I Cor. 2:14; Rom. 3:10).
- 3) We believe that because our salvation is based on grace, we are eternally secure. Those who are truly believers, can never lose the salvation given to them by God (John 10:28-29; Rom. 8:28-30).

“Sola Fide” | Faith Alone

- 1) We believe that God made faith the means for us to obtain all the benefits of salvation including forgiveness of sins and rights as God’s children (Eph. 2:8-9; John 1:12; Rom. 3:21-22).
- 2) Since faith is the only way of salvation, then all who had faith both in the Old and New Testament are part of the same church (Rom. 4:13-14; Gal. 3:8-9; Eph. 4:4-6).

“Soli Deo Gloria” | Glory of God Alone

- 1) We believe God sovereignly controls all things for His purposes. God is part of or allows every single event to happen (Acts 17:4; Prov. 16:1, 9, 33; Col. 1:17; Eph. 1:11; Ps. 104:14; 148:8; Job 37:6-13; Matt 5:45; Matt. 6:26).
- 2) God does not exist to satisfy all the desires of humanity, but so humanity can give Him praise for who He is (1 Pet 4:2; 1 Cor 10:31; Ps. 148:13; Rom. 16:27; Isa. 48:9-11).

What are the Reformed doctrinal distinctives?

“If anyone should ask me what I mean by a Calvinist, I should reply, “He is one who says, Salvation is of the Lord.” I cannot find in Scripture any other doctrine than this. It is the essence of the Bible....I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else.” – Charles Spurgeon

Theological labels can be both helpful and harmful. Different labels often possess negative connotations generated from bad experiences or misunderstandings. In truth, we are Calvinists. But that label is not nearly as useful as telling people what we actually believe the Bible teaches about God and His salvation.

Know that first and foremost, we are Gospel believing Christians. We are Bible-saturated, Christ-exalting, God-centered, mission-advancing, soul-winning, church-loving, holiness-pursuing, sovereignty-savoring, grace-besotted, broken-hearted, happy followers of the omnipotent, crucified Christ. That is our imperfect commitment to He who is perfect. That being said, here is a summary of what we believe using personal pronouns (adopted from www.desiringgod.org):

1. I believe I am so **spiritually corrupt and prideful and rebellious** that I would never have come to faith in Jesus without God's merciful, sovereign victory over the last vestiges of my rebellion. (1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1–4; Romans 8:7).
2. I believe that **God chose me to be His child** before the foundation of the world, **on the basis of nothing in me**, foreknown or otherwise. (Ephesians 1:4–6; Acts 13:48; Romans 8:29–30; 11:5–7)
3. I believe Christ **died as a substitute for sinners** to provide a genuine offer of salvation to all people, and that He had an invincible design in His death to obtain His *chosen* bride, namely, the assembly of all believers, whose names were eternally written in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain. (John 3:16; John 10:15; Ephesians 5:25; Revelation 13:8)
4. When I was dead in my trespasses, and blind to the beauty of Christ, **God made me alive, opened the eyes of my heart, granted me to believe**, and united me to Jesus, with all the benefits of forgiveness and justification and eternal life. (Ephesians 2:4–5; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Philippians 2:29; Ephesians 2:8–9; Acts 16:14; Ephesians 1:7; Philippians 3:9)
5. I am **eternally secure** not principally because of anything I did in the past, but decisively **because God is faithful to complete the work He began**—to sustain my faith, and to keep me from apostasy, and to hold me back from sin that leads to death. (1 Corinthians 1:8–9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24; Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 1:25; John 10:28–29; 1 John 5:16)

Many will label this set of beliefs as Calvinism. Call it what you like. We believe these doctrines because we see them in the Bible. This is what we read, this is what we experience, and this is the heart of the gospel we preach, to the glory of God. We'll close as we began, with a quote from Charles Spurgeon:

"I do not believe we can preach the gospel, if we do not preach justification by faith, without works; nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel, unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having once believed in Jesus. Such a gospel I abhor." - (Charles Spurgeon, [A Defense of Calvinism](#))

To learn more about the various doctrines we hold to, please look to take part in the DOCTRINE 101 class offered periodically at the church. Or, to learn more about our view of the sovereignty of God in salvation, download our **GRACE sermon series**.

For further personal study, please read the following:

- Frame, John [Salvation Belongs to the Lord](#)
- Grudem, Wayne [Bible Doctrine](#)
- Packer, J.I. [Knowing God](#)
- Pink, Arthur W. [The Sovereignty of God](#)
- Shelly, Bruce L. [Church History in Plain Language](#)
- Sproul, R.C. [What is Reformed Theology?](#)
- Sproul, R.C. [Chosen by God](#)
- Wilson, Douglas [Easy Chairs Hard Words](#)

questions

SESSION FOUR

1. What thought, idea, or statement in this session most impressed you?
2. What is theology?
3. Do you feel theology important to study? Why or why not? What are the dangers of ignoring OR idolizing theology?
4. What has been your experience (positive or negative) with Reformed theology or “Calvinism?” How has this session help to clarify any misunderstandings? What questions has it created?
5. The greatest distinctive of a reformed theology is that it is “God-centered” vs. “man-centered.” What do you think is the difference between these two perspectives?
6. What are two or three “reformed” basic teachings or distinctives?
7. What questions, assumptions, or concerns do you have about Reformed Theology?

GOD: THE TRINITARIAN GODHEAD

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love and in his holiness. He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration. Immortal and eternal, he perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning, sustains and sovereignly rules over all things, and providentially brings about his eternal good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation, to the praise of his glorious grace. (Genesis 1:26; 11:7; Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:1-2,14,18; Romans 8; Hebrews 1:8-9; 1 Peter 1:2; Revelation 1:5-6; 22:3)

GOD'S REVELATION: THE BIBLE

God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in the created order, and has supremely revealed himself to fallen human beings in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word. Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by his Spirit has graciously disclosed himself in human words: we believe that God has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are both the record and means of his saving work in the world. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error (inerrant and infallible) in the original writings, complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. We confess that both our finitude and our sinfulness preclude the possibility of knowing God's truth exhaustively, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God's revealed truth truly. The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and do the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel. (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21; Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:5-6; John 16:12-13, 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Revelation 22:18).

