



# The Covenant Wheel

AN EXPLANATION OF OUR CONVICTIONS,  
VALUES, AND RHYTHMS

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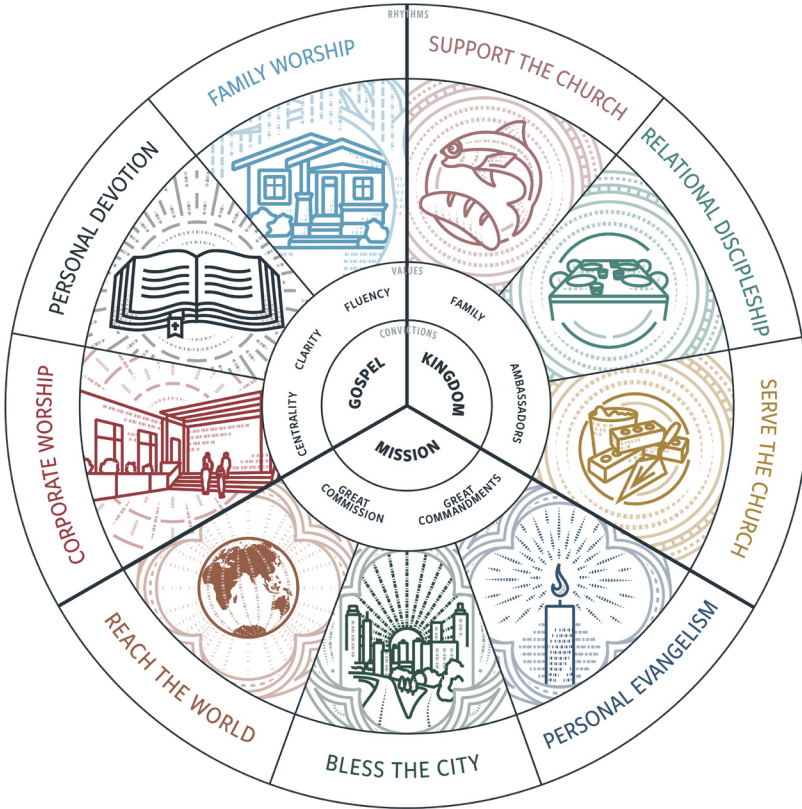
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# Introduction

The Covenant Wheel can be understood in three concentric circles. At the center of the wheel are our three core convictions as a church, followed by seven values that give shape and clarity to our three convictions. Around the values are the nine covenantal behaviors or rhythms that we ask all of our members to commit to making a regular part of their lives. These behaviors aren't unique to Christ Covenant but are rhythms that are a part of the regular meter of the Christian life, rhythms that Jesus has given us to help us grow in godliness.

## CONVICTIONS

**Gospel** – We believe that a church is a people who have been called out by the gospel. This means that the good news of Jesus has come to us, and we believe that in Jesus, we can be reconciled to God. We don't celebrate our morality or religious acts; rather, we celebrate the saving grace of Jesus chiefly displayed through His perfect life, atoning death, and life-giving resurrection. We want to be a church that believes the gospel fully, knows the gospel deeply, and applies the gospel thoroughly to our own lives and the world around us. And this conviction comes from the very idea of the church. The word *ekklesia* is the Greek word for church, and it comes from two words: *ek*, which means out of or from, and *kaleo*, which means to call. Before it is anything else, Christ Covenant is a people that have been called out by the gospel.

**Kingdom** – The gospel also necessarily calls us together. We are called as fellow citizens of the eternal kingdom of Christ to begin living in the kingdom life of Jesus now. There are 59 one another commands in the New Testament. We are called to love one another, serve one another, restore one another, stir one another along, and many more as we live out the ethic of the kingdom now.

**Mission** – Finally, we are a people of mission. As the gospel calls us out of the world and calls us together as the people of God, it also sends us out on mission. Jesus is even now at work on earth through His church, which He said would do greater things than He did during His time on earth as we follow Him by the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God.

## VALUES

Around these convictions we have seven values that give clarity and shape to each of our three core convictions. Three values stem from gospel, two from kingdom, and two from mission.

### *Gospel*

**Gospel Centrality** – We want to be a church that has the gospel at the very center of everything we do. While we want to be a church of excellence, a church that celebrates biblical wisdom, and a church that has great programs, it's only the gospel that saves us and reconciles us to God. Therefore, from our worship service to our children's ministry to our small groups, we want the gospel to be at the very center of everything we do.

**Gospel Clarity** – We are all prone to trust in ourselves for our sense of righteousness and justification instead of the Lord. We all struggle to believe that simple faith in Jesus is enough to save us. We also can be tempted to change the words of Jesus and the commands of Scripture to fit our desires. Therefore, we are steadfastly committed to gospel clarity at Christ Covenant, to exposing counterfeit gospels and to staying focused on the saving power of faith in the righteous life, atoning death, and life-giving resurrection of Jesus.

**Gospel Fluency** – Many Christians know very little of the power of the gospel and how it impacts all of their life. They know that Jesus can save them, and they may even worship Him regularly, but their ability to apply the gospel to every part of their life and to the lives of those around them is limited. Therefore, we are committed to gospel fluency and learning to apply the gospel to every part of our lives, from how we worship, to how we work, to how we parent, to how we take care of our bodies, etc.

### *Kingdom*

**Kingdom Family** – Jesus calls us out of the kingdoms of this world to be citizens of His eternal kingdom and to be brothers and sisters with one another. Jesus has called us to be a kingdom family, and therefore, there should be no such thing as an isolated Christian. As Christians, we are a people called to belong to one another.

**Kingdom Ambassadors** – We gather as a kingdom family, but we scatter as kingdom ambassadors. In His wisdom, God has sent the citizens of His kingdom to all the other “kingdoms” of this world. When we scatter, we scatter to different neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, and friend groups to represent Jesus. And so, we desperately want our people to understand that as we scatter, we scatter as representatives of Jesus, and through us, the kingdom of Christ can be known in our whole community.

### **Mission**

**Great Commandment** – Many churches talk about mission as doing good deeds, while others talk about mission as evangelism and disciple-making. As a church, we want to be committed to the Great Commandment of Jesus to love our neighbors, to pursue justice and mercy in our city, and to pursue the good of those around us.

**Great Commission** – We also want to be a church that is committed to fulfilling the Great Commission of making disciples of all nations through evangelism in our city and by sending church planting teams and mission teams to the ends of the earth.

### **RHYTHMS**

In order to grow in our commitment to these convictions and embodiment of these values, and ultimately so that we can grow in Christ, rhythms of the Christian life are essential. Around the values are the nine behaviors or rhythms that we ask every member to commit to making a regular part of their lives.

**Corporate Worship** – The most fundamental rhythm of the Christian life is gathering together with other believers on the Lord’s Day. In light of this, we ask our members to make it a great priority in their lives to participate in corporate worship on a weekly basis.

**Personal Devotion** – Another fundamental personal rhythm of the Christian life is regular prayer and Bible intake. We ask our members to commit to daily communion with the Lord through the reading and study of His Word and through prayer. We provide several resources for this, like Bible reading plans and the Our Daily Rhythm podcast.

**Family Worship** – Christian discipleship is not just a corporate or personal rhythm; it’s also a family rhythm. Family worship is a simple time of prayer and Bible study that families practice together in some regular rhythm. This could be around the breakfast table, around the dinner table, or during some other set aside time when families read the Bible, pray, and sing Christian songs together.

**Support the Church** – Stewardship is at the very heart of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. The way we steward our time, talent, and treasure is important to our whole lives as Christ followers. Jesus spent a good deal of His ministry teaching on money and generosity. One of our commitments as a church is that we would be people who are generous with our treasure toward the ministry of the Lord.

**Relational Discipleship** – The gospel calls us to one another, to be a kingdom family. The best way to work out that life of kingdom family at Christ Covenant is through relational discipleship—being in disciple-forming relationships with other believers. There are many avenues for this at Christ Covenant, including community groups, men’s and women’s groups, cohorts, and more.

**Personal Evangelism** – The gospel calls us to scatter well as kingdom ambassadors. God calls us all to different workplaces, neighborhoods, and communities to represent Jesus as His ambassadors. As we do so, we are called to make disciples by teaching our unbelieving friends, family members, and acquaintances the life-changing message of the gospel.

**Serve the Church** – The gospel calls us to use the gifts that we have been given to serve the Lord. We ask that every member serves the church in a practical way at least once a month. There are many opportunities for serving, from discipling children to the physical labor of setting up a room.

**Bless the City** – God has called us to love our neighbors, to be a blessing to the community where God has placed us. We want all our members to be good neighbors, so we have also established many programs and strategic partnerships aimed at bringing gospel-motivated restoration to our city.

**Reach the World** – Jesus has called His disciples to make disciples of all nations. Therefore, we are committed as a church to planting churches and sending missionaries all over the world. We ask all our members to be a part of this and to pray, give, and go toward the global mission of God.

As Christ’s body, every Christian should aim to live honorably, whether around their church family or not. May we all, members of Christ Covenant or another gospel-centered church, strive toward these biblical convictions, values, and rhythms which we believe are fundamental for any healthy Christian.







# Corporate Worship

## INTRODUCTION

We were born to worship, to join with all creation in declaring God’s praise (Ps. 150:6). Everything we do in this life should sing God’s glory (1 Cor. 10:31). We are headed to an eternity of worship with a vast congregation from every nation, tribe, people, and language (Rev. 7:9–12). But our sinful nature constantly threatens to twist this inborn instinct to worship our Creator and Redeemer into the worship of just about anything else—money, prestige, sex, work, power, comfort—ultimately turning it in on ourselves, transforming the rushing river of living water intended to flow through our souls to the throne of Christ into a stagnant cesspool of selfish pride (see Rom. 1). What we worship drastically shapes our lives, our dreams, our schedules, our directions, and our emotions. Worship is powerful, and it’s something that we are susceptible to getting really wrong. But nothing is more beautiful and fulfilling than getting it right.

