



# Membership



# WELCOME TO Membership Class

We are excited that you've taken time to discover more about the mission here at Watermark. It is an honor and a privilege to "shepherd the flock of God among us." Thank you for taking seriously God's directive to carefully consider with whom you pursue faithfulness. We are grateful for the chance to encourage and be encouraged by you!

Being a part of Watermark or any local body should be synonymous with a commitment to becoming a devoted disciple. So at Watermark, Membership is more than attending a class or signing a covenant. It is our desire to make sure that as we pursue faithfulness together, those we lock arms with understand our commitment both to Christ and each other. At Watermark, Membership means...

- Integrating your life into a community of others for the purpose of doing God's business (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- Faithfully growing and serving God's Kingdom and taking your role in His Kingdom-work seriously (1 Peter 4:10).
- Submitting to the authority of God's Word, God's people, and to the godly, mature, imperfect leaders who will ultimately give an account for your soul (Hebrews 13:17).

Your church home is God's provision for you – a spiritual family who can support, love, care for, admonish, and encourage you as you walk with Christ. Membership provides you with the community and accountability needed for you to grow and live out God's unique calling and design for your life. Membership also gives you a place where you can discover your gifts and deploy your unique talents as you serve Christ on-mission every day.

We are not a perfect church. We don't have perfect leaders. We don't have a perfect staff. But, in Christ, we are on a perfect mission. Our success will never be based on the size of our buildings, budget, or weekly attendance, but rather, on the depth of our love for one another and the consistency with which we yield to the Spirit.

Our mission is clear: to be and make disciples. We invite you to join us to passionately pursue this mission.

**Let's go, Church!**

**The Elders and Staff Leadership of Watermark**

# Membership Covenant

Having trusted in Christ alone as my Lord and Savior, and being in agreement with the calling, commitments, convictions, core values, beliefs, and governance of Watermark Community Church, I now am called to unite with the Watermark family. In doing so, I commit myself to the Lord and to the other Members of the family to protect our unity, share in, serve, and support the ministry of my church family through pursuing:

## Belonging to His body...

- by living life as a fully devoted follower of Christ.
- by attending faithfully.
- by dealing biblically with conflict and refusing to gossip.
- by following the leadership in submitting myself to the care and correction of leadership should the need arise.
- by praying for its health and impact.
- by warmly welcoming those who visit Watermark and committing myself to community with those who attend.
- by having a community group that will know me and help me as I seek to love God, love believers, and love unbelievers.

## Helping others believe in Christ...

- by developing relationships with the unchurched, de-churched, dead-churched, and unmoved.
- by sharing my story of grace with others.
- by praying for the salvation of non-believers with whom I have a relationship.

## Being trained in God's Truth...

- by committing myself to read, understand, and apply the Bible.
- by affirming the inspiration, infallibility, and authority of God's Word, as well as the other core doctrines found in Watermark's Statement of Beliefs.
- by availing myself to the tools and resources of the church which are designed to further my understanding of and deepen my commitment to applying God's Word.
- by preparing myself to give a "ready defense" for my faith based on God's Word.

## Being strong in a life of ministry and worship ...

- by serving others in ministry.
- by giving graciously as God has graciously given to me.
- by annually filling out my 4B Assessment.

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# Part I



# Our Mission

As a church, our purpose is to call all people to be fully devoted followers of Christ. Calling implies both introduction to and encouragement in a life of full devotion.

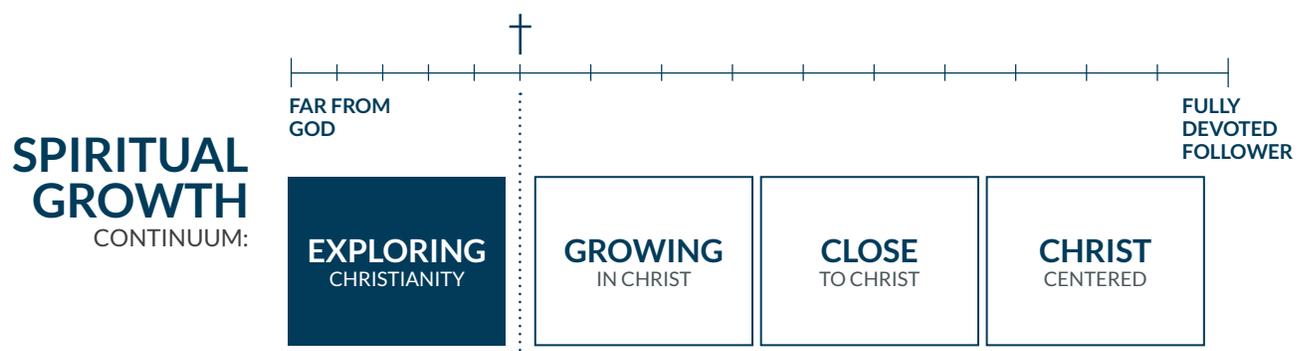
We exist to reach the uncommitted, unchurched, de-churched, dead-churched, and unmoved and to encourage, equip, serve, and sustain those already devoted to Christ.