GOD'S CREATION: MAN & WOMAN

We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in his own image. Adam and Eve belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and devoted fellowship with their Maker (Genesis 1:1-31). Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church, and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church (Ephesians 5:22-33). In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship (i.e. responsible, servant leadership) in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. The distinctive leadership role of pastor within the church given to qualified men is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments.

GOD'S JUDGMENT: THE FALL

We believe that Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original blessedness— for himself and all his progeny — by falling into sin through Satan's temptation. As a result, all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (e.g. physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, spiritually) and condemned finally and irrevocably to death — apart from God's own gracious intervention. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to himself. (Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 3:10-18,22-23; 5:12; Ephesians 1-3,12)

GOD'S PLAN: REDEMPTION

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

GOD'S NEWS: THE GOSPEL

We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ. Utter folly to the world, even though it is the power of God to those who are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18), this good news is christological, centering on the cross and resurrection: the gospel is not proclaimed if Christ is not proclaimed, and the authentic Christ has not been proclaimed if his death and resurrection are not central (the message is "Christ died for our sins . . . [and] was raised", 1 Corinthians 15:3-4). This good news is biblical (his death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), theological and salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), historical (if the saving events did not happen, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and we are to be pitied more than all others, 1 Corinthians 15:19), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events, Ephesians 2:20), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual persons are saved, Romans 10:9-13).

GOD'S SON: JESUS CHRIST

We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to his Father, the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh, fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures (John 1:1-3,14). The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life (Hebrews 4:15), performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. As the mediatorial King, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father (Romans 8:34), exercising in heaven and on earth all of God's sovereignty, and is our High Priest (Hebrews 2:17) and righteous Advocate (1 John 2:1). We believe that by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21): on the cross he canceled sin, propitiated God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. By his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death and defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all his

people; by his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Because God chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, no human being can ever boast before him — Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:27-30).

GOD'S WORK: JUSTIFICATION

We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. (Romans 5:1). By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf (1 Peter 2:24). By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. Inasmuch as Christ was given by the Father for us, and his obedience and punishment were accepted in place of our own, freely and not for anything in us, this justification is solely of free grace, in order that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners (Ephesians 2:8,9). We believe that a zeal for personal and public obedience flows from this free justification.

GOD'S SPIRIT: HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that this salvation, attested in all Scripture and secured by Jesus Christ, is applied to his people by the Holy Spirit. Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and is present with and in believers. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8), and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith, and in him they are baptized into union with the Lord Jesus, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God's family; they participate in the divine nature and receive his sovereignly distributed gifts (1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12). The Holy Spirit is himself the down payment of the promised inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14), and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

GOD'S REIGN: THE KINGDOM

We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God through union with Christ by faith, and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit, enter the kingdom of God and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins, the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God, and the prospect of the glory yet to be revealed. Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace. Living as salt in a world that is decaying and light in a world that is dark, believers should neither withdraw into seclusion from the world, nor become indistinguishable from it (Matthew 5:13-16): rather, we are to do good to the city, for all the glory and honor of the nations is to be offered up to the living God. Recognizing whose created order this is, and because we are citizens of God's kingdom (Ephesians 2:19), we are to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:31), doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God (Galatians 6:10). The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation. The kingdom of God is an invasive power that plunders Satan's dark kingdom and regenerates and renovates through repentance and faith the

lives of individuals rescued from that kingdom. It therefore inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.

GOD'S PEOPLE: THE CHURCH

We believe that God's new covenant people have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem; they are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies (Ephesians 2:6). This universal church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only Head; thus each "local church" is, in fact, the church, the household of God (Ephesians 2:19), the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). The church is the body of Christ, the apple of his eye, graven on his hands, and he has pledged himself to her forever. The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, and, above all, by her love for God, and by her members' love for one another and for the world. Crucially, this gospel we cherish has both personal and corporate dimensions, neither of which may properly be overlooked. Christ Jesus is our peace (Ephesians 2:14): he has not only brought about peace with God, but also peace between alienated peoples. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility (Galatians 3:28). The church serves as a sign of God's future new world when its members live for the service of one another and their neighbors, rather than for self-focus. The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world.

GOD'S SACRAMENTS: BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself (Matthew 28:18-20; Matthew 26:26-29). The former is connected with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal. Together they are simultaneously God's pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of his return and of the consummation of all things. At Damascus Road Church we affirm and practice believers' baptism. ***For more on our position and practice see "Baptism 101"***

GOD'S FUTURE: RESTORATION

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust — the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all and his people will be enthralled by the immediacy of his indescribable holiness, and all things will be made new (Revelation 21:5).

This confessional statement is adapted, in large part, from the Confessional Statement of The Gospel Coalition and Downtown Cornerstone Church.

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¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.
Ephesians 2.19-22

SESSION 5 COVENANT & MEMBERSHIP

session five

COVENANT & MEMBERSHIP

What is membership?

When anyone enters into relationship with God by grace from, and faith in, the person and work of Jesus Christ they are entering into two covenants. The first is to journey with God for the rest of their lives and love Him fully. The second is to journey with His other children in the community of the local church. Church membership is simply an official recognition of this second covenant.

What is covenant membership and why have it at all?

A “covenant” is simply a formal agreement between two parties. In Scripture, we read about covenant agreements between individual men, families, or entire nations where each assume certain obligations. There are several reasons why we believe covenant membership is important for our church.

FIRST, we believe in covenant membership because we believe that it is reflective of God who is by nature, a covenant-making God. Beginning with Adam, then through men like Noah, Moses, David, and finally Christ, we see God making sacred agreements promising His favor to men. His covenants were most often marked by various signs (e.g. rainbows, circumcision, tablets, etc.). Covenant membership at Damascus Road is a physical covenant with a local body symbolizing a spiritual participation in the body of Christ. It is an oath before God with other brothers and sisters gathered together as the expression of the church here. A formal covenant identifies those believers who have committed to God’s mission in a specific locale, committed to one another, committed to mission, and those to whom the leaders are committed to shepherd.