Worship is much more than singing a handful of songs on a Sunday. Even if we add Scripture reading, corporate prayer, preaching, and the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper to our understanding of worship, it’s far more than that as well. Worship is all of life. But nothing better aims our worship toward its proper end than the time we spend worshipping together in corporate worship. Participating in each of the elements of our corporate worship together on Sundays contributes vitally to directing our heart, soul, and might to the love of God in all we do when we sit, walk, lie down, or rise for the rest of the week (Deut. 6:5–8).

## PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

Corporate worship is so important that we should prepare for it. We stretch before we run and brush our teeth before we go to the dentist—shouldn't we also get our hearts ready for an encounter with the Ruler of the universe? These simple steps will help you get more out of our time worshipping together.

1. ***Read the sermon passage.*** Take time to read, reflect on, and pray through the upcoming week's passage so you are primed to draw greater insight from it during the sermon.
2. ***Listen to the songs.*** Christ Covenant has a Spotify playlist of songs we sing together on Sundays. Listening to these songs in the week ahead or on the way to church will help you better minister to others in the congregation in song (see #1 under The Elements of Worship for more on this).
3. ***Give yourself ample time to get to church.*** Rushing out the door in the morning (or the evening) can create conflicts and unneeded stress that distract from preparing for worship.
4. ***Bring a Bible and notebook.*** We are naturally distracted, and our constant entertainment culture can make focusing on Scripture readings and sermons difficult. Reading along in a Bible and taking notes during the sermon helps you actively engage your mind in what you are hearing.
5. ***Put away your phone.*** See #4 above.
6. ***Quiet your heart.*** As you commute to the building, take a moment to ask God to speak to you and use you to bless and encourage others. If you're commuting with your family, this is a great opportunity to pray together. When you arrive at the worship service, please do greet others, but then take a moment when you get to your seat to quiet your heart, entrust those nagging anxieties to the God who cares for you and is greater than them all, and thank Him for the opportunity to enjoy His presence with His people.

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## THE ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP

Our corporate worship on Sundays involves several elements (for an overview, see Naethan Hendrix and Paul Abdallah’s article, “Defining the Stuff We Do On Sunday Mornings: A Congregational Worship Glossary,” on 9marks.org). Each one draws on a long tradition of Christian practice. We see in Acts 2:42 that the very earliest Christians “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Each element of worship is purposefully designed to shape our souls into their created function as conduits for God’s glory. God describes His people in Isaiah 43:21 as those “I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.” In our worship, we encounter God. As we meet with Him, we speak to Him and hear His Word to us, all while encouraging one another.

1. **Singing.** Singing together as a congregation is a powerful way to express our hearts to God while allowing the setting of scriptural truth to music to move our souls toward our Savior. We come into the Lord’s presence singing His praises because of who He is and what He has done (Ps. 95:1–5). This is a collective act of worship in which we all participate, not a concert that we watch passively. We address one another “in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Eph. 5:19). In a sense, every Christian is called to be a worship leader. We are all called to edify and encourage those around us by singing truth wholeheartedly.
2. **Scripture reading.** As we speak to God and one another in our songs, so God speaks to us through His Word. Paul tells the young pastor, Timothy, “Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture” (1 Tim. 4:13). Collectively hearing God’s voice in Scripture can have a transformative effect on His people. For example, Nehemiah 8 tells how Ezra’s reading of Scripture to the people of Israel led them to weep in repentance. As Mark Dever says, “From Genesis to Revelation, God’s people have never created God’s Word. God’s Word has always created God’s people.”
3. **Prayer.** Like the Israelites in Nehemiah 8, we respond to God in prayer. What a privilege it is to communicate with the Creator and Redeemer of the world! In addition to praying our own individual prayers, Scripture encourages us to pray corporately, joining our prayers together. The Psalms are full of collective prayers in which we bring our praises, laments, petitions, and thanksgiving to God. The Lord’s Prayer, the exemplary prayer Jesus gives His disciples (Matt. 6:9–13), also uses corporate language (“Our Father... give us this day...”), though that doesn’t mean it can’t be used individually as well. Our worship services incorporate several types of prayers, including:
  - a. **Prayers of praise**, in which we praise God for who He is and what He has done (Eph. 1:3–14)
  - b. **Prayers of confession**, in which we seek forgiveness for our sins (1 John 1:9)
  - c. **Prayers of assurance**, in which we remind ourselves of the Lord’s sure promises, not only to forgive (1 John 1:9) but also to

complete the work He has begun in us (Phil. 1:6)

d. **Prayers of thanksgiving**, in which we thank God for His mighty works on our behalf (Col. 3:15–17)

e. **Prayers of intercession**, in which we plead with God to carry out His redemptive purposes in our lives and the world (Matt. 6:10; 1 Tim. 2:1–6)

f. **Prayers of illumination**, in which we seek the Spirit’s help in understanding and being changed by His Word as it is declared to us (Ps. 119:18; 1 Cor. 2:12–16)

4. **Giving.** Each of us should give individually as we feel called by God. As Paul instructs, “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). However, we incorporate individual giving into our collective worship to remind ourselves that our gifts are offerings—acts of worship to God—motivated by our gratitude for His generous grace and intended for the support of His church, both in Atlanta and across the globe. As Paul goes on to write, “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, ‘He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever’” (2 Cor. 9:8–9).
5. **Preaching.** In the human-divine dialogue of worship, preaching is the primary means through which the Lord speaks to us as God’s Word is explained and applied to God’s people. Following the reading of Scripture in Nehemiah 8, we’re told that the Levites “gave the sense” of the text so that people understood it. This is what preachers continue to do today. Paul instructs Timothy to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:1–2). In the Great Commission, when Jesus sends His disciples out into the world, He commands them to make new disciples of all nations, “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20). Preaching helps fulfill this grand purpose.
6. **Baptism.** In the Great Commission, Jesus also commands His disciples to baptize the new disciples they will make in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). Baptism is one of two church ordinances that Christ explicitly commands the church to practice. Baptism signifies the unity of a believer in Christ’s death and resurrection through faith (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). Because baptism is a public profession of faith, before their baptism, people at our church share the story of how they met Jesus and experienced His transformative power in their lives.
7. **The Lord’s Supper.** Also known as communion, the Lord’s Supper is the second church ordinance. As baptism celebrates the entry of a believer in Christ into His body, the church, the Lord’s Supper celebrates our continued participation in that body together. As Paul writes, “Because

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there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:17). On the night before He was crucified, Jesus instituted the practice of eating bread and drinking wine as a symbol of our absolute dependence on His sacrifice of His body (the bread) and blood (the wine) for our salvation (Matt. 26:26–29; Luke 22:14–23; 1 Cor. 11:23–26). Because the Lord’s Supper is a symbol of our common dependence on Christ’s sacrifice, Scripture encourages us to approach it with proper reverence, first confessing our sins to Christ and one another (1 Cor. 11:27–32).

8. **Fellowship.** We don’t often think of the time we spend shaking hands and giving hugs before, after, or even during a service in a time of greeting as part of worship, but fellowship is mentioned as one of the four practices of those earliest Christians in Acts 2:42. Everything else we do in worship means even more if we know the people worshipping with us. It’s even more encouraging to hear the woman in the row behind us sing “It Is Well With My Soul” if we’ve prayed for her to find comfort after the death of her father or to see the young men in the row ahead of us listening attentively to the sermon if we know one has been sharing the gospel with the other at work. The church has sometimes been called a “mutual-assurance-of-salvation society,” as getting to know others gives us the opportunity to see evidence of the Spirit’s work in each other’s lives and to hold each other accountable when our actions indicate that we are drifting from our faith. Our fellowship is also a powerful witness to a watching world. As Jesus says, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

By preparing for, better understanding, and fully participating in corporate worship, we fuel our souls each Sunday to delight in the Lord all week. And as Sunday builds upon Sunday, we prepare ourselves for heaven, where “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” will join together to worship our Redeemer, declaring, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Rev. 7:9–10).







# Personal Devotion

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most important disciplines for growth in Christlikeness and Godliness is spending personal time with the Lord. At Christ Covenant, personal devotion is one of our covenantal agreements because we believe it is essential for the life of a disciple. Throughout Christian history, the church has held to the idea of abiding with—or being intentional to stay connected to—the Lord. On the night He was betrayed and arrested, Jesus told His disciples, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 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 15:4-5). Jesus teaches here that if you want a fruitful Christian life marked by the fruit of the Spirit, then you must seek to be a branch that is connected to the Vine; you must seek to be a Christian that is connected to Christ.

In light of this, we encourage every member to create space in their life for personal devotion. As one who abides in Christ, this should be a priority, which means spending at least 10–15 minutes alone with the Lord several times a week, and ideally daily. We hope that as you make this a discipline in your life, the time will grow longer, but the most important aspect of personal devotion is consistency.

You may be asking, *How do I get started? What am I supposed to do?* This guide answers those questions by giving you practical steps to take to develop the discipline of personal devotion.

## PRACTICAL STEPS

### **1. Choose a time**

The first step to having an effective personal devotion is choosing a consistent time that works for you. For some, this is in the evening before bed, and for others, it's at some point in the middle of the day (during a lunch break, etc.). However, the most typical time for personal devotion is in the morning. This appears to have been Jesus' practice, as we are told He woke early in the morning while it was still dark to go and pray (Mark 1:35). But the psalmist speaks of meditating on God in the watches of the night (Ps. 63:6), so personal devotion certainly does not have to be restricted to the morning. The most important thing is choosing a time when you can be consistent.