**UNCHURCHED**—those who have never been exposed to a faithful body of Christ-followers

**DE-CHURCHED**—those who have previously been in a church environment but have left it

**DEAD-CHURCHED**—those involved in a church that is not pursuing biblical Christianity

**UNMOVED**—those nominally involved with Christ or His purposes



## What does it mean to be fully devoted to Christ?

Full devotion to Christ does not mean that you know the most Bible facts/trivia or that you faithfully attend a church service. While those can be good things, head knowledge, simple attendance, and moral behavior are not what God is after. He is after our hearts, and He desires that we acknowledge our need for a Savior and respond to His lovingkindness by submitting every aspect of our lives to His leading. A fully devoted follower of Christ is one who is committed to God's Word, God's purposes, and God's people, and who welcomes encouragement from others to "excel still more" (1 Thessalonians 4:1) in these areas.

### **Committed to God's Word**

- By communing with God through consistent time spent reading the Bible and responding to Him through prayer
- By growing increasingly competent in understanding and articulating doctrine

### **Committed to God's Purposes**

- By discovering, developing, and deploying their gifts to serve those around them
- By contributing their time, talents, and treasures to God's mission
- By being committed to taking the things they have learned and to teach them to others

### **Committed to God's People**

- By connecting with other believers for the purposes of fellowship, encouragement, admonishment, and spiritual growth
- By intentionally pursuing those that are far from God and investing in them until they are able to do the same

# Our Strategy

In desiring to help others become fully devoted followers of Christ, we encourage everyone to **Believe** in Christ, **Belong** to His body, **Be trained** in truth, and **Be strong** in ministry.

## THE 4Bs



**Believing in Christ** is more than just acknowledging that God exists. Belief is about trust – trusting that Jesus is who He says He is; relying on His sacrifice on the cross as the only thing that will save us from the penalty of our sins; and responding to His grace by committing our lives to follow Him.

**Belonging to His body** means practicing the “one anothers” of Scripture with God’s people. This involves attending faithfully; praying for the church’s health and impact; dealing biblically with conflict; following after the leadership’s care and vision; and committing to be fully known, encouraged, and cared for in community as we grow in love for God and others.

**Being trained in truth** consists of reading, understanding, and applying God’s Word, affirming its inspiration, infallibility, and authority, as well as availing ourselves to the tools and resources of the church to help us deepen our understanding of Him and grounding ourselves in faith.

**Being strong in ministry** by discovering, developing, and deploying our gifts as “good stewards of the grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10). It is humbly committing to abide with Christ and be faithfully serving, giving generously of our gifts and time, and courageously sharing God’s Word as we faithfully serve and seek the good of others.

# Our Core Values

## Biblically Based

God's Word is our guide, authority and conscience in everything. We stand firm where it stands firm and remain flexible where it is flexible (2 Timothy 3:16).

## Fully Devoted to Christ

We measure our success by our ability to be and make disciples. Full devotion to Jesus is normal for every believer (Luke 9:23).

## Grounded in Grace

We acknowledge our complete dependence on the goodness and grace of God. We have benefited from the kind intention of His will; therefore, we eagerly extend it to others (Ephesians 2:8-9).

## Passionate about Prayer

We believe the attitude and action of prayer is essential to everything we do (Colossians 4:2).

## Authentic in our Walk

Authentically, integrity, openness, and sincerity will define us. The goal of our instruction is love, from a good conscience, a pure heart, and a sincere faith (1 Timothy 1:5).

