

Partnership Seminar Participant's Guide



mercyview

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INTRODUCTION

At Mercyview, we believe that the true test of a gospel-centered church is its doctrine on paper *plus* its culture in practice. The way that we like to talk about both our beliefs and our practice at Mercyview is to describe them in three values: the gospel, community, and mission. These three values summarize, at a high level, what we are about here at Mercyview. Or said another way, if you distill what we do here at Mercyview down, we believe what you will find is that the gospel, community, and mission are the ethos of our church culture.

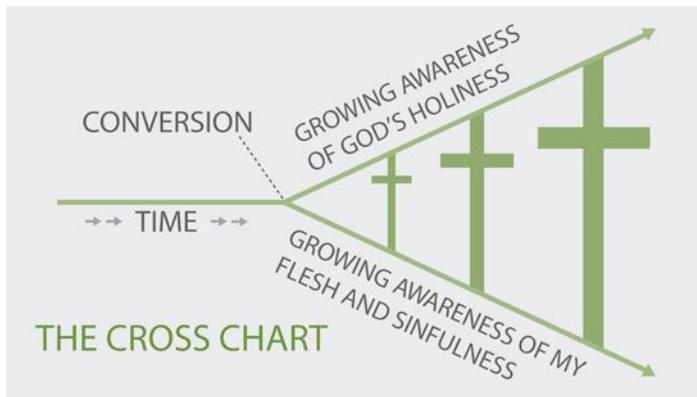
The partnership seminar is an opportunity for us to describe how these three values play themselves out at Mercyview. By the end of our time together, we pray that you will both understand these values and desire to join us in living them out as a partner here at Mercyview.

Value 1: THE GOSPEL

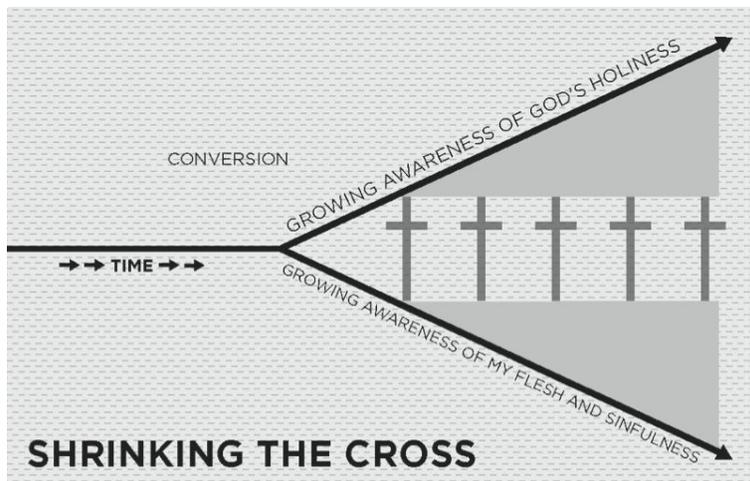
The **gospel** is at the center of Mercyview and we desire, at the center of all our lives as Christians. “The gospel” is a phrase that Christians often use without fully understanding its significance. We speak the language of the gospel but we rarely apply the gospel to every aspect of our lives. Yet this is exactly what God wants for us. But first, what is the gospel?

What is the gospel?

- The gospel is the _____ of Jesus’ victory over sin, death, and Satan through his perfect life, substitutionary death on the cross, and glorious resurrection from the grave.
- The good news of the gospel is that we are not reconciled to God through our efforts and record but through _____ efforts and record.
- The gospel is not just the entrance point into God’s kingdom but the _____ we are to walk every day of the Christian life.
- The gospel is not simply deliverance from sin’s _____ but release from sin’s _____.
- The following model has been helpful to many people in thinking about the gospel and its implications. This diagram does not say everything that could be said about the gospel but it does serve as a helpful visual illustration of how the gospel should work in the life of the Christian.