### **2. Choose a place**

Choosing a consistent place is another important step in developing the discipline of personal devotion. If you have a place where you consistently seek and meet with the Lord, that space will begin to develop a certain gravity. Coming into that familiar place will help you quickly focus and make the most of your time. Daniel, for example, goes to an upper chamber next to a window open toward Jerusalem three times a day to pray (Dan. 6:10). Your place should be somewhere that's quiet and free from distractions where you can be alone. In Scripture we see Jesus go to "a desolate place" (Mark 1:35), and elsewhere it says He goes up on a mountain by Himself to pray (Matt. 14:23). We recommend having your personal devotion at a desk, sitting up in a chair, or even while walking. This will keep you alert and engaged in your study of God's Word and prayer.

### **3. Choose a Scripture reading plan**

In keeping with the theme of consistency, it's important that you choose a consistent Scripture reading plan. You don't want to spend time every day trying to find a passage to read, and you want your Bible intake to be robust and orderly—robust in that it involves reading through the whole Bible and orderly in that you have a plan for how much Scripture you read each day. Of course, the Lord could redirect your plans and you could end up reading more, or you could end up spending the entire time meditating on one verse. However, we all do well to have a plan. Devotionals are another great resource that many Christians enjoy. The key to success with devotionals is to make sure that you use a devotional that is full of the Scriptures.



## RECOMMENDED DEVOTIONALS

1. *New Morning Mercies* by Paul David Tripp
2. *Morning and Evening* by Charles Spurgeon
3. *Through the Bible Through the Year* by John Stott
4. *Voices from the Past* by Richard Rushing
5. *Walking with God Day by Day* by Martyn Lloyd-Jones
6. *For the Love of God (Volume 1 & Volume 2)* by D.A. Carson
7. *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions* compiled by Arthur Bennett
8. *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers
9. *Holiness Day by Day: Transformational Thoughts for Your Spiritual Journey* by Jerry Bridges
10. *Be Thou My Vision* by Jonathan Gibson
11. *Psalms By The Day* by Alec Motyer

### **4. Use a plan for your prayer time**

One of the things that we often talk about at Christ Covenant is praying through Scripture. This one simple tool can help your prayer life come alive. It can transform a person who struggles to pray for more than a minute or two into a person who enjoys extended periods of God-centered prayer.

#### ***How to pray through Scripture***

Read a verse of Scripture, use the words to guide your prayers, and once you can't think of anything else to pray, continue to the next verse and so on, letting the words that God inspired in His Holy Bible guide the words that you are praying back to Him. The Psalms, Jesus' prayer in John 17, and Paul's prayers (Rom. 15:5–6, 13; Eph. 1:15–23; 3:14–21; Phil. 1:9–11; 1 Thess. 3:9–13; 2 Thess. 1:3–12; Philem. 4–7) are great resources for getting started with this since they are already prayers, but any passage of Scripture can inspire prayer. (For more, see the appendix on Praying Through Scripture.)

Christians have also followed a basic fourfold approach to prayer for centuries: Praise, Thanksgiving, Confession, and Supplication. Praise is the act of meditating on the goodness and glory of God and expressing gladness to Him. Thanksgiving is the act of thanking God for the particular goodness that He has shown in your life. Confession is the act of confessing particular sins before the Lord as you repent of those sins. Supplication is the act of asking the Lord for His blessing, care, and guidance.

Combining the Praise, Thanksgiving, Confession, and Supplication method with praying through Scripture is a great way to energize and bring consistency to your prayer life. Other things to consider are prayer walking, using a prayer journal, or using a prayer board with written prayer items.

### **5. Consider journaling**

Journaling is a tool that Christians have often used in personal devotion. Journaling is not a biblical discipline, but it's a very practical idea that will help you do at least three important things. First, use a journal to keep track of your prayers. A record of things you are praying about is a helpful tool for looking back on how the Lord has answered those prayers. Second, use a journal to express your thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Sometimes it's hard to pray or even put things into words, so the act of writing something out can be helpful and healing in the journey of seeking to understand your own soul. Third, use a journal to stay focused. A journal is a great tool to keep you focused on your prayers and can help you meditate on and memorize Scripture. For instance, suppose that during your devotion time a to-do list item for the day pops into your head. Having a way to simply jot it down can alleviate a distraction and help you to refocus on the Lord.

### **6. Create goals and seek accountability**

Creating goals can motivate you in your journey of developing the discipline of personal devotion. Here are a couple of examples:

- What sin do you want to be killing in your life?
- What fruit of the Spirit do you want to see more clearly?

Writing down goals like this and making them a point of prayer can be powerful as you work your way through Scripture, seeking to discern how the truth of Scripture applies to your written goals. It's also helpful and good to find a trusted friend and share these goals with them. Invite them to ask you regularly about your consistency in personal devotion and the goals that you are working to achieve. Accountability is a great tool for this discipline and any discipline

### **7. Be flexible**

If you decide that a plan isn't working well for you, try another plan. If you have been using a plan for a while and it's getting a little stale, feel free to try something new. The key is consistently creating space to meet with the Lord; however, this does not mean that you always do the same thing. That being said, it's important to remember that your personal devotion will likely not be a perpetual mountaintop experience. The value of a regular time of personal devotion is the small and consistent gains you make over a long period of time.

Our hope is that this guide is helpful in getting you started down the path of having a consistent and meaningful time of personal devotion.

If you have any questions about personal devotion, please reach out to your parish elder or a member of our pastoral staff.





# Family Worship

## INTRODUCTION

Every Christian family should be marked by love for Jesus, His Word (the Bible), His church, and His mission. Therefore, we desire the members of Christ Covenant to be committed to family worship.

### ***What is Family Worship?***

Family worship in the home is both a posture of worship toward the Lord and a particular activity for the whole family. Family worship (also called family devotional, Bible time, family time, etc.) is a regular and intentional family gathering to read God's Word, pray, and perhaps even sing together.

### ***Time and Place***

Finding a consistent time for the whole family to sit down together to read God's Word and pray can be difficult. Some families have family worship during breakfast, after dinner, before bed, or a combination of the three. Some families meet all together to read the Bible and pray just once a week, but the parents also intentionally meet with each child individually at different times throughout the week as well. Being consistent and intentional with whatever time or pattern you choose is what matters most. You will have to say *no* to some things in order to consistently say *yes* to family worship. Some families in our church keep their early morning plans clear so they can make family worship a priority; others have a couple of nights a week that they always guard to eat together and engage in family worship. Regularly pulling the whole family together is a great challenge and requires discipline.

*“Prayer should not be viewed as something you tack on to the beginning of a meal or the end of Bible reading. Rather, prayer should be viewed as it is biblically portrayed—intimate communion with the Father.”*

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However, most of the great and meaningful things you do as a parent are hard and require discipline, and training your child to know and love Jesus, His Word, His church, and His mission is the most important thing you can do.

## **HOW TO DO FAMILY WORSHIP**

### **1. Read**

Reading God’s Word is an essential element of meaningful family worship. Of course we need to read the Bible in order to know and love God’s Word, but Bible study will also lead us to know and love Jesus, His church, and His mission more deeply.

See the appendix on Family Worship Resources for books and reading plans to help you and your family get started intentionally reading through Scripture. If you are new to reading the Bible as a family, we recommend narrative books (such as the book of Genesis or one of the four Gospels) or practical books (such as Proverbs or James).

### **2. Pray**

Prayer is the active participation in our spiritual and physical dependence on God. Prayer should not be viewed as something you tack on to the beginning of a meal or the end of Bible reading. Rather, prayer should be viewed as it is biblically portrayed—intimate communion with the Father. Keep in mind that access to the Father in prayer is only possible when we are united to Christ by faith and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who helps us in our weakness (Rom. 8:26). It’s important for parents to model prayer for their child and then allow them the opportunity to also pray. Remind your child that they aren’t praying to you; they are praying to God. While we can approach the throne of God with boldness because of Christ, we must always approach God in prayer with a sense of awe, wonder, and humility.

## **PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR PRAYER**

### ***Prayer Journal***

One of the most humbling realities of prayer is that God hears and answers our prayers. During family worship, it's helpful to allow every family member to share prayer requests. Hearing a child's prayer requests gives parents a sneak peek into their child's heart. Write down the prayer requests and revisit the journal every time you gather as a family to reflect on how the Lord is working.

### ***Praying Through Scripture***

Using a passage of Scripture as a prayer guide is one of the most helpful prayer tools for both personal and family worship. The basic premise of praying through Scripture is to read a verse of the Bible and use the words in that verse to guide your prayer. When praying through Scripture as a family, each person can participate by reading a verse and praying, one person after the other. Praying God's Word back to Him as a family is a beautiful, engaging, and edifying practice. See the appendix on Praying Through Scripture for more guidance.

### **3. Sing**

Singing is a great way to affirm truth collectively as a family. Starting this rhythm can be a little awkward initially, but over time, singing together will become fun and encouraging for the faith of all family members. Parents can begin teaching songs at a very young age. Children will learn new songs as they grow and can begin using a songbook with the family.

Parents should explain the text of the song before everyone sings and then be intentional about singing the lyrics out (even if you don't think you have a good voice). The way parents model singing in the home will translate to how the family sings when the church gathers. It's helpful to sing songs from the worship service even if your child was at Covenant Kids and not in the main service. This will help them connect to the larger church family.

## **PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR SINGING**

### ***A Family Hymnal***

We encourage every family to have a hymnal in the house that you can use as a tool to sing together. We recommend *Hymns of Grace* from Master's Seminary Press.

### ***Christ Covenant on Spotify***

The Christ Covenant worship team keeps a playlist of all our church's favorite worship songs on Spotify. This playlist is great to play just around the house or to use as a guide for singing.

## BEST PRACTICES

One of the most challenging aspects of family worship is keeping children's attention. This can be difficult with both younger and older kids. Here are a few best practices to keep in mind as you establish your own pattern of family worship.