SECOND, the elders of Damascus Road believe that membership is biblically encouraged. Because membership is implied, but not explicitly mandated in Scripture, some churches choose not to have formal membership. Bad teachers leading bad churches with bad theology have led many to believe membership is not necessary or at least not desirable—even oppressive. Others minimize membership so absolutely that it comes to mean little more than Sunday attendance. Biblically, we believe that numerical records of some kind were kept (Acts 2.37-47) and leaders were elected from those they knew were within the church (Acts 6.1-6). We also know that records for the purpose of meeting the material needs of members (e.g. widows) were also maintained (1Tim 5.3-16). Most importantly, we know that some form of membership is required for the proper exercise of church discipline (Matt 18.15-20, 1Cor 5, Gal 6.1) and for establishing who precisely the elders are accountable for (Heb 13.17).

THIRD, the elders of Damascus Road believe covenant membership is culturally necessary. Culturally, the world is reticent to make commitments without “benefits” they can tangibly measure. When church membership is properly understood as more than a Costco or Blockbuster membership, even Christians begin to adopt a similar mentality. At the core is misunderstanding of *commitment* itself. Sadly, there are many relationships today where people live together for a long time without covenanting in marriage. In the same way, Christians often “date” a church (or two) like a girlfriend without even truly committing to her like a bride. They leave themselves a “back door” in case their personal preferences are offended, or as a way to avoid accountability, service, or sacrifice. We believe this attitude prevents the individual from enjoying the community God wants them to experience, as well as lessening the effectiveness of the body they are designed to contribute to.

Formal covenant membership, therefore, is an important biblical tool to combat our culture's perversion of commitment to a family, as well as preserve the churches' theological purity and missional potency.

Is membership in the Bible?

We believe that Every Christian is called by God to be passionately committed to a specific local church. Some argue that membership is unbiblical because it is not explicitly taught in Scripture. We believe that there are solid reasons to believe membership was part of the early church and that membership is necessary to be obedient to the Scriptures. Some reasons include:

1. **Metaphors for the church.** There are a host of metaphors the Bible uses to explain the relationship of Jesus to his people, and Jesus' people to Jesus – bride, flock, branches, building, crops, harvest, priesthood, house and more. The majority of these metaphors highlight that our relationship to Jesus is not merely individual, but corporate. Four metaphors seem to be central: citizens, body, temple, and family. These images couldn't merely be used to describe the universal church as it is impossible to be "family" or part of the same "body" with people you're not in direct proximity to. Nor could these metaphors be used to describe a loose collection of isolated individuals that happen to gather once a week. God chose these particular metaphors to describe a brand new people that are vitally and organically committed to one another by nature of their faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, church membership represents the commitment to live out our corporate identity in Christ as citizens, the body of Christ, the living temple of God, and the adopted family of God, with other followers of Jesus, in a local context.
2. **Jesus loves the church. So should we. (Eph 5:25-27).** Church membership is a way to say, "I love the local church (i.e. people) and I'm going to demonstrate that by committing myself to these people for whom Jesus died and rose from the grave." Church membership is a way of saying with our lives, "I'm committed to what Jesus is committed to – his people."
3. **The first Christians corporately identify themselves as "churches". (Acts 8:1; 11:22,26; 12:1,5; 14:27; 15:3,4).** If you look closely, there are no examples of Christians in the Bible that lived separately from the local church. Church membership is a way so saying with our lives "I understand that essential to following Jesus is belonging to a specific, local family (or church) of Jesus."
4. **The first Christians were "added" to the church. (Acts 2:14,47).** In other words, these new Christians did not merely become isolated Jesus-followers or choose a small group of fellow Christians to hang out with, but they were added to a people – the church. Church membership represents being "added" to a particular local church.
5. **An intentional record was kept. (Acts 1:15; 2:41; 4:4).** The early church seemed to be keeping track of those that demonstrated faith in Jesus Christ – likely for the purposes of planning and care (cf Acts 6). There is biblical evidence that the early church kept a list of widows (1 Tim 5:9). If there were lists of widows it is very reasonable to conclude there were also lists of those who belonged to the church. Church membership is counting yourselves among those that belong to God's people, in Christ, in a local context.
6. **Common commitment and mutual dependence. (Acts 2:42-47).** From the beginning those in the church were committed to and mutually dependent on one another. It is evident that the church was not just random collection of isolated individuals who happened to gather once or twice a week. Church membership is demonstrating your common commitment to and mutual dependence on other followers of Christ in the context of a local church.

7. **Pastors/leaders are responsible for specific “sheep”.** (1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28). These verses tell us that the pastors/leaders knew who they were responsible for (i.e. the “flock”) and who they were to give an account for before Jesus Christ (Heb 13:17). In order to give an account, the pastors must know who they are accountable for. Clearly, this cannot mean that pastors/leaders are responsible for everyone, but only those who are part of their “flock”. Church membership allows the pastors to know who they are ultimately responsible for.
8. **Christians are responsible to follow specific pastors/leaders.** (Heb 13:17; 1 Tim 5:17). Just as pastors and leaders must know who they are responsible for, the church must know who they are to follow, emulate and honor. By becoming a member of a local church you are placing yourself under the watch and care of specific leaders who have been given the task of shepherding your soul. Without becoming a member of a local church it is impossible to actually obey these verses.
9. **Church discipline infers church membership.** (1 Cor 5:13; Titus 3:10; 1 Jn 2:19; Mt 18:15-20). In each case above, an individual is living in stubborn, unrepentant sin and thus removed from among God’s people. The question this raises, “How can someone be removed from the church who has not first belonged to it?” Answer. They can’t. You can’t put someone out of the church if they have never officially been part of the church.
10. **The Apostle Paul planted churches not isolated Christians.** (Acts 14:23; 15:41; 16:5). Throughout the book of Acts the Apostle Paul’s aim was to plant churches, not merely convert isolated, independent individuals. We see this not only during his three missionary journeys, but also in his epistles which comprise the bulk of our New Testament – written in church (Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Corinthians, Thessalonians, etc). Church membership is an acknowledgement that God’s primary plan for the spread of the gospel is through the planting of local church-planting-churches.
11. God gives spiritual gifts to followers of Jesus for the upbuilding of the church. (Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:4-31). On two occasions the Apostle Paul addresses the great reality that God gifts individual followers of Jesus in order to build up the church. Now some of these gifts benefit the universal church (e.g. apostleship), but the vast majority are given by God to be used for the benefit of the local church (serving, teaching, exhortation, generosity, leadership, mercy, etc). “For the body does not consist of one member but of many...if all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.” (1 Cor 12:14,19-20). Church membership is a way of saying, “I belong to this particular body and commit to exercising my God-given gifts here for its up-building and flourishing, alongside others who are doing the same.