## Committed to the Uncommitted

We believe that lost people matter to God; therefore, they matter to us. Jesus came to seek and save the lost and left us here, in part, to do the same. Our individual lives and corporate efforts will reflect this conviction (Luke 19:10).

## Relevant and Innovative

The Bible does not tell us to use only certain style of music, or to present our message only through words. The Bible does make it clear, however, that we are to find ways to effectively bring the message "into all the world" in order to make disciples. We believe this will require careful scrutiny of everything we do – new practice and old – and a willingness to change when necessary within biblical parameters, in order that we "by all possible means might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22).

## Committed to Community

Belonging to our community requires a commitment to being intentionally involved with others in accountable, encouraging relationships. We believe life-change happens best in the context of relationships. In clusters of caring people, participants share and encourage each other toward a larger church and enjoy the kind of relationships that only develop in small, safe settings (Hebrews 10:24-25).

## Focuses on Ministry and Service

We believe that each believer has received a special gift and should employ that it in serving others, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Spiritual giftedness and maturity determine where and how a believer serves. We believe excellence honors God and reflects His character. We strive for excellence without compromise in all areas of our ministry and lives (1 Peter 4:10; Colossians 3:17).

# Church Membership: Why It Matters

While we acknowledge that all true believers in Jesus Christ are positionally members of the Church universal, we believe participation and commitment in a local church body should be a normal act of obedience for all true believers in Jesus Christ in light of the following passages:

## Spiritual Care and Protection

Hebrews 13:17 states that Christians are to “obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account .” Membership places you under the spiritual care and protection of godly leaders who are keeping watch over this local body. If there is no membership, which leaders should a Christian submit to? Do Christians have to submit to anyone with the title “elder” from any church? We believe that Membership provides the direction for which leaders the Members should submit to, and why.

## Leadership Oversight

Acts 20:28 says to church elders, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.” If there is no membership, for whom will the elders give an account? Will elders of Watermark be held accountable for all Christians, or for the members of churches that Watermark has theological differences with? We believe that Membership defines the scope of authority and accountability for local church leaders.

## Outside/Inside the Church

1 Corinthians 5:12-13 states that Christians are not to judge the morality of those outside the church. Rather they are to judge those inside the church and remove unrepentant, immoral members from fellowship if needed. How is being outside or inside the church definable if there is no such thing as membership? How can you remove someone if they aren’t “in” to begin with? We believe Membership provides a proper context for making moral assessments and decisions about Members’ conduct and character.

## Care and Correction

Matthew 18:15-17 states when a brother sins against you and does not listen or respond even after multiple witnesses address his fault, you are to involve the church. Without membership, who constitutes “the church,” and who decides when someone is to be treated as an outsider (“a Gentile and a tax collector ,” v. 17) and lovingly called back to repentance? We believe that Membership provides a clear process and path for care, correction, and restoration when a Member is caught in sin.

## Suggested Scripture Study

Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:1-12, Hebrews 13:17, Acts 20:28-30, 1 Peter 5:1-5, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Acts 2:37-41, Acts 6:1-7, 1 Timothy 5:3-17.

# The 4B Assessment

## What is the 4B Form?

God's Word calls all people to be complete in their understanding of who Jesus Christ is and in their response to Him. In an effort to call all people to be fully devoted followers of Christ, we strive to help people live out the 4Bs we see in Scripture:

- **Believe** in Jesus Christ (John 1:12)
- **Belong** to His body (Hebrews 10:24-25)
- **Be Trained** in truth (2 Timothy 2:15)
- **Be Strong** in a life of ministry and worship (1 Peter 4:10)

Each year, we ask our Members to complete the 4B Assessment. The 4B allows our Members to reflect on how they're doing in four key areas and helps us understand how we can shepherd our Members more effectively.

## Why go back to zero?

At Watermark, we believe that church Membership is important. One of the ways we determine who is a Member of Watermark vs. who is a "regular attender" is by asking every Member to take the annual 4B. The 4B is also the means through which our Members recommit with us each year.

Our heart is not to trouble our Members with busyness. However, the Elders take seriously the commitment they make before the Lord to shepherd the flock God has entrusted to them. Completing the 4B is your affirmation that you would like to remain among the "souls we watch over and give an account for as leaders" (Hebrews 13:17).