- Keep it short. Family worship time doesn't have to be long; even 10 minutes is a good start.
- Make it interactive and involve all family members. Ask older children to read passages of Scripture. Ask younger children to act out passages of Scripture or draw a picture of a biblical truth.
- Be intentional. Be intentional in establishing the rhythm of family worship in the home. Be intentional in taking advantage of "God moments" in life to point your child to truth. Be intentional about celebrating milestones (birthdays, graduations, etc.) in a way that points to God's provision and blessing.
- Remember Ephesians 6:4: "Do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

## CONCLUSION

The Bible recognizes that there is a balance between disciplining children and exasperating or provoking children to anger. Children need discipline and will have to be corrected during family worship. With that said, parents will do well to encourage and engage their children during family worship. Family worship should not be a dread. If you are consistent and intentional, children will begin to enjoy the time together, and the truth and love of God will capture their hearts.

The secular world promotes successful parenting as being defined by what kind of grades children make or how good they are at sports or other extracurricular activities. However, Christian parents must remember that those things will matter very little in 10,000 years. What will matter then—and now—is whether or not children know and love Jesus, His Word, His church, and His mission. God has called parents to train their children diligently to this end (Deut. 6).

Please feel free to contact one of our pastors, elders, or Covenant Kids staff members for additional help with family worship. They truly desire to equip parents to effectively and lovingly disciple their families.





# Support the Church

## INTRODUCTION

Though when the church actually began is debated, most people agree that the church’s truest and current form can be dated to the day of Pentecost as described in Acts 2. While the apostles were together in an upper room, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and then they went out to preach the gospel in Jerusalem. This resulted in 3,000 people believing the gospel for salvation. From that day on, many of the new believers gathered together to form a church in Jerusalem, which we read about in Acts 2.

### ***Acts 2:42–43***

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.”

These verses provide a basic description of three priorities that every church should exercise: teaching, fellowship, and prayer. The author of Acts continues to describe what he witnessed in the verses that follow.

### ***Acts 2:44–47***

“And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 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.”

Early on (literally three verses into the church), that generosity becomes a theme of Christian faithfulness. This theme continues through the New Testament and throughout church history up to this very day.

Money and generosity are consistent themes throughout the Old Testament. God regularly challenged His people to be generous to others and generous in their offerings to Him (Deut. 15:7–8; Ps. 112:5, 9; Prov. 21:13; 22:9; 28:27; Mal. 3:10). During His earthly ministry, Jesus actually talked more about money than any other subject with the one exception being the kingdom of God. He regularly challenged the coldness of His hearers’ hearts toward the needs of the poor, as well as their stinginess toward advancing the kingdom (Matt. 6:24; 19:21; 21:12–13; Mark 12:41–44; Luke 14:28; 16:13–15). Throughout Acts and the rest of the New Testament, we see a deep concern among churches for one another reflected in offerings being made for churches in need. We also see an urgency toward being generous in support of advancing the kingdom of God (2 Cor. 8:1–15; 9:7; Phil. 1:5; Heb. 13:16). Even in Revelation, Jesus condemns the church of Laodicea for their dependence on and confidence in their wealth (Rev. 3:17).

Generosity is a priority for the church. We offer here some reasoning for generosity and some practical things to consider as you prayerfully pursue kingdom-focused generosity in your life.

## THREE BIBLICAL REASONS FOR GENEROSITY

### ***1. Be generous for yourself***

Matthew 6:19–21 is a fascinating passage of Scripture. These words are spoken by Jesus during the Sermon on the Mount.

#### ***Matthew 6:19–21***

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

You would expect Jesus to say something like, “Where your heart is, there your treasure will be also.” However, He actually says the opposite. He declares, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be.” It’s as if Jesus is saying that if you want to have a heart for the Lord, then you need to be invested with the Lord. If you want your heart to be in line with the things of God, then you must get your treasure in line with the things of God. Giving is the best way to resist the tyrannical power of money over our lives. As Jesus



says a few verses later, “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Matt. 6:24).

## **2. Be generous for your church**

As previously mentioned, just a few verses into the existence of the church, people within the church were being generous toward one another. One of the most striking passages about the early church is found in Acts 4:33–35.

### **Acts 4:33–35**

“And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.”

There was not a needy person within the early church. Isn’t that incredible? The church was so concerned with the needs of one another that they worked to meet one another’s needs fully. Today, we should still be concerned with one another’s physical needs and certainly continue working together faithfully to meet one another’s physical needs when they arise. However, we should work together to meet one another’s spiritual needs even more so!

As members bring resources to the church, those resources are distributed in various ways. Some are used for hiring pastoral staff who work to care for the congregation and serve to meet their spiritual needs. For example, our children’s ministry staff is working to meet the spiritual needs of our children as they partner with parents to help shepherd our kids. Also, our Biblical Counseling Center stays full of men and women with acute spiritual needs, and it’s such a blessing and means of grace in their lives that our church has this center that can address their needs. Other resources are used for our building. This gives us a place to worship, host Bible studies, hold meetings, and connect with the community at large. Other resources are used for specific church ministries that are directed at meeting spiritual needs inside and outside of the church family. Last but certainly not least, resources are deployed for the global mission of the church. By joining together, we can work to support various ministries in our city and advance the work of Christ around the world.

## **3. Be generous for the mission of God**

One of the motivations for giving is indeed to see the mission of God advanced outside of our church. Jesus has given us the most urgent and world-changing command in all of history—to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18–20). The responsibility for people coming to know and follow Jesus, the only hope of salvation, has been given to the church. God is known, worshiped, and glorified, while the eternal destiny of billions of

souls hangs upon Christians faithfully going and giving to advance the Great Commission. The Great Commission is great in that it is an amazing task, but it's also great because it is a massive task. God has called us to make disciples of every nation, and that requires immense resources. Effectively training pastors, planting churches, and sending missionaries are all expensive, but if we want to see the kingdom of Christ advanced, we must be generous as individuals and generous as a church.

### *TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURE*

It takes far more than money to fulfill the Great Commission. Though Scripture challenges us to be generous with our money, God's Word also addresses the way we use the other gifts God has given us. We are called to use our time, talent, and treasure in ways that glorify God, serve others, and direct our hearts heavenward. We have developed a Stewardship Tool to help you steward your resources in all three areas toward kingdom purposes. This tool gives you an opportunity to reflect on how you are currently using your time, talent, and treasure, what that says about your priorities, and how you could develop in these areas in the future. See the appendix for the Stewardship Tool.

### *WHY AND HOW SHOULD YOU GIVE?*

Whether you are just getting started in kingdom generosity or have been giving to the church for a long time, there are two important passages worth meditating on regularly when considering why and how you should support the church.

#### *WHY?*

##### **2 Corinthians 8:9**

"For 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."

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*"Effectively training pastors, planting churches, and sending missionaries are all expensive, but if we want to see the kingdom of Christ advanced, we must be generous as individuals and generous as a church."*

If the previously mentioned reasons aren't motivating enough to move you toward greater generosity, then listen carefully to what Paul is saying here in 2 Corinthians: ultimately, we give because God has given so much to us in Christ. Jesus, who was rich, became poor so that we could be rich in Him. Jesus wasn't just rich; He was the Lord of the entire cosmos. Everything was His and He was the Lord over everything. Yet, He willingly gave up everything to become like us. The Lord of all became a pauper for all.

Jesus didn't just become physically poor in His life; on the cross, He became spiritually poor in His death. He took on all our sin and became the object of God's wrath. The debt of our sinfulness that we could never repay was placed on the very Son of God on the cross. In other words, the richest became the poorest so that we who are poor before an almighty God might become rich, heirs to His worth and glory. If we believe this is true, it should motivate a radical kingdom generosity in all of us who know God in Christ.

As we see in 2 Corinthians 8, Paul urges the Corinthian church to give in light of the gospel, but he also teaches them how they should give in 2 Corinthians 9.

## HOW?

### **2 Corinthians 9:7**

"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

There are three principles for giving that can be drawn from this verse.

#### **1. Your giving should be structured and planned**

Faithful Christian giving is not something that you do on a whim; rather, it's something that you budget for like any other financial obligation in your life. We encourage each member to pray and think about what he or she is to give when joining the church. This plan should consider times throughout the year when you get a raise or bonus and should be reevaluated at least once per year. It's good to set spiritual goals at least once a year, and giving to the kingdom of God should be one of these goals. Many members try to increase their giving by a percent or half a percent every year, resulting in more and more resources deployed to help God's kingdom grow as He continues to provide. Some Christian churches make a big deal out of tithing (giving 10% of your income to your local church). At Christ Covenant, we consider the tithe a good principle that typically represents a generous gift for many people. However, we can also see in the New Testament that Christians would often give generously beyond a tithe to advance the work of Christ.

#### **2. Your giving should be consistent and obedient**

Once you have created a plan, it's important to follow it. The best advice on this is to make your giving habitual and regular. While you can give by check

in the offering boxes at the exit doors of the auditorium, the easiest and most efficient way to give is by setting up a direct draft online. You can set up a recurring gift and give additional one-time offerings as the Lord leads by visiting [christcovenant.com](http://christcovenant.com). While one-time and end-of-year gifts are great tools for generosity, the practice of giving regular weekly or monthly gifts is a great discipline to develop. Think about it in the same way that you save money. If you try to just save money once or twice a year, you will never save very much. The best way to save is to make savings a regular (usually monthly) part of your financial plan.

### ***3. Your giving should be a joyful priority***

While giving might certainly be a discipline, for those of us in Christ, it should be a joyful discipline. We are giving to advance a never-ending kingdom of truth, righteousness, and joy. We are giving to advance the only part of our lives that is truly eternal. A walk through any of our basements or attics will reveal a number of things that we probably regret buying, but have you ever regretted investing in the kingdom? As Jesus tells us, what we give yields for us an eternal return.

#### ***Matthew 6:19–20***

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

## **CONCLUSION**

God has given us a huge responsibility to take ownership of His kingdom work on earth. We pray that this guide helps you join in with what God is doing at Christ Covenant and throughout the world. We also pray that this guide would move you to place your treasure in the kingdom and, by doing so, that your heart would love God more deeply. If you have questions about how money is used at the church or anything else pertaining to finances and the Christian life, or if you are interested in learning creative ways to give, contact any of Christ Covenant’s pastors. Also, please plan to attend our quarterly members meetings, where we decide how to use the resources that God is providing our church together. Finally, join the members of Christ Covenant in kingdom generosity as we collectively pursue the pleasure and glory of God.