What is the purpose of church membership?

We believe the gospel saves us to Christ, His people, and His mission. When anyone enters into relationship with God by grace from, and faith in, the person and work of Jesus Christ they are entering into two covenants. The first is to journey with God for the rest of their lives and love Him fully. The second is to journey with His other children in the family of the local church.

At Damascus Road Church, membership means being part of a family. It is a group of different people, with different personalities, different experiences, and different gifting who share one identity in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. This family is loved and led by biblically qualified leadership who work to proclaim Jesus’ teaching, call men to Jesus mission, and guard the purity of His bride, the church.

By becoming a member at Damascus Road, you are in a sense marrying into a family - people willing to celebrate with you when things are good, cry with you when things are bad, to encourage you and lovingly stir you to remain steadfast especially when you are tempted to stray. Your membership in a church is an official recognition of this, and the purposes of the Damascus Road Church Membership Covenant are:

- To join the Spirit in forming authentic community that reflects the relationship between the Father, Son and Spirit.
- To clarify the ongoing blessings and responsibilities of each member.
- To encourage consistency, accountability and loving unity within the church family.
- To accomplish God's call for the Damascus Road Church Family.

This agreement does not imply that you will ever fall short of the goals, but that the desire of your heart is to fulfill each of the responsibilities stated to the best of your ability. We trust that your commitment will be a personal blessing to your own journey in Christ, as well a blessing to those around you.

What are the membership blessings?

There has been much debate regarding the need for membership. Past negative experiences, fear of commitment, or simply misunderstanding of exactly what it means. We don't want to "sell" you on the benefits of membership so that you're persuaded to join us. Joining a church will not save you any more than your good works, your education, your culture, your friendships, your financial contributions, or your baptism will save you. Non-Christians should not seek to join a church, but learn more about what the Bible says a Christian is. But, for those who are confessing Christians, we believe that living the Christian life alone is neither healthy nor wise. We believe that there are some significant benefits to taking ownership in a church:

1. **You have the benefit of accountability to spiritual leaders.** Every believer is called to "obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls" (Heb. 13:17). This command assumes that you have a covenant with certain spiritual leaders. They are responsible for you and you to them. Some people may say, "I am accountable only to God". Ultimately, only God has authority over you. But the doctrine of sin should sober us about making ourselves the sole judges over our own hearts, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9). Heb. 3:13 say we need others to exhort us "daily" lest we become hardened by sin.
2. **You shamelessly identify with Christ and His people** (Mark 8:38). Our hope is that you can speak with confidence and love about your identification with Christ and His church community. Without doubt, we desire to see a committed group of people share, talk about, and declare their love for Jesus. We also desire to see people declare their love for Jesus' bride through their own participation as well as their desire to invite others to belong.
3. **You encourage other believers to commit to the local body versus consume** (Heb. 10:24). We believe it is a good thing to encourage commitment. Our world encourages consumerism. In essence, consumers exhaust resources without giving of themselves—they're users. In the church, this manifests itself out in church-hopping where the believer skips around to different services looking for their next "fix." Their refusal to commit allows them to slip out the backdoor because they are not personally invested anywhere or connected with anyone. Asking people to make a covenant, or a promise, encourages them to take their participation in the body seriously by owning it. Ownership will always produce more satisfaction than renting.

4. **You stop being an independent Christian** (Matt. 18:15-17; Heb. 13:17). Community is a core value because God's very nature declares it. The early chapters of Genesis declare that we are not made to be alone. As a part of our community, you have a family to love you, to cry with you, to laugh with you, to learn with you, to learn from you, and to serve you, as you do the same.
5. **You participate in a stronger more unified effort of God's people.** Ecclesiastes 4.9 teaches that TWO people can accomplish more than TWICE as ONE. There is strength in numbers. There are very few things, if any, that are ever accomplished by one person. God has called a people, not a person, to join His mission. If we are to fulfill the calling of Jesus, we need each other.
6. **You may have opportunity to lead church ministries or serve as a church leader.** You will not find a verse that says you must be a member to lead a Bible study. It does say, however, that pastors must watch over and protect the flock from false teachers and false doctrine. Membership is one means through which we can protect the purity of the word and the church. As a member, you agree to uphold the teachings of the church and respect its leadership decisions. It is both practical and wise to ensure those leading the flock do so from the same foundation under the same authority.
7. **You have greater opportunities to use your spiritual gifts** (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4). In other words, you openly manifest the reality of the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12.27). As part of the body of Christ, you serve a particular purpose. Without you we're missing parts! The body might function, but it certainly is not robust. When you are using your God-given skill, gift, talent or resource for the body, you are fulfilling God's ideal for His community.

What are the membership commitments?

Membership at Damascus Road means that you have committed yourself to our family of believers — that you have agreed to participate as fully as you are able in the life, ministry and government of our church. Therefore, Damascus Road members must affirm the following promises as a vow unto the Lord:

You must believe and live the Gospel of Jesus meaning....

1. You acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope except through His sovereign mercy.
2. You believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel. (You must seek to grow into the likeness of Christ, not through proud self-reliance, but through constant repentance and reliance on the Holy Spirit.)
3. You now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as a follower of Christ.
4. You promise to support the Church in its God-glorifying worship and work to the best of your ability.
5. You submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to strive for its purity and peace.

What are the membership expectations?

We encourage all of our members to live out their membership in the context of Scripture's expectation for the Christian life. God wants more than just a name on a list. He expects that you will actually grow into active membership at Damascus Road and flesh out your promise to "support the Church" through involvement in the ministry, not just your checkbook.