## How does Watermark use the data from the 4B?

The data from the 4B allows us to "take the temperature" of our church body. On a high level, it helps inform decisions regarding ministry partners, staff hires, finances, and resources for the upcoming year. On an individual level, we use the data from the 4B to update our records, know how to best care for each Member, and provide a platform for our Members to give us feedback and ask questions.

We believe that spiritual growth happens best in the context of relationships. We encourage Members to share their results with their community group as a way of celebrating what God has done in their lives over the past year and encourage and challenge one another in specific areas as they look forward to the next year together.

## **BELONG TO HIS BODY...**

- by living life as a fully devoted follower of Christ.
- by attending faithfully.
- by dealing biblically with conflict and refusing to gossip.
- by following the leadership in submitting myself to the care and correction of leadership, should the need arise.
- by praying for its health and impact.
- by warmly welcoming those who visit Watermark and committing myself to community with those who attend.
- by having a community group that will know me and help me as I seek to love God, love believers, and love unbelievers.

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

# What Scripture Says About Belonging to the Body

## Truth that Scripture reveals to us:

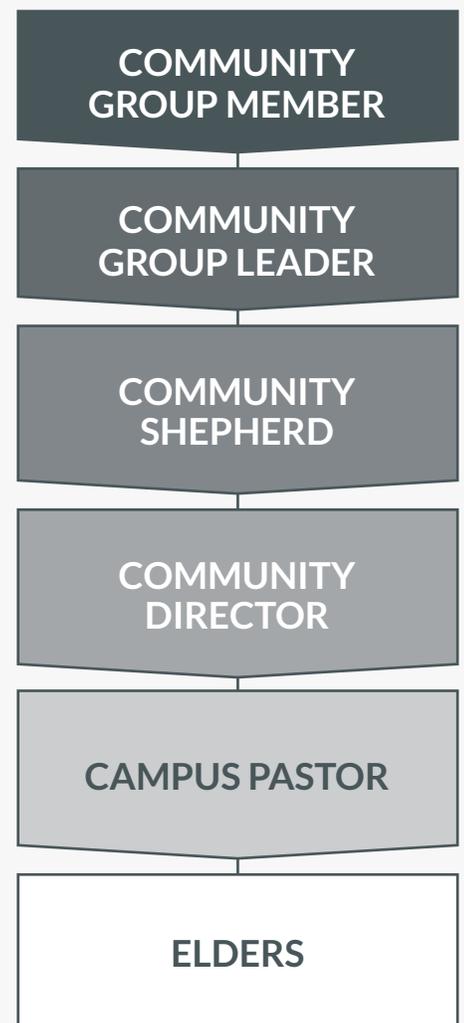
- The Church is a family.
- If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, God expects you to be a member of a church family.
- A believer without a church family is an orphan.

## Scripture says the body of Christ is...

1. Part of who you are: It is a part of what identifies individuals as genuine followers of Christ (Ephesians 2:19; Romans 12:5).
2. God's provision for you:
  - a. It provides you a spiritual family that can support, encourage, and care for you in your walk with Christ (Galatians 6:1-2; Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Corinthians 12:26-27).
  - b. It provides you the community and accountability necessary to grow and live out in obedience God's design for His people (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; Ephesians 5:21).
3. Part of His protection: It places you under the spiritual protection of godly leaders (Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:28-29; 1 Peter 5:5).
4. A place for ministry: It gives you a place to discover and use the gifts that the Lord has entrusted you with for ministry (1 Corinthians 12:4-27).

## Shepherding Structure

(Hebrews 13:17; Exodus 18:21-22)



**While we acknowledge that all true believers in Jesus Christ are positionally members of the Church universal, Membership in this local body requires participation in, and commitment to:**

- the Beliefs & Governance of this church;
- intentional community with Members of this local body; and
- the use of whatever gift(s) he/she has received to serve others, in order that he/she may do his part in faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.

As a result, we acknowledge two types of membership in Christ’s Church:

1. **Positional Membership**—which includes all true believers in Jesus Christ; and
2. **Participatory Membership**—which includes true believers in Jesus Christ who have committed themselves to this local body as outlined above (hereinafter “Members”).