- We have an ongoing tendency to minimize the gospel or “shrink the cross.” This happens when I either _____ God’s perfect holiness, thinking of him as something less than his Word declares him to be or _____ my own righteousness, thinking of myself as someone better than I actually am. The following model depicts this:



Repentance

- The consistent pattern of the Christian life is _____ and _____.
- Repentance is turning away from _____ and _____ and looking to God for _____.
- _____ and _____.
- According to the Bible, true repentance:
 - is oriented toward _____ not _____
 - is motivated by true godly _____ and not just selfish _____

- is concerned with the _____ not just with external _____
- looks to _____ for deliverance from the _____ and _____ of sin
- Instead of excusing our sin or falling into patterns of remorse and resolution, true gospel repentance moves us to _____ and _____.

Faith

- When asked by the crowds what they must do to live a life that pleases God, Jesus answers that the work of God is to _____.
- The Bible calls anything that we worship or believe in the place of God alone _____.
- Underneath every external sin is a _____ idol—a false god that has eclipsed the true God in our thoughts or affections.
- The key to gospel-driven transformation is learning to repent of the “sin _____ the sin”—the root idolatry and unbelief that drive our more visible sins.
- At the moment I sin, an idol has taken God’s place in my soul and I am trusting in that idol to be my “savior.” I need to apply the gospel by _____ of my deep heart idolatry and _____, turning my mind toward the specific gospel promises that break the power of my idols.

Cultivating a gospel culture

- The gospel creates a new kind of community—a gospel culture called a _____.
- Two kinds of churches that *aren’t* gospel-centered:
 - Gospel doctrine – gospel culture = _____
 - Gospel culture – gospel doctrine = _____
- The kind of church that *is* gospel-centered:
 - Gospel doctrine + gospel culture = _____

VALUE 2: COMMUNITY

Community is the second value we embody at Mercyview. In Acts 2:42-47, it says that the early church **devoted** themselves to the apostle's teaching – which was the story of what Jesus had done in his life, death, and resurrection. It says that they fellowshiped together. They broke bread together. They prayed together. They shared what they had with one another so that no one was in need. Then v. 46 says this: "And **day by day**, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." Regular, active presence and participation in community was an essential rhythm of the early church. We desire for our partners to live out this same practice at Mercyview.

Church structure

We are a Jesus-shepherded, elder-led, deacon- and team-served, partner-engaged church.

(see appendix for a fuller treatment of both the elder-led, deacon- and team-served concepts)

Contexts for partner-engagement

- **Missional Community**

- At Mercyview, a missional community is an _____ small group that may be made up of both _____ and those exploring Christianity, for the purpose of growing in the _____ and _____ of the gospel, fostering _____ and going on _____.
- 3 objectives for missional community
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
- 5 components of a missional community
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____

- **DGroups**

- The expressed purpose of DGroups is to pursue _____.
- A DGroup is a group of _____ members of the same gender who meet frequently - ideally once per week to pursue holiness through study of _____, confession of _____, belief in the _____, and _____.
- How it works
 - _____ & _____
 - _____ & _____
 - _____

- **Gathered worship**

- We take our cues from three places: the _____, _____, and _____. (see appendix)

- **Service**

- Our goal at Mercyview is to help you _____ the spiritual gifts that God has given you and _____ you to use them.
- Paul uses the image of a _____ to describe the different gifts God gives his people and how they work together.
- Serving God according to how He _____ and _____ you will give you an opportunity to develop spiritual gifts you may not even know you have.
- Serving God's created _____ for your life will give you much joy as you experience God using you to touch the lives of others.
- Serving God as He created you will allow you to make an _____ _____, as you join your God-given talents along with the entire body of believers.

- Serving according to God's plan will bring you a sense of _____ and _____ that you may have never thought possible.

- **Equipping**

- Equipping efforts at Mercyview will tackle a variety of topics through _____, _____ - _____ opportunities.