There is, however, a proper balance between active involvement and over-commitment. Damascus Road seeks members who are thoughtful in their involvement levels. We feel it is important to serve but not to "burnout" in the name of the Lord. Our ministry activity should not become a barrier to living a God-honoring life but simply one expression of it. As a member of DRC, we hope, encourage, and expect all of our brothers and sisters to pursue:

1. **Walking with the Father:** This is the regular, intentional, disciplined, use of the "means of grace" such as Bible reading, prayer, etc. We want all of our members to feast methodically for your own spiritual growth as you develop a deeper relationship with God. See Mark 1:35.
2. **Worshipping with the Family:** The Greek work for "church" is ekklesia, which means, "assembly." Our church gathers on Sunday regularly to worship. This is where we hear the word of God boldly proclaimed, where we adore our King in song, and where we take communion together. See Heb.10:24-25.
3. **Spending time with the Family:** Road groups are one of the key ways that pastoral care occurs at Damascus Road in addition to living out our charge to be missionaries. For your own spiritual growth as well as others, you need to belong to a group, either through your participation or your leadership. See Eph. 4:15-16.
4. **Serving the Family:** Besides attending worship and a community group, each member should find one way to minister to others. Use your gifts. See 1Pet. 4:10-11.
5. **Helping lead the Family:** At times, there will be opportunities to serve by leading the family. When there is a need or a role to fill, members are the ones expected to use their time, talents, and gifting to meet the need or fill the role.
6. **Introducing others to join the family:** Let the gospel overflow from your life into the lives of those around you - at home, at work, in your circle of friends. Help those whom you bring to Damascus Road be able to connect into the life of the church. See Acts 2:41-47.
7. **Giving to the Family:** Stewardship of your first fruits to support the work of God and do it joyfully from a pure heart. See Mal. 3:8-10; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Acts 4; Mark 12:41-44

What are the leadership commitments?

With the help of the Holy Spirit, the church leadership covenants the following:

1. We commit ourselves to lovingly caring for you and seeking your growth in Christ (Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12).
2. We covenant to provide teaching and counsel from the Scriptures and that this teaching will span the whole counsel of God's Word (Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; Acts 20: 27-28).
3. We commit to helping you in times of need (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35; James 2:14-17).
4. We covenant that your elders and deacons will meet the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:-13& 5:17-22, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4).

5. We covenant to pray for you regularly, particularly when you are sick (James 5:14).
6. We covenant to be on guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28-31).
7. We covenant to exercise church discipline when necessary (Matt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5; Gal.6:1).
8. We covenant to help you become equipped to serve Christ (Eph. 4:11-13).
9. We covenant to seek God's will for our church community to the best of our ability as we study the Scriptures and follow the Spirit (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-5).
10. We covenant to set an example and join you in fulfilling the duties of church member (I Co. 11; Philip. 3:17; I Tim. 4:12).

WHAT NOW? How do I become a member of Damascus Road?

Your first step is participation in the *Road 101 Class*. Attendance at the seminar in no way obligates you to pursue formal membership—you may simply use the class to find out more about Damascus Road's vision, goals or what position we take on certain Christian doctrines. We also recommend walking in relationship with our church for 3-6 months. This will give you ample opportunity to know us and be known. Relationships are what are most important to us, and this takes time. Participating in a community before membership will give you a sense of who we are and what we're like.

When you have decided you want to belong to the Damascus Road family and have completed the above class, please read, pray, and then sign the membership covenant at the end of this study. You may turn in your covenant to any pastor, the church office mailbox, or mail it to:

Damascus Road Church
PO BOX 281
Marysville, WA 98270

A pastor should call to welcome you to the family, answer any questions, and clarify any concerns you may have. If you have never been baptized, we would be delighted to experience that with you at our next available opportunity. Let the pastor know during his call we will schedule your baptism.

Finally, the elders will meet and review all membership requests. Candidates for membership will be notified of their approval following the next regularly scheduled meeting. Upon approval, we will joyfully and publicly acknowledge your membership to the church family.

Can I transfer membership from another church?

It is possible to transfer membership from another church. In most cases, we require to be in both relationship and agreement with these churches theologically and philosophically. Additionally, a transfer of membership will require a conversation with your former pastor.

What if I choose to not become a formal member?

We still love you and love that you are here. If you decide to stay involved with Damascus Road without membership, there will be no effort to pressure you into joining. Do not join unless you are ready to be a committed family member. A broken promise is worse than no promise at all.

We believe that covenant membership with Damascus Road is a privilege. It is not required for full participation in church activities. We encourage you to join our covenant family, but we do not intend to exclude anyone from family activities if they have chosen not to pursue formal membership. Nonmembers may worship with us, be active in a Road Group, go on the church retreats, etc.

Questions, Comments, or Concerns?

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns please feel free to ask any pastor. If you'd like to have a conversation in person, please email life@rdchurch.org to schedule a meeting.

Appendix 6 | HOW TO GIVE MY TREASURE

What did it mean to “give” to God’s family?

In the Old Testament, sacrificial giving of offerings to the Lord was a lifestyle—it was law. In addition to taxes paid to the king, God’s people in the Old Testament had various other religious giving obligations called tithes. This was usually a tenth of one’s finances or produce consecrated and set apart for special purposes. In the Pentateuch there were actually three different required tithes.

- 10% First Tithe – From the crops, the fruit of the tree, oil and wine and the herd or the flock (Lev. 27:30-33; Dt 14:22, 23; 2 Ch 31:5,6).
- 9% Second Tithe – 10 percent of the remaining resources after the first tithe (90%) to pay the temple staff (Num. 18:21-32; Heb 7:5).
- 3.5% Poor Tithe – An additional tithe given every 3rd year to the poor (Deut. 26:12-15).

There was also additional giving such as gleaning for the poor and alien (Lev. 19:9-10), and occasional extra tithes (Neh. 10:32-33). So the total mandatory yearly tithe for Israel was over 23%. Although there was no punishment for not tithing, there were sharp warnings for withholding what was rightfully God’s (Mal. 3:8-10; Pro. 11:24).

What does it mean to give to the family at Damascus Road?

Recent statistics have found that only 12% of American Christians actually donated one-tenth of their income to churches in 2000 (Barna). Church members give an average of 1.6% to 2.5% of their income. Under the New Covenant in Christ, the law has been fulfilled and there is no longer a set financial amount required by church members. But the grace of Christ is not a license for selfishness, rather, it is the example of giving all that one has to the Lord. Biblically, therefore, Christians are expected to give to support the work of God (Matt. 22:21; 2 Cor. 9-11), and support their full time pastors (1 Cor. 9:1-12; 1 Tim. 5:17-18).