*\*See Appendix Article 2: Our Membership, Section 1, 2, and 3*

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household.”

Ephesians 2:19

## BE TRAINED IN GOD'S TRUTH...

- by committing myself to read, understand, and apply the Bible.
- by affirming the inspiration, infallibility, and authority of God's Word, as well as the other core doctrines found in Watermark's Statement of Beliefs.
- by availing myself to the tools and resources of the church which are designed to further my understanding of and deepen my commitment to applying God's Word.
- by preparing myself to give a "ready defense" for my faith based on God's Word.

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

# Be Trained in God's Truth

At Watermark, we believe that the Bible is our authority, conscience, and guide.

## **The Bible is our authority.**

We believe that the Bible is authoritative, and we are called to submit to its direction and counsel. Our leaders yield to its guidance and hold its truth up to everything we do as a church.

## **The Bible is our conscience.**

We believe that the Bible tells us the difference between right and wrong, and despite what other influences we might be experiencing (culture, emotions, worldly wisdom, etc.), it communicates God's best in any situation.

## **The Bible is our guide.**

We believe that the Bible does not leave us to figure out this life alone. The Scriptures are the key source of guidance and help as we navigate life. We can turn to it to know how to proceed in any situation.

## Equipping Opportunities

### **The role of the Church: Equip you with God's Word**

One of the purposes of God's Church is to help you grow in your knowledge and understanding of the Word of God. We hope to accomplish this in many different ways:

- **Join the Journey**

The Journey is an easy way for anyone to read, understand, and apply God's Word. By signing up for The Journey, you'll get a daily email with Scripture and a devotional to help you grow in your faith and your understanding of Scripture. You'll also find an online community where you can engage with others who are discussing the day's passage and how it applies to them. If you have an iOS device we encourage you to download the app at [jointhejourney.com](http://jointhejourney.com).

- **Weekly Bible Studies**

Through Women's Bible Study, Men's Bible Study (Summit), and Equipped Disciple, there is ample opportunity to dive in to study God's Word and begin building relationships with others. Both fall and spring sessions are available so that our body may take advantage of the many opportunities to be equipped.

- **Equipping Classes**

Depending upon your campus's availability, you will discover a host of other equipping opportunities from equipping courses and Training Days to studies offering instruction on specific topics. Many equipping courses are also available online.

# Watermark Doctrinal Statement

## **Section 1: The Bible**

We believe the Bible to be the verbally inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, and the supreme and final authority in doctrine and practice (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21; John 17:17).

## **Section 2: The Trinity**

We believe there is one God, that the Father and the Son and the Spirit are each God, and that the Father and the Son and the Spirit are each a distinct person (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 13:14; see also 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 2:9; Acts 5:3-4).

## **Section 3: Jesus Christ**

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God, fulfill prophecy, and redeem sinful man. We believe He accomplished our redemption through His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross, His burial, and His bodily resurrection. We believe our redemption and salvation are guaranteed by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is the only means of salvation (John 1:1; 14; 18; Luke 1:35; Romans 3:24-26; 4:25; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Philippians 2:5-8; 1 Timothy 2:5).

We believe that Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, the Creator and Sustainer of heaven and earth, and the Head of the church. We believe the Lord Jesus Christ is now in heaven, exalted to the right hand of God where, as High Priest to His people, He serves as our Advocate and intercedes for us (Colossians 1:15-19; Hebrews 1:3; 3:1; 7:23-25; 1 John 2:1-2).

## **Section 4: The Holy Spirit**

We believe God the Holy Spirit is a person who restrains evil in the world and convicts men of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He dwells in all who believe in Jesus. From the moment of belief in the Son, the Spirit baptizes believers into the body, seals them for salvation, regenerates them to new life, bestows spiritual gifts on each one, and is fully present to continually fill (control and guide) His own (John 16:7-11; John 3:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13; John 14:16-17; Ephesians 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19).

Some gifts of the Holy Spirit, however, such as speaking in tongues and the gift of miraculous healing, were given to certain individuals as authenticating signs for the early church and not as final evidence of God's presence in a believer's life nor as confirmations of a "second blessing" or subsequent filling of the Spirit. Furthermore, we believe the gift of tongues in the New Testament always presents itself as a known language and not as a private prayer language (Acts 8:14; 10:44-48; 11:15-18; 19:1-6; 2:6-13).