- Opportunities

- _____
- _____ / _____

- Categories

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- **Restorative discipline**

- Restorative discipline is an important aspect and responsibility of a partner-engaged church. The New Testament presents clear evidence that the church must address _____, _____, and _____ sin. (see appendix)

VALUE 3: MISSION

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the Church. Worship is. Mission exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.” John Piper from *Let the Nations be Glad*

- **Mercyview’s missional convictions**

- The _____ is the only means for salvation, and it is meant to _____ from where it is to where it is not. (John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Rom 10:13-17)
- The _____ is the Spirit-led _____ of mission and the immediate _____ of mission. (Acts 13, Romans 15:18f)
- All _____ are _____. (2 Timothy 2:2, 2 Cor 4:13, 5:11-21, Matt 28:18-20)
- The driving activities, the leading edge, of mission are _____, _____, and _____.
- _____ of _____ (Acts 20:35; Heb. 13:16; James 1:27) are an indispensable partner to ministries of proclamation. These activities are shaped by the values of _____, _____, _____, and _____.
- Pipelines for mercy and justice at Mercyview are centered on five people groups who we believe God has called us to focus on: the _____, the _____, the _____, the _____, and the _____.
- The sovereign Lord designates the _____ and _____ of peoples/nations. (Acts 17)

- **Areas of focus**

- _____, _____, and _____
- We are committed to multiplying locally-ministering churches among the under-gospeled in the U.S. As a part of the _____ network, we want to partner with church planters that are seeking to plant _____ churches in the U.S.
- We are committed, Lord willing, to sending workers and ultimately, church planting teams to serve in _____ and _____ immigrant-recipient cities in the future.

APPENDIX

Our Confessional Center

The foundation of our confession is creed written during the 4th century A.D., expressing the heart of the several doctrines which are critical in the understanding of who Jesus is and His relationship to the Father and the Spirit called the **Nicene Creed**.

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, light from light,
true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father [and the Son],
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

As beautiful and rich in doctrine as the Nicene Creed is – it does not explain Mercyview's more specific beliefs. We use the term “core beliefs” to express the beliefs that we, as a church, are united around beyond a simple confession like the Nicene Creed. Though statements of convictions like this are limited in expressing the fullness of Christian belief, we offer this with humility to describe what distinguishes us from other churches.

Our Confessional Boundaries

First, we are Christians (which distinguishes us from other world religions and cults).
Therefore, we adhere to the Nicene Creed.

Second, we are Evangelicals.

- 1. The Triune God** 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.
- 2. Revelation** 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 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 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.
- 3. Creation of Humanity** 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. 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. 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 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 within the church given to qualified men is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments.
- 4. 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 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.

5. **The Plan of God** 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.
6. **The Gospel** We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ—God’s very wisdom. Utter folly to the world, even though it is the power of God to those who are being saved, 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”). 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), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual persons are saved).
7. **The Redemption of 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. 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, 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, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God’s sovereignty, and is our High Priest and righteous Advocate. 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: 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. 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.
8. **The Justification of Sinners** We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. 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. 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. We believe that a zeal for personal and public obedience flows from this free justification.

9. **The Power of the 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, and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith, baptizing them 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. The Holy Spirit is himself the down payment of the promised inheritance, and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.
10. **The Kingdom of God** 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: 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, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God. 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.
11. **God's New People** We believe that God's new covenant people have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem; they are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies. 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, the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth. 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: 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. 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.

12. **Evangelism/Discipleship** To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church and responsible service in the world.
13. **Christian Social Responsibility** We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all people. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. Because men and women are made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, colour, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.
14. **Baptism and the Lord's Supper** We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself. 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 nourishing grace, our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipation of his return and of the consummation of all things.
15. **The Restoration of All Things** 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 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 ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of his glorious grace.

Third, we are Missional:

1. We believe that our local churches must be faithful to the content of unchanging Biblical doctrine (Jude 3).
2. We believe that our local churches must be faithful to the continually changing context of the culture(s) in which they minister (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).
3. We believe that our mission is to train covenant members to go out into their culture as effective missionaries.