# Relational Discipleship

## INTRODUCTION

After His resurrection and just before His ascension into heaven, Jesus gave His disciples the command to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19). Discipleship is at the heart of everything Christ Covenant does. Colossians 1:28 describes well the aim of our church when Paul writes, “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.” We hope to see all Christ Covenant members grow in personal purity and holiness, learn to live by the Spirit, increase in knowledge of God’s Word and in prayer, carry out the one another commands in Scripture, and grow as gospel witnesses in evangelism. In a word, we hope to “present everyone mature in Christ.” This kind of maturity in Christlikeness happens when we are involved in relational discipleship with others who encourage, challenge, and exhort us.

## COMMUNITY GROUPS

A simple reading through the narrative of Scripture shows that God has a heart for community. From the tribes of Israel to the seven churches in Revelation, the people of God are always being called together into fellowship with one another. Further, the Bible says that when a person trusts Christ, they are saved into a family. Simply put, there is no biblical category for an isolated Christian. The pastors and elders of Christ Covenant care deeply about creating biblical community.

One of the ways that we facilitate biblical community is by organizing our members into smaller groups that focus on growing in Christ and disciple-making. All members are expected to regularly engage in one of our community groups. In a normal group gathering, you will find Bible study, prayer, the forging of friendship, and encouragement toward godly and missional living. Beyond the group gathering, members of groups often become true friends and serve as missional expressions of the local church. Joining a group is the absolute best way to build relationships and get plugged into the life of the church.

## HOW TO FIND A GROUP

When thinking about visiting or joining a community group, we typically say, “Proximity is priority.” We have community groups all over Atlanta that meet on different days and times. We would encourage you to start looking for a group close to where you live. You can find a list of our community groups on our website, [christcovenant.com](http://christcovenant.com). You can also request to join groups on the website. If you’d like a personal group recommendation, you can reach out to our Discipleship Director, Jackson Randall, at [Jackson@ChristCovenant.com](mailto:Jackson@ChristCovenant.com).

### *Types of Groups at Christ Covenant*

- **Community Groups** – all different ages and life stages
- **Women’s Groups** – women only, all different ages and life stages
- **Men’s Groups** – men only, all different ages and life stages
- **Young Adult Groups** – men’s groups and women’s groups of young professionals
- **College Groups** – men’s groups and women’s groups of college students

### *What to Expect at a Group*

When you visit a community group, you’ll find a group of people who want to grow in their knowledge and understanding of God and in their love for one another. Some groups open their time with coffee or a meal (depending on when and where they meet). From there, groups sit down together and consider the Sunday sermon, work through a passage of Scripture, or talk about a book the group is reading. Different groups might have slightly different ways they spend their time, so it’s always a good idea to ask the community group leader how their particular group is structured. Groups also spend time praying for one another, the church, and our world. There is also typically time for group members to provide life updates and be encouraged or challenged. Community group gatherings typically last about two hours and meet weekly or bi-weekly.

### *How to Participate in the Life of a Group*

There are four key ways we like to encourage you to be a part of the group.

- **Show Up** – Commit to showing up. Your presence in a community group matters. If you’re not present, you will miss out on what the

Lord might have for you, but significantly, others will miss out on how you might meaningfully contribute to their walks with the Lord. Never underestimate the power of your presence.

- **Participate** – Our desire is not that you would merely show up to your community group but that you would be an active participant within the group. Part of what it means to be a community group member is that you will give yourself to the group in such a way that you know others and make yourself known. You can do this by participating in group discussions, actively listening to others, asking good questions, praying for your fellow group members, and initiating meeting times outside of your group.
- **Communicate** – Being in a community group means you will have a community group leader or leaders. These leaders will want to be in touch with you. Make sure you’re being responsive and open to their communication. Also, commit to sharing openly about your life and your needs. Community groups are a key way we get connected to the body, grow in our faith, and have our physical and spiritual needs met. So invite your fellow group members into your life by being communicative.
- **Keep Confidentiality** – When you’re part of a community group, you will walk through valleys and mountaintops with your fellow members. As part of this journey, you will be invited into people’s lives in such a way that you will possess some privileged information. We ask that you resolve to honor your brothers and sisters by not sharing private group information outside of the group unless it’s absolutely necessary.

## OTHER FORMS OF RELATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Community groups are the primary context where relational discipleship takes place at Christ Covenant, but they are not the only place where this sort of discipleship occurs.

**The Spotted Cow** – The Spotted Cow is a twice-a-year gathering where the men of Christ Covenant get together to discuss culture and theology. These gatherings are extremely edifying, and they also provide an opportunity for men to grow in relationship with one another.

**The Lydian and Women’s Ministry Events** – Similar to The Spotted Cow, The Lydian is a twice-a-year gathering for the women of Christ Covenant to discuss culture and theology. Our Women’s Ministry also hosts a few other gatherings throughout the year. All of these events are excellent relational discipleship contexts.

**Cohorts** – Cohorts seek to answer a common problem that often exists within churches—people want to be discipled by an individual, but they don’t know how to make that happen or who to approach. With cohorts, we place three or four men or women into a small group with a leader for the purpose of intentional relational discipleship. This group works through

one of six tracks that leads participants to read books and craft a discipleship plan. Cohorts meet once a month to discuss readings, provide life updates, and encourage one another in their walks with the Lord.







# Serve the Church

## INTRODUCTION

The Bible portrays the church as a living organism. In 1 Corinthians 12:12, the apostle Paul writes, “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.” To give shape to how the Corinthian church is to understand itself, Paul offers an extended analogy of a living, breathing, functional body. In the verses that follow, Paul explains how the body functions as an interdependent system that needs each part (feet, hands, ears, eyes) working together under the headship of Christ.

This analogy of the body is very instructive for the church when it comes to understanding our responsibility and relationship to one another in areas of service. In order to flourish as the body of Christ, all members must faithfully steward their giftings. As 1 Corinthians 12:27 declares, “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

When Christ entered our world, He came with full authority. In fact, at the end of the gospel of Matthew, we read these words from Jesus: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matt. 28:18). This is a declaration that Jesus is the unhindered Lord of all, that He will do as He pleases, and even that He is due the worship of the entire world. Other places in Scripture affirm that Jesus is the Creator, the Sustainer, and the purpose of all things (Col. 1:15–20).

And yet, in Matthew 20:28, Jesus says, “...even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Do you see what is being stated here? The God-Man, the Son of God, the hope of life, and the Light of the World who has all authority did not come to be served, though He rightfully could have. Rather, He came to serve to the point of greatest cost. With these things in mind, it can be rightfully stated that a life lived in union with and under the headship of Christ is a life that makes serving the body of Christ a treasured priority.

## FIVE FRUITS OF FAITHFUL SERVICE

### ***1. Serving honors the Lord***

Quite simply, serving honors God because He has commanded us to love and serve one another under the headship of Christ. Galatians 5:13–14 says, “For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

### ***2. Serving evidences a love of God***

The first and greatest commandment according to Christ is to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind (Matt. 22:37–38). Jesus goes on to say that the second greatest commandment is like it, that you shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:39). It is not by coincidence that these commandments appear next to each other. Rather, there is a deep and necessary connection between the two. When we know and actively love the God who has gone to the greatest length to serve us, we will be willing to go to great lengths to serve others. That love for others, then, is an expression of our love for God.

### ***3. Serving is a functional reminder that life is not about us***

Our culture works fastidiously to convince us that life is about us and our personal little kingdoms. And let’s be honest with ourselves—we are easily convinced of this message. When we engage in serving, we remind ourselves

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“With these things in mind, it can be rightfully stated that a life lived in union with and under the headship of Christ is a life that makes serving the body of Christ a treasured priority.”

that life is not about us. Committing to consistently serving gives us a tangible, physical reminder that our lives are meant to build up the body of Christ.

**4. *Serving is a blessing to others***

This is simple but true. Giving of ourselves and exercising our gifts to benefit others encourages the souls of those being served.

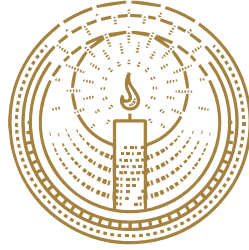
**5. *Serving grows the kingdom***

God's strategy for kingdom growth is the body of Christ—the local church. When members are rightly exercising their gifts and faithfully serving under the lordship of Christ, we can rightly expect that God will grow His kingdom through us.

For all these reasons and others, in order to be fully integrated into the life of the body, you need to find some way to serve the body. Your area of service might change through the years, or you may stay very consistent in one area of service, but as you serve, your understanding of who you are in the body of Christ and how the Lord desires to use your life will grow—and your joy in His kingdom will grow with it.







# Personal Evangelism

## INTRODUCTION

All Christians are called to make disciples. Jesus very clearly told His followers that, as they were going about their lives, they were called to make disciples (Matt. 28:18–20). An important part of the disciple-making process is evangelism, where Christians take part in sharing the good news of Jesus with unbelievers. But before you can become a faithful disciple-maker, you have to know who you are in Christ. Most Christians think their contribution to the advance of the gospel is to attend a church service, give, volunteer once a month, and occasionally invite their friends to church to hear the gospel from “professional Christians” like preachers and worship pastors. The reason most Christians believe this is because that’s basically what church leaders have told them their whole lives. However, the Bible says something much different.

Our problem is that we have often understood the church as an event that we attend rather than a living organism or body of which we are members. According to Scripture, the local church is not something that people attend. Rather, the local church is a local group of believers joined together for the glory and mission of Jesus. Sometimes those believers are gathered in the same place, but usually they are scattered throughout the city or local area in a variety of roles and responsibilities. It’s important to realize that even when the church is scattered, it is no more or less the church. If this is true, we have

to ask the following questions: 1) What is the primary purpose of the church gathering? and 2) What is the primary purpose of the church scattering?