### **Section 5: Angels, Fallen and Unfallen**

We believe angels are spiritual beings who were created as sinless personalities and that they occupy different orders and ranks. They presently exist in both fallen and unfallen states, the former including Satan and his angels (Hebrews 1:13-14; 2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 7:12).

We believe Satan, by his own choice the enemy of God and His people, is the originator of sin, that led our first parents into sin and now rules as “the god of this world.” We believe he was judged at the cross and that ultimately he will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Isaiah 14:12-14; Genesis 3:1-19; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 20:10).

### **Section 6: Man**

We believe man was created innocent and in the image and likeness of God, but that man sinned, bringing both physical and spiritual death to himself and his posterity (Genesis 1:27; 2:17; 3:19). Man can do nothing to merit God’s favor, and as such, is in need of salvation (Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 6:23). We believe that mankind’s sinful nature is rebellious toward God and His good design for life and worship (Romans 1:20-24; Ephesians 2:1-3). Mankind’s rebellion causes confusion about good and evil, and harm to people, ultimately ending in judgment, despair, and death (Genesis 1:31; Galatians 5:16-21; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; James 1:13-15).

We believe God created mankind in His image, forming each person in the womb from conception (Psalm 139:13-16; Isaiah 44:2; 49:5; Jeremiah 1:4-5) until the point of death when they breathe their last (Genesis 25:8; Luke 23:46), and assigning gender to His people, male (man) and female (woman), as He created them sexually and biologically different, but with equal personal dignity and value (Genesis 1:26-28).

We believe that God ordained marriage as a lifelong union between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:18; Matthew 19:4-9; Ephesians 5:31-33). Those who accept and live within God’s design for sex, biological gender, and marriage experience the blessing of His good design (Psalm 1:1-3; 128:1-4), and decisions to change, alter, or modify God’s will in marriage, sex, or gender are part of man’s brokenness and lead to despair (Romans 1:21-22; James 1:13-15).

We believe that God loves and pursues mankind despite our rebellion (Romans 5:8). He offers forgiveness, healing and abundant life to anyone who turns to Him in humility (John 3:17; 10:10; Titus 3:3-7; 1 Peter 5:6-7).

### **Section 7: Salvation**

We believe salvation is a sovereign gift of God and is received by man through personal faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for sin. We believe man is justified by grace through faith apart from works (Acts 13:38-39; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 1:4-5; 2:8-10). We believe that Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation and that no one is saved apart from a conscious and personal decision to trust in Christ as his or her one and only Savior (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 10:9-10). We believe all true believers elect of God, once saved, are kept secure in Christ forever (Romans 8:1; 29-30; 38-39; John 10:27-30).

### **Section 8: Sanctification**

We believe sanctification, which is a setting apart unto God, is positional, progressive, and ultimate. Positionally, it is already complete since the believer is in Christ and is set apart unto God as Christ is set apart unto God. Since the Christian retains his sinful nature, however, there is need for progressive sanctification whereby he grows in grace by the power of the Spirit. Ultimately, the child of God will be set apart from sin in his practice (as he is now in his position in Christ) when he is taken to be with Christ and shall be like Him (John 17:17; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 10:10; 14).

### **Section 9: The Church**

We believe the Church, the Body and Bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism, made up of all born-again persons of this present age. We believe the Church began at Pentecost and that a believer is placed into the Church by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. We believe the Church is distinct from Israel (Ephesians 1:22-23; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 10:32).

We believe the local church is an assembly of professed believers in Jesus Christ who are voluntarily joined together in one locality for the purposes of worship, study of the Word of God, observance of the ordinances, Christian fellowship, equipping for and practice of Kingdom service, specifically stewarding our lives for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission (Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; Ephesians 4:11-13; Matthew 16:18; 28:19-20).

### **Section 10: The Ordinances of Baptism and The Lord's Supper**

We believe Christ instituted the ordinances of water baptism and the Lord's Supper, both of which are to be observed by believers until He returns (Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

We believe by water baptism a believer publicly identifies with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. We believe that infants of believing parents may be dedicated to the Lord but should not be baptized until they can personally articulate their faith and the purpose of baptism.