Giving is not all about money, though money seems to be the most common idol that captivates men’s hearts. That is probably why Jesus talked about money more than anything else other than the Kingdom of God. In fact, Jesus talked about money more than He did Heaven and Hell combined. The Scripture does not give an exact percentage for giving, though 10 percent seems a good standard—to apply to ALL of our lives, not just our checkbooks. In truth, for some, it is easier to write a check than it is to give of their time, resources, or energies to the mission of the church. For others, writing a check is the area of their life where it proves most difficult to submit to Jesus’ Lordship.

Many do not give because they simply do not know how much should be given—they need to be taught how to give of their time, energies, or resources. Damascus Road does not require a certain percentage in order to be a member. Below are some questions that God’s Word challenges and guide us on our giving:

- 1) **Am I giving regularly?** Our giving should be on a regular basis, that is, weekly, bi-monthly, monthly, etc. Although there is nothing wrong with spontaneous giving, Scripture suggests that we be more mindful and systematic about our giving. Therefore, giving should not be an afterthought or derived from “leftovers”. It should be a result of the firstfruits of our labor and intentionally planned as part of our budget (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

- 2) **Am I giving proportionally?** Our giving should be in accordance with how each of us has been prospered by God; according to our ability (1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 8:2–3). Many of us have been blessed by God abundantly, others have not. Some people can give much more than 10%, others much less. This is an issue that must be worked out in your own heart—but it must be worked out.
- 3) **Am I giving sacrificially and bountifully?** We are called to give generously, even sacrificially, but not to the point of personal affliction (2 Cor 8:2–3; Phil 4:17–18).
- 4) **Am I giving intentionally?** Our giving should not be blind. We give in faith to further the preaching and ministry of the gospel. We give deliberately in order to meet a genuine need, not out of guilt merely to soothe a pressing request (2 Cor 8:4; Phil 4:16).
- 5) **Am I properly motivated in my giving?** Our giving is rooted in an understanding of the gospel. That understanding leads to belief; our giving is a confession of that belief. In essence, our motivation comes from a desire to give back to God as He has given to us. Secondary motivations include a love for others (2 Cor. 8:9), a desire for reciprocity (1 Cor 9:14–15; 2 Cor 8:12–14; cf. Gal 6:6), and a reward from God (2 Cor 9:6).
- 6) **Am I giving cheerfully?** Our giving should spring from a cheerful heart which God loves. God is not interested in your money but your heart. Our sacrifices do not mean as much to him as our repentance. We are to do all things, including giving, without grumbling and with joy (Philip 2:14; 2 Cor 9:7).
- 7) **Am I giving voluntarily?** Our giving must not be reluctant or under compulsion. Giving ought to be done out of one's free volition (2 Cor 8:2–3, 8; 9:7; Phil 4:18).

Relative to our giving of our time, energy, and resources, we would do well to remember Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 9:6-8: *"And the point is this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."*

APPENDIX 7 | HOW TO GIVE MY TALENT & TIME

How can I use my “Gifts” to help family...and the world?

Not only does God give us material gifts to steward, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts which are to be used for the common good and to help build up the church. Unfortunately, the existence, exercise, and extinction of spiritual gifts has been a point of contention among churches for hundreds of years. Denominations and individual churches have been born, killed, and split over the issue of spiritual gifts. The “Renewalist Movement” of Pentecostalism in the 1960’s brought with it a new emphasis on spiritual gifts. Since then, two extremes have formed.

- Some churches have overemphasized spiritual gifts. Finding one’s gift and fitting perfectly in a ministry becomes a greater focus than simply serving where the church needs help. This creates Christians who make ministry about self-fulfillment more than self-sacrifice.
- Other churches believe that the Holy Spirit doesn’t empower us to do much in the church. The exercise of Spiritual gifts (and the Holy Spirit Himself) has become irrelevant, because we need to just serve God wherever we are needed. We believe on one hand everyone should be involved wherever they are needed, but ideally we would like people to serve where they are gifted and passionate.

What is a spiritual gift?

A spiritual gift is any ability that is empowered by the Holy Spirit to be used in the local church. Your abilities are spiritual when they are:

- Empowered “by one and the same Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:11),
- Given “for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7), and
- Used for the building up of the church (1 Cor. 14:26).

Sometimes natural abilities become an easy fit for spiritual abilities. There are people who are gifted administrators at work, and when they become believers, that gift also gives great spiritual benefit to the church. Sometimes the natural abilities of individuals are completely different from their spiritual abilities. There are people who are very shy and could not do a presentation in a board room, but when they teach the Bible they do it with power and effectiveness.

What is the purpose of gifts and how many are there?

The purpose of spiritual gifts is to equip the church to carry out its mission of bringing spiritual dominion until Christ returns (1 Cor. 1:7). Gifts were given to believers until the consummation of Christ’s Kingdom. Paul tells believers to “strive to excel in building up the church” (1 Cor. 14:12), and to use our gifts “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). Spiritual gifts used properly in the church bring benefit to its growth, its unity and its effectiveness.

The New Testament has 6 separate lists of spiritual gifts, and all the lists are different. No list includes all the gifts, and no gift except prophecy is mentioned on all the lists. What these facts indicate is that when Paul named gifts, he was not attempting to construct exhaustive lists (1 Cor. 7:7; 12:8-10; 12:28; Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Pet. 4:11).

- These passages indicate that God has given a wide variety of gifts to impact the growth and health of the church.
- There are also gifts and contemporary uses of gifts that exist in the church today that aren't necessarily on these lists (technology, art, etc.)
- We need to have a willingness to appreciate people with gifts that differ from ours.
- The health of a church is found in having a variety of gifts in order to make it function properly.

What is the Christian's responsibility with Gifts?

- **Understand your gifts:** Paul tells the Corinthian believers that they are not to be "ignorant" of their spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:1). He also regularly makes the assumption that people already know what their gifts are. He will simply tell people in the church to use their gifts in various ways (Rom. 12:6-8).
- **Use your gifts in the church:** Paul tells Timothy, "*Do not neglect the gift that is in you . . .*" (1 Tim. 4:14). It seems that gifts can weaken through infrequent use because Paul later tells Timothy to "*rekindle the gift that is in you*" (2 Tim. 1:6). The point of a spiritual gift is not to put it on the shelf to admire, but to use it.

How can Christians discover their Spiritual Gifts?

The best way to discover your gifts is to get involved in the church.