The core belief statement is an adaptation of three convictional statements: 1) "Doctrine" of the Acts 29

Church Planting Network; available from <http://www.acts29network.org/about/doctrine/>; 2)

"Confessional Statement" of The Gospel Coalition; available from

<http://thegospelcoalition.org/about/foundation-documents/confessional/>. 3) "The Lausanne Covenant" of The Lausanne Movement; available from <http://www.lausanne.org/covenant>.

Elders

Elders are a **plurality** of **co-equal male** leaders, chosen and affirmed according to clear biblical **characteristics** after a sufficient season of **testing** in the church.

In every instance where the Scripture is talking about elders, it is talking about the characteristics of a **male** elder. 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1 say that an elder must be "the **husband** of one wife" and 1 Tim 3 also says that an elder "must manage **his** own household well, with all dignity keeping **his** children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage **his** own household, how will **he** care for God's church?" So we believe that this is a role that is restricted to men only.

So, how are elders identified or chosen in the life of the church? The Bible clearly defines the characteristics of an elder in two primary places: 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9. If you look at the lists, they are virtually identical and there are really four categories found within them

Relationship to God

- A man – a biblically masculine leader
- Above reproach – without any serious character defect
- Able to teach/equip – effective Bible communicator vs. charismatic speaker
- Not a new convert – mature Christian

Relation to Family

- Husband of one wife – one-woman man, sexually pure (this does not require a man to be married, as Paul, Timothy, Jesus, and widowed men could qualify)
- Faithful, obedient children - this doesn't mean that your kids are perfect; the pastor's kids are sinners, like everybody else's kids. But what it does mean is this, that the children respect and honor the father.

- Manages family well – provides for, leads, organizes, loves, shepherding/disciplining

Relation to Self

- Sober-minded – mentally and emotionally stable
- Self-controlled – disciplined life of sound decision-making
- Not a drunkard – without addictions
- Not a lover of money – financially content and upright

Relation to Others

- Respectable – worth following and imitating
- Hospitable – welcomes strangers, especially non-Christians
- Not violent – even-tempered
- Gentle – kind, gracious, loving
- Not quarrelsome – peaceable, not divisive or contentious
- Well thought of by outsiders – respected by non-Christians

In addition to the qualifications of an elder, the Bible also supplies the duties of elders/pastors:

- Praying and studying Scripture (Acts 6:4)
- Giving an account to God for the church (Heb. 13:17)
- Teaching the Bible correctly (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:2)
- Preaching (1 Tim. 5:17)
- Equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11–16)
- Intentionally shepherding the flock among us (MC oversight, “pastor-to-partner” shepherding) (1 Pet. 5:1-14)
- Praying for the sick (James 5:13–15)
- Refuting false teachings (Titus 1:9)
- Protecting the church from false teachers (Acts 20:17–31)
- Training prospective partners and receiving new partners into the church (1 Tim. 3:1-2, 5:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-5)
- Disciplining unrepentant partners of the church (Matt. 18:15–20; 2 Cor. 2:5-8)
- Identifying, testing, and appointing church leaders (Acts 6:1-6, 15:22; 1 Tim. 1 Tim. 3:10, 4:14, 5:22; Titus 1:5)
- Disciplining church leaders (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Tim. 5:19-20; Titus 1:10-13)
- Making binding decisions for the church as representatives from within the congregation (Acts 16:4).
- Ensuring a healthy partnership with the congregation by providing open and accessible pathways for communication, in particular regarding the affirmation of disciplining partners, appointing/disciplining leaders, doctrine, and significant directional matters (Matt. 18:17; Acts 15:22; 2 Cor. 2:5-8; 1 Tim. 5:19-20).

The Bible also consistently teaches that local churches are to have a plurality of elders. There are multiple men who serve together in unison who are responsible for the spiritual care of the church. At Mercyview, we use language that expresses the idea that the elders are co-equals. We do not use the terminology of “lead pastor.” We each are co-equal pastors serving in areas of giftedness for the health and benefit of the church.