We believe the Lord's Supper is a memorial of Christ's death and an expression of our faith in His future coming that is to be continually practiced by all believers. We believe every Christian has a right to partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper but that participation must always be preceded by solemn self-examination.

### **Section 11: The End Times**

We believe in the personal, imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for the Church. This event, commonly called the rapture, will be followed by great tribulation on earth and will culminate in the visible and bodily return of Jesus Christ to the earth, commonly called the Second Coming, to rule the nations and establish His millennial kingdom (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Philippians 3:20; Matthew 24:15-31; Zechariah 14:4-11; Revelation 19:11-21; 20:1-6).

### **Section 12: The Eternal State**

We believe the souls of believers in Jesus Christ do, at death, immediately pass into His presence, and there remain with Him until the resurrection of our earthly bodies at His coming for the Church, when our souls and imperishable bodies shall be with Him forever in glory. We believe the souls of unbelievers remain after death in constant misery in Hades until the final judgment of the Great White Throne at the close of the millennium when soul and body reunited shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, not to be annihilated, but to be punished with everlasting separation from the presence of the Lord (Luke 16:19-26; 23:43; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 20:11-15).



## **BE STRONG IN A LIFE OF MINISTRY AND WORSHIP...**

- by serving others in ministry.
- by giving graciously as God has graciously given to me.
- by annually filling out my 4B Assessment.

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

# Be Strong in Ministry

## Be strong in ministry through the giving of our time:

God has entrusted each of us with a certain number of hours, months, and years. Being strong in ministry includes stewarding our time for His glory and the good of others. The Bible says that God has already prepared specific “good works” for each of us (Ephesians 2:10). These include many everyday opportunities as well as special chances to invest deeply to help others. But all these “good works” involve spending time.

Because of this biblical calling, Watermark Members are asked to commit a portion of their time to serving (generally at least once a month) in a ministry at Watermark or in the community.

## Be strong in ministry through the giving of our talent:

God has provided each of us with unique strengths, experiences, and personal characteristics. Being strong in ministry includes discovering, developing, and stewarding those gifts. In 1 Corinthians 12, God assures us that no one’s gifts are more important than another’s. How has God uniquely wired you? What passions, skills, and experiences might He want to use for the good of His church and for those outside our walls?

There are times we should simply meet an urgent need, regardless of how well the opportunity “fits” us. But in general, we should look for ways to serve with our specific wiring and giftings. That’s where we will have the biggest impact and will continue to develop our God-given talents.

## Be strong in ministry through the giving of our treasure:

God owns everything, and we are simply managers of the material resources He has entrusted to us. Being strong in ministry includes using finances and other resources to impact others. Our Watermark Members give financially to many ministries around our city and around the world. We’re also thrilled that our Members believe enough in our mission at Watermark to give extremely generously to support that mission.

At Watermark, we choose not to pass an offering plate during our services, and we do not require Members to give financially. Instead, we have placed offering boxes at the back of the Auditorium and receive gifts online at [watermark.org/giving](http://watermark.org/giving). We don’t want people to feel under compulsion to give, nor do we want to create a barrier for anyone who thinks that churches “only want my money.” Giving is an opportunity for ministry and personal growth, and we want our Members to be free and purposeful in their giving choices.

### **Question: Should a Christian Tithe?**

The Bible tells us that money can powerfully grip our hearts, and Jesus talks more about money in the New Testament than heaven and hell combined. He doesn’t do this because He needs our financial help! He does this because He wants our hearts - and our hearts tend to follow our treasure.

At Watermark, we do not teach that God commands giving a certain percentage toward His purposes. But God does ask His people to share their finances cheerfully and generously, instead of grudgingly or under compulsion. He also asks us to share sacrificially, trusting Him to provide all that we need. If we focus on these opportunities, we might be surprised and stretched by what He leads us to give. But we may also be surprised by how He works through us - and what He does inside us.

## **HELPING OTHERS BELIEVE IN CHRIST...**

- by developing relationships with the unchurched, de-churched, dead-churched, and unmoved.
- by sharing my story of grace with others.
- by praying for the salvation of non-believers with whom I have a relationship.