- Try out various areas of service and see where you are effective.
- Ask others to evaluate your effectiveness in bringing spiritual benefit in ministry.
- There are spiritual gift tests that can be helpful as well. Most tests are not going to be completely accurate and should not be the ultimate standard for determining your gifts, but for some these tests have been helpful.

As members of Damascus Road, it is expected that we all be involved in building up the church with the gifts that God has given us. For some, finding their gifts will be a process. Others may have certain gifts, but at the current stage of the church there may not be enough positions to put those particular gifts to use. Others know right away what they do effectively and enjoy putting that gift to use. As we grow, the ultimate desire is that everyone is equipping the church by serving in areas where they are both passionate and gifted.

We are committed to helping people exercise their God-given gifts, talents, and experiences to His glory. As we grow, there are more and more outlets for you to serve. Our Road Groups are designed to release missionaries into the world as they employ what God has given them. We believe that your personal talents, interests, and gifts are the tools God intends to use to bless the world.

What does the church believe about the gift of tongues?

There is much debate as to whether or not there are certain miraculous gifts that are no longer needed in the church today. Biblical history does show us that throughout the history of redemption, God gave miraculous gifts to individuals such as Moses for a specific purpose. Since the gift of tongues is a major issue, it is important for us to understand what Damascus Road believes about this gift.

- The word “tongues” is used in the Bible to refer to other languages (Gen. 10:5, 20, 31; 11:7; Daniel 3:4; 29; 4:1; Isa. 66:18).
- “Tongues” in the book of Acts was a spoken language. Many Old Testament prophets predicted that at the coming of the Messiah many supernatural events would happen, including the fact that people representing every nation on earth would hear of Christ (Zech. 8:23; Isa. 28:11; 66:18; Eze. 3:6). In Acts 2, Jews who represented “every nation under heaven” (vs. 5) came to Jerusalem to celebrate the Day of Pentecost. When the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles and they began to speak in tongues, the Jews were bewildered “because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language”. The purpose of tongues was to be a supernatural sign to unbelievers, while at the same time giving them the message of the gospel in their own language.
- When tongues were later spoken among the assembly of the early church, they were only to be done within strict rules. Tongues were not to be spoken in a public setting unless they were done in order, and unless they had “two or three” witnesses to interpret (I Cor. 14:27-28, 33). Paul spent much time in Corinthians dealing with the abuses of the early church, one of which was the use of tongues. If tongues are not interpreted, it is a useless gift to the body. The purpose of tongues is “for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers” (I Cor. 14:22). If tongues are used in the church without following these rules, then when “unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?” (14:23).
- Paul seems to indicate that at some point the supernatural gifts of the early church would cease. “But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away (I Cor. 13:8).” This verse in itself is not decisive in proving that the supernatural gift of tongues is impossible today. However, history does record that tongues and many of the supernatural acts of the early church disappeared for thousands of years.

Damascus Road believes that most of the use of tongues in the present day Pentecostal and Charismatic movements is unscriptural. Tongues are rarely viewed as a spoken language in these contexts but, rather, as a “heavenly” babbling. Tongues are often spoken by multiple people throughout a service without the required witnesses or interpreters. Tongues are also viewed by many as a second work of grace, a work that should be done in all who are truly mature Christians. Damascus Road Church does not believe in *this* definition or practice of tongues in the contemporary church. It does not mean conclusively that God could never use such a gift in the church since God can do anything He wants. But the gift would have to be exercised with great discernment and within the rules of Scripture.

Appendix 10 | Church Discipline

What do we do when there is conflict in the family?

Unfortunately we all fall short of love in this sinful world, and have relational issues. The Bible gives us principles to deal properly with conflict.

- Christians are to seek peace with others as much as is possible (Rom. 12:18). We can't always have peace, but it should always be our desire.
- Christians are to cover others' faults with love (1 Pet. 4:8). This is more of an attitude. There are some issues that are so big they must be dealt with, but everyone has minor faults that should be covered with love.
- Christians are to seek to restore other brothers and sisters who are dominated by sin (Gal. 6:1-2). It is our duty as Christians, and would be unloving not to help others who are deep in destructive sin.
- Christians are to first seek private reconciliation when they are wronged (Luke 17:3-4). We are not to make public something that should be dealt with in private.
- No matter what the results of the conflict, Christians are to avoid gossip and slander (2 Cor. 12:20).

What is Church Discipline and what is its purpose?

Church discipline is the act of removing a Christian from the local church membership and severing all relational ties to that individual until they are willing to return back to God. The exercise of church discipline has often been unbiblical and poorly exercised. In response, many churches wrongly abandon this practice in an effort to gain the approval of men. Damascus Road church believes church discipline is biblically required of churches. We must therefore be measured in its practice and clear on its purpose. First Corinthians 5:1-7 defines two purposes for church discipline.

- Church discipline is ultimately to show love to the sinner. It is so "his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord" (vs. 5). The hope is that the individual will respond correctly to the discipline and turn from his sin. If he never repents he may never have been a true believer, since true Christians do not stay forever in unrepentant sin (1 John 1:6-7).
- Church discipline is necessary to protect the other members of the church from falling into the same sin. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump" (vs. 6). This shows that sin in the body that is not dealt with can infect everyone else. Allowing unrepentant sin without discipline also waters down the Gospel for unbelievers (Matt. 5:13-16). The Christian life is to give evidence of real heart change to the unbelieving world.

What sin warrants church discipline?

The church is to be an atmosphere of grace, as a reflection of Christ's mercy to us. There is no single sin that by itself warrants church discipline. If someone is unrepentant of a major sin such as immorality (1 Cor. 5), or is unrepentant of wronging another believer (Matt. 18), they could be church disciplined. Not repenting of wrong is rebellion towards God. After several private attempts to persuade someone to turn from their wrong, they are to be removed from the body (Matt. 18:15-17, Gal. 6:1-5).

*For more detailed information about the specifics of our church discipline policy, please ask a pastor.

Is church discipline and Damascus Road membership removal the same thing?

No. Someone who is disciplined will be removed from the membership role, but someone who is removed from the membership role is not necessarily church disciplined. Membership removal is primarily up to the church member. That will only happen when the member decides they no longer want to fulfill the requirements of the membership covenant, they feel called to another local church ministry, or they plan to move away from the area.