First, the primary purpose of gathering for corporate worship is that the followers of Jesus would worship together and, in doing so, remind one another of who God is and what He has done for us in Christ. Pastors, elders, and other church leaders carry the responsibility of leading the church to understand the beauty and the mystery of the gospel more deeply. This is not to say that evangelism does not happen when the church gathers for corporate worship. Proclaiming truth to the lost certainly happens during the worship service; however, the primary target audience is the group of believers who make up the church.

Second, the primary purpose of the church scattered is that the glory of God, the power of the gospel, and the kingdom of God would go out to a world that has been separated from God by sin. This is done so that God might restore all things to Himself through the proclaimed gospel of Christ. This means that the primary purpose of pastors, elders, and other church leaders is to equip the church to that end—that the church would be mature and ready to make an impact in the world for Christ (see Eph. 4:11–16).

The Bible calls all believers to be bold ambassadors for Christ as God Himself makes His appeal through them (see 2 Cor. 5:20). Therefore, it's important that when Christians gather for corporate worship, the church is strengthened and equipped to scatter well. As we scatter as kingdom ambassadors, we are charged by Jesus to have disciple-making relationships that begin with personal evangelism. The Christians who are most active in personal evangelism are the ones who are most intentional. But true evangelistic living does not depend on special evangelistic programs; rather, it's the fruit of ordinary people doing ordinary things with gospel intentionality. To that end, we are equipping you with a tool called Table Talk to help you grow in gospel intentionality and impact in disciple-making relationships.

A Table Talk is an intentional relationship-building meeting (a coffee, a lunch, a dinner, a walk, etc.) where you talk, build a friendship, and hopefully share the greatest news ever—the gospel of Jesus Christ. We call it Table Talk as a nod to the time in church history when Martin Luther would gather people in his home to talk about spiritual things, and because a table is a great setting for these conversations. Sitting at a table for a meal or coffee is conducive to great conversation, though it's certainly not necessary. The following are some guidelines for how to make Table Talk a useful, intentional, and regular part of your life.

*“Don’t just go work out or attend the book club; engage as an ambassador for the Lord, seeking to give an answer for the hope you have in Christ (1 Pet. 3:15).”*

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## HOW TO DO TABLE TALK

### **1. Pray**

Write down the names of three people you will regularly pray for. Pray specifically that they would come to know and treasure Jesus. Don’t underestimate the power and importance of regular and consistent prayer. Put the list in a place where you will see it every day as a reminder to pray.

### **2. Create a rhythm**

The goal of Table Talk is that you would create an intentional rhythm in your life when you connect with people that don’t know Jesus. For example, you could take an unbeliever out for lunch every other Monday or one Monday per month. You could invite someone who isn’t a Christian to coffee every Thursday afternoon. You could invite one of your unbelieving neighbors over for dinner every other Tuesday. You may also approach something that is already a rhythm in your life (like a workout group or a book club) with particular evangelistic intentionality. Don’t just go work out or attend the book club; engage as an ambassador for the Lord, seeking to give an answer for the hope you have in Christ (1 Pet. 3:15).

### **3. Build the relationship**

As these relationships begin, make every effort to develop them. The goal with Table Talk is not necessarily that you would share the gospel with someone at the first meeting but rather that you would build genuine relationships with people who don’t know Jesus with the hope of sharing the gospel with them patiently and gently. These relationships will take time and intentionality to build. Though we hope that these relationships will give you the opportunity to invite people into the kingdom of God, the authentic love you show for your neighbors is also an opportunity to demonstrate (and experience) the beauty of that kingdom.

### **4. Share the gospel**

If you are intentional about building relationships and useful in your areas of influence, the Lord will likely give you favor with people. Don’t get lost in this favor and forget about who you are as an ambassador for Christ. Remember

that the kindest thing you can do for someone is to share the good news of the gospel so that by God's grace, they might believe and be restored to fellowship with God through Christ. The simple gospel is that Jesus came to restore broken sinners like us into fellowship with God by His righteous life, atoning death, and life-giving resurrection. As we look to Jesus in a posture of repentance and faith, His righteous record is accredited to us, our sin is accredited to Him and to His cross, and the power of His resurrection gives us hope in Him for eternal life with God.

For more guidance on clearly explaining the gospel, see the appendix for the God, Man, Jesus, Response framework

### ***5. Follow up***

Remember: our goal is not to just share the gospel. Rather, we are put here on this earth as Christ's body to make disciples. Inviting someone to church is likely not the first step in evangelism, but at some point, we do want people coming into the community of faith where their relationship with God can grow and flourish. Repentance and faith are the *what* of the Christian life, but the *where* of the Christian life is the fellowship of believers in the local church. Inviting someone to church is not the final step in evangelism either, as if we have handed the person off to the "professional Christians" and our work is now done. Disciple-making is relational. There is great joy in walking alongside someone as they encounter Jesus and then grow in their faith (see 1 Thess. 3:6-9).







# Bless the City

## INTRODUCTION

All Christians should regularly reflect on the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of Jesus. They are both called “great” with good reason. In the Great Commission, Jesus gives Christians the command to make disciples of every nation, and this should be central to our lives as believers (Matt. 28:19–20). In the Great Commandment, Jesus reiterates the commands of God from long ago that Christians should love God with all their heart and soul and mind and that Christians should love their neighbors as they love themselves (Matt. 22:37–40; see Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18).

This means that the Christian life should be largely marked by outward-facing relationships and love. As Christians, we are called to love one another (John 13:34). As the Great Commandment makes clear, we are also called to love our neighbors. The Greek word that Jesus uses in His command that we love our neighbors is the same word that the lawyer uses when he asks Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29), which leads into the parable of the Good Samaritan. In this parable, the Samaritan didn’t know the man who was beaten and stripped on the road. Not only that, the man on the road was actually the Samaritan’s political and racial enemy. Even still, the Samaritan showed lavish mercy to the vulnerable man. The Samaritan was full of love toward a stranger and enemy, and this is exactly what Jesus has called us to through the gospel.

At Christ Covenant, we regularly talk about being a church that gathers and scatters well. When we gather, we seek to worship God faithfully, encourage

*“When we scatter, we want to be a people who represent Christ authentically and share our faith as faithful kingdom ambassadors. We want to make disciples and plant churches in Atlanta and beyond in our efforts to reach the world.”*

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one another, and love one another deeply. When we scatter, we want to be a people who represent Christ authentically and share our faith as faithful kingdom ambassadors. We want to make disciples and plant churches in Atlanta and beyond in our efforts to reach the world. We also want to be a people who do good works, pursue justice, and love the people of our community as we seek to bless the city in which we live. While we want our efforts to bless the city to ultimately lead to disciple-making opportunities, we also recognize that these opportunities don’t necessarily begin there. We want to be a church that gives of ourselves to do good for others in the name of Christ, even when we aren’t verbally communicating His gospel. God instructed His people to bless the city even when they were in exile in Babylon, urging them to “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jer. 29:7).

We are trusting the Lord to help us discern how to steward our resources, partner effectively, and mobilize our members to bless the city faithfully. We are seeing Him grant us opportunities to engage our city in four focus areas.

## **FOUR BLESS THE CITY FOCUS AREAS**

### ***1. Community Flourishing***

Atlanta is a city of both great wealth and immense poverty. According to recent census data, Atlanta has the largest gap between the poor and wealthy among United States cities with more than 100,000 residents. Certain communities near Christ Covenant face the ongoing challenges of homelessness, low employment rates, and subpar education performance. We believe that God has placed Christ Covenant in the city of Atlanta to display His mercy and justice to the vulnerable all around us. We aim to encourage this work primarily through local strategic partnerships.

- Strategic Partnerships: Atlanta Mission, Grove Park Community

Church, Read Together ATL, Thrive Academy

## **2. Family Restoration**

As we consider how to advocate for the vulnerable, we desire to give particular care to pregnant mothers and vulnerable children in dire need. By partnering with FaithBridge, our church equips its members to engage in foster care and adoption. We also partner with A Beacon of Hope, a local women's clinic that aids women both physically and spiritually during the entire process of an unplanned pregnancy.

- Strategic Partnerships: FaithBridge, A Beacon of Hope

## **3. Refugee Care**

Clarkston is a city less than 15 miles from the heart of Atlanta. It's one of the largest refugee resettlement sites in the United States. Over 45% of Clarkston's residents are internationally born, and over half live below the poverty line. They face many challenges in a new host culture as they adjust to a new language, culture, and lifestyle. We believe that God has strategically placed Christ Covenant near this community to engage our refugee neighbors with the love of Christ. The Lord has given us a unique opportunity to engage the nations with the gospel in Atlanta!

- Strategic Partnerships: Send Relief – Atlanta Ministry Center, Brannon Hill Community, Clarkston International Bible Church, Individual Refugee Families

## **4. Fighting Trafficking**

Atlanta is among the top five cities in the United States for human trafficking. We believe that God has providentially placed Christ Covenant in this city to minister in this dark space. Through our efforts, we hope to educate our members on the complex realities of human trafficking and work with partner experts in the field to bring holistic gospel healing to victims. Our aim is to press into these difficult spaces alongside our partners in order to see people rescued from the slavery of human trafficking.

- Strategic Partnerships: Frontline Response, BeLoved Atlanta

## **CONCLUSION**

Every year at Christ Covenant, we take a month to highlight practical ways that you can do good works, pursue justice, and love your neighbor. We call this emphasis Bless the City, and it's the perfect time to engage with different ministries and organizations that Christ Covenant seeks to bless strategically. Our ultimate hope is that you would regularly engage in serving with at least one of these organizations and that you would consistently seek ways to be a blessing throughout the year. To this end, we plan a range of opportunities for you to contribute to. Visit [christcovenant.com/bless-the-city-initiative](http://christcovenant.com/bless-the-city-initiative) to

determine which opportunity you would like to engage with.