Here are some benefits of a plurality of co-equal elders in the local church. **1) Biblical accountability:** Godly fellow elders are a great means for holding the other elders accountable to live, teach, and lead faithfully. **2) Wisdom:** There is more wisdom to be found in a multitude of counselors (Prov. 11:14;

24:6). **3) Balance:** No one man has all the gifts that are necessary to build up the church. Having a plurality of elders serves the church by bringing men with different gifts into the church's leadership who can complement the other elder's strengths. **4) Burden-sharing:** Caring for the whole church is a burden God does not intend one man to bear alone. Even the most faithful, gifted pastor needs help from other godly men in order to pay careful attention to himself and to all the flock (Acts 20:28).

Deacons

When the elders are overburdened to the degree that they are unable to simultaneously get time for prayer and Bible study (which is their primary responsibility according to Acts 6), they are given the freedom to appoint ministry team leaders or pastoral assistants to help ease some of the burden of spiritual leadership (Acts 6:1–7). Those servants are called “deacons.” A deacon means “**servant.**” And while the duties of an elder are universally constant in every church, in every place, in every age, the duties of deacons vary according to the needs of local churches and their elders. The primary list of characteristics for the office of deacon is found in 1 Tim. 3:8–13. Actually, the characteristics are identical to the ones of elders – minus the teaching and preaching gifts.

At Mercyview, we believe that the Scriptures teach that deacons can be male and female. The Scriptures use the word “servant” to describe women like Phoebe in Romans, Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians, and Lydia in Acts, they were most likely deacons. So we have men and women serving in this capacity at Mercyview - taking on the work of the ground war of serving as deacons.

Gathered worship

We take our cues from three places: the **Bible**, **tradition**, and **culture**.

The Bible

The worship gathering liturgy is derived from Isaiah 6:1-8. In the passage we see four specific **movements**. We seek to **reflect** each movement in the worship gathering.

- **God is God** And we are **not**

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”
Isaiah 6:1-3

We are transported into the throne room of God. The scene must have been near indescribable for Isaiah. However, he is able to describe what he sees; angels flying around the throne of God, worshipping him, exclaiming his holiness. In this scene it is abundantly clear who is God and who is not. In the same way, we intend to begin our worship gathering in a posture of looking to God in his majesty, transcendence, greatness and holiness. We must

continually remind and align our sinful with this truth: God is God and we are not.

- Elements
 - **Confession of Sin** and **Assurance of Pardon**
 - **Call to Worship** (scripture reading)
 - **Sung Worship** 1-2 songs focusing on the character of God

- We **approach** God in our **brokenness**

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Isaiah 6:4-5

God's presence is so powerful that inanimate objects have the good sense to shake! Isaiah, finding himself in that same presence pronounces a curse because of sin. The prophet approached the throne of God in his brokenness, undone by sin. Likewise, we approach God in our brokenness and throw ourselves on his mercy, while relying upon his grace.

- Elements
 - **Sung Worship**: 1-2 songs focusing on our need for the grace and mercy of God

- God **redeems** us

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." Isaiah 6:6-7

God did not leave Isaiah alone in his brokenness. He showed Isaiah inexpressible grace by taking away his guilt and atoning for his sin. The imagery in Isaiah's vision is a foreshadow of how God through the person and work of Jesus would redeem his people. Due to his amazing gracious love, God has redeemed his people. In response, we aim to remind each other by proclaiming the love God.

- Elements
 - **Sermon**: Preaching at Mercyview is Christ centered. Christ-centered preaching is a unique style of preaching that aims to connect the person and work of Jesus to every sermon. In Christ-centered preaching God's redemption is on full display in a weekly rhythm.
 - **Communion**: By participating in Communion the local church we remember and proclaim Jesus' death, by which we are redeemed. In addition, communion is one of the avenues or means by which we have the opportunity to experience God's grace.
 - **Ministry Time**: Members of Mercyview's prayer team will be available to pray for all who request prayer.
 - **Sung Worship**: Songs focuses on the redemptive plan of God.