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT



With the guiding help of the Holy Spirit, I, the undersigned, covenant the following:

1. I am a Christian who has been saved from my sins by the grace of Jesus Christ alone. I have been or *desire to be* baptized to give testimony of my identification with the body of Christ and obedience to the Scriptures.
2. I have read and understood Damascus Road Church's doctrinal statement and agree not to be divisive to its teaching. I also understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace (Hebrews 13:7; Ephesians 4: 1-3).
3. I will endeavor to maintain a close relationship with the Lord through regular personal Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of the other spiritual disciplines. My journey in Christ will be evident through my regular participation in the corporate worship services, and involvement in a community group (Psalms 119:97, 105; Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25
4. I will strive to properly manage the resources God has given me, including my time, body, gifts and talents, attitudes, finances and possessions (Eph. 5:15-18; Romans 12:1-2; Eph. 4:1-16; Gal. 5:22-26; Proverbs 3:9-10). This includes regular giving to Damascus Road Church that is sacrificial and cheerful (II Corinthians 8 and 9).
5. I commit myself to the Damascus Road Church family and agree to aid in fulfilling its missional purpose to both live and bring the gospel to Marysville and the surrounding area. I recognize that this will be accomplished by actively living Damascus Road's core values of truth, worship, mission, and community.
6. I commit to using the spiritual gift(s) God has given me for the building up of the church, both at Damascus Road and universally (I Peter. 4:10-11; Romans 12:108; I Cor. 12: 7-13).
7. I covenant to practice the humility and sacrificial attitude of Christ by considering the needs of others (Philippians 2:1-11), not gossiping (Proverbs 16:28; Matt. 18:15-17), and seeking spiritual friendships (Proverbs 17:17).
8. I covenant to have friendly Christian relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ from other churches, but I will not function in leadership or as a member in another church family until such time that I am released from membership (Heb. 13: 17).
9. I covenant to follow the biblical procedures of church discipline and submit myself to discipline if the need should ever arise (Matt. 18:15-17; Gal. 6:1-5).
10. I covenant to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues. (Psalm 119: Tim. 3:16-17).

God enabling me, I will strive to consider my commitment to the Membership Covenant on a yearly basis. I understand that it is an evaluative tool, as well as an affirmation of my continuing conviction and purpose. My responsibility will be to notify the Damascus Road Church leadership if at any time I can no longer commit to this covenant, or if I have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding Damascus Road Church.

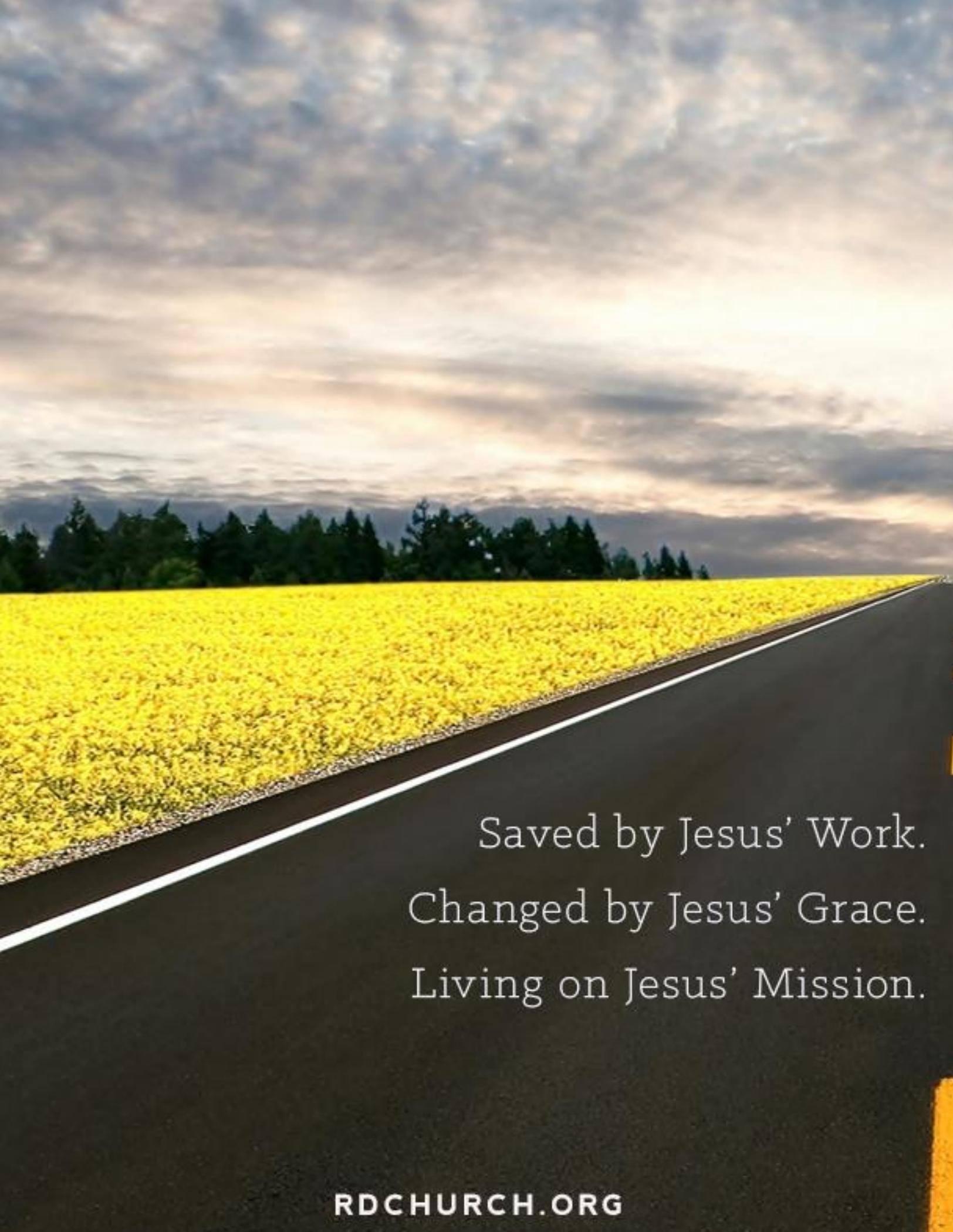
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Damascus Road 101 Class 73



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