Jesus has called us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. As we seek to obey Him and to be like Him, let us pursue outward-facing relationships in love, and by doing so, let us bless the city together.





# Reach the World

## INTRODUCTION

A commission is an instruction, command, or duty given to a person or group of people. What, then, is the nature of the commission given by Christ to His disciples? What are those specific instructions that apply to all Christians today?

Jesus issues the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19–20. He states, “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.”

One of the interesting things about this passage is that only one verb is used in this phrase in the original Greek language, which is translated as “make disciples.” Besides that single verb, every other action word is a participle. A participle is a form of a verb that is used in a sentence to modify a noun, noun phrase, verb, or verb phrase and thus plays a similar role to that of an adjective or adverb. So, the church’s commission is to make disciples, with our going, baptizing, and teaching serving that goal.

**1. Go.** Where are we to go to make disciples? This passage makes it clear that we are to go to “all nations.” This encompasses all people, everywhere. This refers to far nations and near nations, including our own nation. The scope of the Great Commission is the entire world that God created for His name’s sake.

**2. Baptize.** Baptism is so powerful because it represents a new birth and

a new identity. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, the apostle Paul states, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” Baptism is a physical representation of this spiritual reality—the old self has been buried with Christ, and the new self has been raised with Christ to a new, Spirit-filled life.

**3. Teach.** Becoming a disciple fundamentally implies a worldview change. New disciples need mature Christians to walk with them and teach them how to apply the truth of Scripture and the commands of Christ to their lives. In Romans 12:2, Paul states, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” God’s design is that His people would continually be transformed toward Christlikeness as we submit to the truth of Scripture in community, observing and obeying all Jesus has commanded in His Word.

### WHAT’S SO GREAT ABOUT THE GREAT COMMISSION?

First of all, this commission is great in its magnitude. According to the International Mission Board, there are more than 11,900 people groups, and roughly 3,150 of them are considered unreached people groups. A people group is any group of people who identify with each other based on common ancestry, ethnicity, culture, and language. An unreached people group is any people group with less than two percent of its population “reached” with the gospel. Currently, there are more than four billion people that don’t know the gospel. They don’t have access to the gospel because they are unlikely to encounter a Christian who speaks their language.

This is a great task that we have before us. Our Lord has commissioned His church for this great task, and with His help, we can reach the whole world with the good news of the gospel. Think about this: Jesus initially gave this commission to 11 ordinary guys. These 11 guys were not kings or rulers with far-reaching power and authority. They were just your everyday, regular guys who received the Holy Spirit and were faithful to leverage their lives for the name of Christ. And now, look how far the work of the gospel has come.

Jesus has always had the multiplication of the church in mind. If today there was only one Christian and he or she discipled eight people in one year, and the next year all eight of those people discipled eight more people, you would have 64 disciples. Imagine, then, if each of those 64 new disciples made eight disciples the next year, and this went on and on and on. With this pattern of discipling, we would reach every person on earth in approximately 10 years. This is doable. With the Spirit’s help, we can do this. We could see this happen in our lifetime.

Secondly, this commission is great because it is the work of God. God has

commanded us to join Him in a precious and beautiful task, and it's the greatest responsibility we could ever have because eternity with God is at stake for every human on the earth.

### WHAT IS MISSIONS?

We want everything we do at Christ Covenant to be focused on God's gospel, God's kingdom, and God's mission. We want to be a church where every member knows and can apply the gospel to life. We want to be a church where every member knows they are part of a kingdom family that gathers for corporate worship and scatters to our respective areas of responsibility throughout the week. We want to be a church full of good neighbors who seek to be a blessing to our city. However, when we talk about missions and reaching the world, we are talking about making disciples beyond our city.

A good way to think about the Great Commission is to think about it in terms of heavenly colonization. God is bringing little colonies of heaven to earth, and in these colonies, the kingdom of Christ is seen, experienced, and known. It's an upside-down kingdom, built on the faith of a fallible fisherman like Peter (Matt. 16:18) and exemplified by little children (Matt. 18:3-4). Jesus introduced the first heavenly colony through His disciples. These men were the world's first church, the first group of followers of Jesus. Christ told these disciples to go and make more disciples and, by implication, to start new churches. These churches, or heavenly colonies, would work together to make even more disciples and start new churches from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). This is the pattern we see throughout the New Testament—disciples making disciples and churches planting churches. Eventually, this movement came all the way to Atlanta, Georgia, where our church was planted. And now, disciples are being made and we are experiencing a taste of the kingdom of Christ.

Participating in the Great Commission and reaching the world with the gospel is to engage in the greatest movement the world has ever known. We

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*“A good way to think about the Great Commission is to think about it in terms of heavenly colonization. God is bringing little colonies of heaven to earth, and in these colonies, the kingdom of Christ is seen, experienced, and known.”*

want our church members to take the gospel to places in the world where the gospel has not yet been heard. We want to be a part of God’s work of establishing healthy churches—colonies of heaven—all over the world. We want to be a church that plants churches where no churches exist, revitalizes churches that have grown weak, and helps strong churches grow stronger in their mission and work.

## HOW DO I ENGAGE?

There are many ways to engage with the Great Commission. First and foremost, be a disciple-maker where you are. Pray for the people you are around every day that don’t know the Lord and seek to engage with them for the purpose of disciple-making. Beyond the city of Atlanta, there are three basic ways to engage with what God is doing around the world.

### *1. Pray*

It should be a regular rhythm of our lives as Christians to pray for the advance of the gospel. We should pray for people groups to be engaged, for churches to be planted, and for disciples to be made. While we obviously want this to happen in every place, we strongly encourage you to pray for these things in specific places. Here are a few great ways to pray for missionaries and church planters all over the world.

- Join our weekly mission prayer gatherings on Tuesday mornings at 7:00 am
- Explore [imb.org/pray](http://imb.org/pray)
- Explore [namb.net/pray](http://namb.net/pray)
- Explore [operationworld.org](http://operationworld.org)
- Pray for our partner churches and missionaries; read more at [christcovenant.com/mission](http://christcovenant.com/mission)

### *2. Support*

Scripture calls churches to support the work of missions through **financial, material, and relational** provision. It has always been our commitment that at least 10% of everything we give financially as a church goes to ministry outside of Christ Covenant. As we continue to mature as a congregation, our goal is to give more than 10% of our budget to support missions. We also use these funds to meet any material needs that surface through our partnerships and for funding specific projects and maintaining healthy relationships with our partners through our missions conference, biblical counseling resources, and care teams. You can give directly to many of these missions efforts by selecting the Missions fund in your giving portal.

For more information, contact our Missions Director, Billy Bean, at [Billy@ChristCovenant.com](mailto:Billy@ChristCovenant.com).



### **3. Go**

The final way to engage with what God is doing outside of Atlanta is to actually break the rhythm of normalcy and go. To go faithfully, we are sent out to join in the faithful ministry efforts of our church planters, missionaries, and churches beyond our city. We do this through short-term trips and long-term sending.

#### ***Short-Term Trips (One to Two Weeks)***

Going involves supporting our missions partners through short-term trips. Our church offers many short-term trips every year. There are also opportunities to serve longer than two weeks with some of our partners. Learn more at [christcovenant.com/mission](http://christcovenant.com/mission).

#### ***Long-Term Sending***

Long-term missions is a call to the mission field through North American church planting or global missions work on a long-term basis. For those interested in long-term vocational ministry, a perfect next step is training. We created an apprenticeship program to train members of our church for gospel ministry. The apprenticeship is a one-year, full-time program designed to train men and women for biblically-faithful church leadership, which is essential for missions.

God is building His church throughout the world, and He has invited you to participate in this work. We want to help you take the next step of faithfulness to the Great Commission. Every year we host a missions conference where we celebrate what God has done, is doing, and will do through us to make His name known throughout the whole world. Through these conferences, our regular missions prayer gatherings, and all our other missions efforts, our goal is that every member of our church would be mobilized for obedience to the Great Commission.







# Appendix: Praying Through Scripture

If you are like most Christians, your prayer life could be better. You find yourself too busy to pray, or not knowing how to pray, or worse yet—bored in your prayers. The common sentiment from Christians is something like, “I find myself just praying the same old things about the same old things: ‘God, be with my family, protect my children, and help me have a good day.’” If that’s the extent of your prayer life, then it can indeed be boring and lifeless. Any attempt at communing with God in prayer is a good thing, of course, but you are right to want your prayer life to be richer and more exciting. The good news is that God has given you an amazing tool that you already have and that anyone can use to totally revolutionize your prayer life. What is this tool, you may be wondering? Your Bible! The practice of praying through Scripture has energized and vitalized the prayer life of Christians like nothing else, and it’s something that anyone can do.

Praying through Scripture is as simple as it sounds. You simply use the Scripture to guide, shape, and give language to your prayers. When you begin to pray through Scripture, you may notice that the subject matter of your prayers won’t change very much. You may still find yourself praying for your faith, your family, your work, your church, your community, and the crises and victories of your life and others’ lives—and that is a good thing. The reason you spend so much time praying about these things is that they dominate and define most of your life. Praying through Scripture won’t greatly change the basic subject matter of your prayers—Jesus instructs us to bring all our needs to Him (Matt. 7:7–11)—but it will likely expand it to include more of the concerns of Scripture, including the glory of God and the spread of His kingdom, as we see in the introduction to the Lord’s Prayer: “Our Father in

heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:9–10). In addition to expanding your efforts in prayer, it will ease and enrich them, making them more enjoyable and encouraging you to spend more time before God. More time in prayer will lead to a more effective prayer life and a deeper knowledge of the Lord.

So how do you pray through Scripture? As you might have guessed, it begins with the Scripture, and a great place to start is with the Psalms. Once you find a text to pray through, read one or two verses of the Scripture and begin to pray, letting the words that God inspired in His Holy Bible guide the words that you are praying back to Him. Continue like this through the passage. Here is an example of what praying through Scripture looks like using verses from a very popular psalm, Psalm 23.