- God **sends** us

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." Isaiah 6:8

God is a missionary God. He has been on a mission for a very long time. Throughout the Bible, he invites his children to join him on his mission as an outworking of his love. The love of God compels his people to share the good news of his love through word and deed. In response the love of God, we go and tell the world the news good of Jesus.

- Elements
 - **Benediction**: We will corporately read a passage of Scripture designed to remind us of our mission.

Tradition

Tradition and history are valuable tools. We aim to retain what is helpful and valuable from the past, while learning from those who have come before us. In particular, we aim to incorporate liturgical elements in the worship gathering to provide opportunities to participate in the worship gathering. Here are some examples:

- Scripture reading
- Creeds
- Meet/greet
- Sung worship
- Communion

Culture

We also aim to borrow redeemable (or neutral) elements and resources from culture. We believe we have the freedom to take contemporary tools to contextualize the gospel. This includes things like sound systems, guitars, contemporary styles, etc. in sung worship.

Restorative discipline

In its broadest sense, restorative (church) discipline is simply you and I helping each other pursue holiness and to fight sin. And most of it happens in the ordinary of life. When we use this phrase, "church discipline," here at Mercyview, we are primarily using in a broad sense to talk about what we call **everyday discipleship** – everyday discipline – in the context of our missional communities, our worship gathering.

But there is another form of church discipline. And it's what most of us probably think of when we hear the phrase "church discipline." Here at Mercyview, we prefer to call it **restorative discipline**. So what is restorative discipline? It is the church's formal response when one of its own partners refuses to repent of sin and is acting as if they were an unbeliever. But here's the question before us: when does **everyday** discipleship become **restorative** discipline? One way to summarize the biblical data is to

say that that restorative church discipline is required in cases where there is a combination of three things: 1) **open** sin 2) **serious** sin, and, 3) **unrepentant** sin.

A sin must be open. It must be something that can be seen with the eyes or heard with the ears. Second, a sin must be serious. This takes discernment from the elders to determine this objectively. The church clearly needs to be a place for love to “cover a multitude of sins” in a congregation’s life (1 Peter 4:8) while at the same time addressing sin that is harming. And third, restorative church discipline is the appropriate course of action when sin is unrepentant. The person involved in serious sin has been privately confronted with God’s commands in Scripture, but he or she refuses to let go of the sin. From all appearances, the person prizes the sin more than Jesus.

So what does this look like? How should a church practice restorative church discipline? Jesus provides the basic outline in Matthew 18:15-17. If you look at this passage, Jesus describes the process in four steps:

1. One-to-one
2. Few-to-one
3. If the intervention of the two or three does not admit of a solution, the offended party is then instructed to tell the church (Matt. 18:17a). Here at Mercyview, this will typically be first done within the elder team, to inform the entire elder team of the facts concerning the current situation. Next will be that person’s MC. If done on the partner level (1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2), the elders will announce the name of the party charged with outward, serious, and unrepentant sin. They will provide a very brief description of the sin - a description that will not cause others to stumble or to bring embarrassment on any family members. We will then give the congregation 1-2 months to seek out the sinner and call him or her to repentance.
4. The final step of church discipline is exclusion from the fellowship or membership of the church, which the Scripture speaks as exclusion from the Lord’s Table: “And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matt. 18:17b). He is to be treated as someone outside of God’s covenant people, someone who should not partake of Christ’s covenant meal b/c he or she is now showing signs that they are a Christian.

In reality, there is a fifth step. If after some time there is repentance, restoration to the fellowship of the church occurs. What true repentance looks like depends on the nature of the sin. The question of true repentance is a difficult one that requires much wisdom. Caution must be balanced with compassion. But once a church decides to restore a repenting individual to its fellowship and the Lord’s Table, there should be no talk of a probation period or second-class citizenship. Rather the church should publicly pronounce its forgiveness (John 20:23), affirm its love for the repenting individual (2 Cor. 2:8), and celebrate (Luke 15:24).

Affiliations

- [Acts 29](#)
- [Southern Baptist Convention](#)
- [The Gospel Coalition](#)