Scripture: The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Prayer: Father, you have given me a great shepherd in Jesus, the Good Shepherd who has taken on all my sins and who has called me to Himself. What more could I ask for than the privilege and honor of knowing you through Him? Please shepherd my life and my family today.

Scripture: He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

Prayer: Father, I know that you have good plans for me, and even though sometimes I may not understand a situation that you have put me in, I can trust that you are good and your plans are right. Father, I want to be in your pastures, and I want to drink from your waters. I love you, Lord, and I pray that you would continue to guard my soul as you have always done.

You can use this technique with any passage of Scripture. The Psalms are a great place to start, as are Paul’s prayers in his letters (Rom. 15:5–6, 13; Eph. 1:15–23; 3:14–21; Phil. 1:9–11; 1 Thess. 3:9–13; 2 Thess. 1:3–12; Philem. 4–7). Try praying through the Scriptures today and see how God can use this simple tool to ease, expand, and enrich the way you pray.

If you are interested in learning more about this, Donald Whitney’s book, *Praying the Bible*, is an excellent resource. You can also visit his website, [biblicalspirituality.org](http://biblicalspirituality.org).





# Appendix: Family Worship Resources

## BOOKS FOR COUPLES

- Keller, T. & Keller, K. (2015). *The Songs of Jesus: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Psalms*. Penguin Publishing Group.
- Tripp, P. D. (2014). *New Morning Mercies: A Daily Gospel Devotional*. Crossway Books.

## BOOKS FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

- Helm, D. R. (2014). *The Big Picture Story Bible*. Crossway Books.
- Lloyd-Jones, S. (2007). *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name*. ZonderKidz.
- Machowski, M. (2010). *Long Story Short: Ten-Minute Devotions to Draw Your Family to God*. New Growth Press.
- Machowski, M. (2012). *Old Story New: Ten-Minute Devotions to Draw Your Family to God*. New Growth Press.
- Machowski, M. (2011). *The Gospel Story Bible: Discovering Jesus in the Old and New Testaments*. New Growth Press.
- Murray, D. P. (2017). *Exploring the Bible: A Bible Reading Plan for Kids*. Crossway Books.
- Ware, B. A. (2009). *Big Truths for Young Hearts: Teaching and Learning the Greatness of God*. Crossway Books.

## APPS AND WEB VIDEO

- Bible Project ([bibleproject.com](http://bibleproject.com))
- YouVersion's Bible App ([youversion.com](http://youversion.com))
- RightNow Media ([rightnowmedia.org](http://rightnowmedia.org))





# Appendix: Stewardship Tool

## TIME

1. What are the top areas where you have been spending time this year? List in order of most time spent to least time spent.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

2. How well does the list above reflect your priorities? Would God be honored by the list above? Why or why not?

3. What would you change related to how you spend your time? What things do you need to spend less time doing? What things do you need to start spending more time doing?

**Matthew 6:33**

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

**TALENT**

1. What gifts has the Lord given you to leverage in your relationships with others and for the sake of the kingdom?

2. How well have you utilized these gifts this year?

3. What do you need to change to better use your gifts for the kingdom of God?

**Ephesians 4:15-16**

“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”



## TREASURE

1. How much did you contribute financially to the church and other kingdom work/ministries out of what the Lord entrusted you with this year?

2. How can you grow in this area?

3. How much or what percentage of your gross income can you commit to contributing to the church and other kingdom work/ministries?

### ***2 Corinthians 9:7***

“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”







# Appendix: God, Man, Jesus, Response

When it comes to evangelism, we often look to tools or easy methods, but the truth is that these are not always effective. What we need is an understanding of the gospel. We need gospel clarity. If we know the gospel clearly, we will be able to present it clearly to others. This allows us to tailor what we say to the person we say it to. Everyone is different, but everyone needs to hear the truth. With that in mind, we have written this short article to help you understand the gospel and how it relates to the people in your life. We have done this because we desire to equip you to reach your friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors with the truth that has radically changed our lives.

## **GOD**

The first step in evangelism is God. Christians believe that there is a God and that He is the Supreme Being who has no beginning and no end. We believe that He has all authority, all power, all knowledge, all goodness, and all worth. We also believe that this God is not a mystery but that He has spoken, that He has revealed Himself specifically through the reliable and authoritative account of His character, nature, and plans in the Bible. In order for someone to become a Christian, there are several important questions about God that people have to answer: Is there a God? Who is this God, and what is He like? How do you know this God?

How these questions apply in a particular person's life will differ based on the person. For example, consider two of my friends. The first is a guy I knew in high school who wanted to be a pastor, while I had no plans of becoming a pastor and was more interested in public service. So we went off to college and I became convinced that the best way for me to make a lasting impact

on the world was by becoming a pastor, and he lost faith in God and went into public service, but he calls himself a happy agnostic. He doesn't believe the Bible is reliable, he doesn't believe that Jesus is God, and he doesn't even know if he believes that there is a God. My prayer for this guy is that he would begin to believe that there is a God and that he would see the beauty of the eternal Creator—a Creator who called all of creation into existence with a few sentences and who rules over the entire universe. That is what evangelism looks like in regard to him.

Evangelism looks different when I consider a second friend who is Jewish. He is a very committed Jew and is incredibly proud of his Jewish heritage, but he doesn't believe that Jesus is God. He believes in God, and he even believes in Moses and the Ten Commandments, but he doesn't see who God really is and what He is really like or how God has ultimately revealed Himself. My prayer for him is that he would see God in His fullness, that his incomplete perception of God would be changed, that he would see the love of God and the beauty of God and understand that God is actually pursuing him for relationship.

As you think about evangelism, you need to be able to diagnose where people are spiritually and where you should begin the conversation. Even right here in the Bible Belt, we live among people who have very different ideas about who God is or whether or not there even is a God.

## MAN

The second idea that people need to comprehend in order to understand the gospel and be a follower of Christ is the idea of man. Christians have traditionally used this term to refer to the belief that every person was created by God and that humans were created good but also freely chose to disobey God—what the Bible calls sin. When humanity sinned, we gained a knowledge of evil that has been infecting our hearts ever since. Sin separated us from God, and as a result, we choose to serve ourselves rather than to serve the One who has all goodness and worth. Since we have a knowledge of evil, not only do we fail to love God—we also fail to love one another. Therefore, Christians believe that the human condition is actually fatal. This

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*“As you think about evangelism, you need to be able to diagnose where people are spiritually and where you should begin the conversation.”*

has been proven throughout the history of the world because every sinful human has died. We also believe that because we have sinned against a holy, good, and eternal God, we deserve retribution—we deserve to be punished for that sin by that God.

In your presentation of the gospel, this is often the most difficult concept to present to people. This is something that everyone knows about themselves deep down but that no one wants to believe. Most people believe they are basically good, or at least they have convinced themselves that they are okay. It takes a miracle of the Holy Spirit called regeneration for our eyes to be opened to our own sinfulness before an almighty God. As Christians, we certainly have an obligation to show people the truth about their own souls, but when we do, we need to do it with grace. I have seen people who are passionate about evangelism confront people with their sin and really only make them mad. The truth of the gospel—the truth about our own sin—is offensive, but as we present these truths, we are commanded to be gracious. We don't approach sinners as self-righteous know-it-alls but as fellow sinners who, by the grace of God, have found the cure. This is the truth about all of us—we are susceptible to any sin. If left to ourselves and if the circumstances were right, every one of us could be guilty of theft, adultery, or even murder, but for the grace of God. So let's quit walking around with our noses in the air and start walking around with our heads bowed.

## JESUS

The third step in evangelism is with Jesus. Once people see who God is and how holy and how wonderful He is, and once they see their own condition before such a holy and wonderful God, then the good news of Jesus is such good news.

The passage that I always love to go for this is 2 Corinthians 5:21, where Paul explains, “For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” The first thing we must understand about Jesus is that He lived a totally righteous life. In other words, He achieved the righteousness of God in His life. However, God the Father took Jesus, who knew no sin, who was totally innocent, and God made Him to be sin. On the cross, Jesus took on our sin. All of our sin—the guilt of that sin, the shame of that sin, all of it—was transferred to Christ. Once Jesus took on the sin of the whole world, the Father punished Jesus by putting Him to a horrible death, so that the punishment (or the debt) for our sin was paid in full. Then Jesus rose from the grave, defeating death. And if you have faith in Him, if you believe in Him, if you follow Him, just as your sin was transferred to Him, His perfect righteousness is transferred to you.

It is because of the holiness of God and because of the depth of our sin that our only hope is that someone would save us. That is why Jesus is the only way, because only Jesus can be such a savior. Al Mohler once said, “If all we

need is a teacher of enlightenment, the Buddha will do; if all we need is a collection of gods for every occasion and need and hope, Hinduism will do; if all we need is a tribal deity, any tribal deity will do; if all we need is a lawgiver, Moses will do; if all we need is a set of rules and a way of devotion, Muhammad or Joseph Smith will do; if all we need is inspiration and insight into the sovereign self, for crying out loud, Oprah will do; but if we need a savior, only Jesus will do.”

## RESPONSE

If you come to terms with who God is—His glory, His weight, His holiness—and then your eyes are opened to see who you are in your sin before a holy God, and then you see that there is a Rescuer who has paid the price of your sin and called you to eternal life, then you must make a choice.

The last stop in evangelism is response. In evangelism, we call people to respond to the gospel. They must decide if they believe this is true. If the eternal God sent His own totally righteous Son to rescue your sinful soul and my sinful soul, then there is only one response. The love of God toward us demands our everything. If this is true, if Jesus is who He says He is, then He can't just be a part of your life. He can't just be a good moral teacher who you respect. He has to be everything. In the words of C. S. Lewis, “You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”







CHRIST COVENANT