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

# Believe in Christ

## Why do we share testimonies as part of Membership?

It can sometimes feel a little intimidating to share your story, but it is an important practice for believers to become comfortable with articulating how Christ has transformed their lives. Sharing your story of grace gives God the glory for your life story and declares your need for Him. It is also a great first step for believers as they come together to be on mission for Him. At Watermark, we ask all of our Members to share their story of grace both verbally and in written form.

## Why do we share both verbal and written testimonies?

Sharing your story verbally increases your ability to share God's goodness in a conversational format. It also gives you an opportunity to share some time with one of our lay leaders at our church, and for them to encourage you (and be encouraged) by what God has done.

Sharing your story in a written form helps us grow in communicating with clarity what God has done, and helps you to distinctly communicate what you believe.

## How do I share my testimony?

### The Diagnostic Questions

On a scale of 1-10 (10 being 100% without a doubt), how sure are you that you would go to heaven if you died today?

If God asked you why He should let you into heaven, what would you say?

### The Testimony Outline

- Life before you trusted Christ - What was your life like before you began a relationship with Christ?
- How you came to trust in Christ - How did you come to have a relationship with Christ?
- Life after you trusted in Christ - Since trusting in Christ, what has your life and your relationship with Christ looked like?

# TOP 10

Initiate friendship  
Share story  
Invite

|    |                          |                          |                          |
|----|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**pray**

- that we would truly be a church committed to the uncommitted.
- that God would show us how to share His truth.
- that God would give us courage to reorganize our priorities and schedules to love and serve lost people as we build authentic friendships with them.

*We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. 1 Thessalonians 2:8*



## Sample of Top Ten Card

**“What shall we say then? Are we to continue  
in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be!  
How shall we who died to sin still live in it?  
Or do you not know that all of us who have been  
baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized  
into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him  
through baptism into death, so that as Christ was  
raised from the dead through the glory of the Father,  
so we too might walk in newness of life.”**

**ROMANS 6:1-4**

# Baptism

## What is baptism?

Baptism is a concrete way for believers to demonstrate their obedience to Jesus' command to profess faith in Him publicly (Matthew 28:19-20). As a person is immersed in the water, he or she is proclaiming: "I believe in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and I am trusting in Him alone for my salvation" (Romans 6:1-14; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Acts 4:12). Baptism is also a proclamation and illustration of these gospel truths to non-believers and an invitation for them to come to faith in Christ.

## Can baptism save me?

- No. There is no causal link between baptism and salvation. There are about 200 passages that speak of salvation with no mention of baptism.
- Baptism is not "essential" for salvation, but it is an important first step of obedience.
- While Jesus had no need to repent from sins, He was baptized as a sign of fulfilling all righteousness, identifying with the Father, and submitting to the Father's will.

## What if I was baptized as a baby or before I accepted Christ?

- We recognize that people come to Watermark from different communities of faith and denominations within God's broader Church – many of which hold different views about the meaning of baptism.
- At Watermark, we believe that baptism is an outward sign of the new life given to an individual by the Spirit when they personally trusted Jesus for salvation (Romans 6:1-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18; Matthew 28:19-20).
- If you have not been baptized since personally trusting in Christ, we would strongly encourage you to consider baptism as a believer.
- Infant baptism is not explicitly referenced anywhere in Scripture. We will dedicate and pray for our babies but will only baptize those believers who can articulate their faith and declare that their life has been changed.

## Baptism at Watermark

- We choose to follow Christ's example by using full submersion (Matthew 3:1-12).
- As a believer in Jesus Christ, have you decided to be baptized? Visit [watermark.org/baptism](http://watermark.org/baptism) to take your next step.



# Part II



# Elders

## Description of the Office

Consistent with the exhortation of Scripture, Watermark is led by a team of Elders/Pastors, not one man who reports to a board. This team of Elders/Pastors governs, corrects, cares for (shepherds), and oversees the spiritual interests of this church. An Elder must be a Member of this church and lead a life that meets the qualifications of Scripture and embodies the calling, convictions, and commitments of Watermark Community Church.

## Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Elders include:

- providing spiritual leadership for the church;
- directing the affairs of the church;
- receiving and dismissing Members;
- making provision for teaching during worship services;
- praying for and with the people and watching over their spiritual and physical needs;
- leading the church's outreach to a lost world;
- providing care and correction for Members; and
- executing on behalf of the church, deeds, notes, deeds of trust, releases, copyrights, intellectual property, and any other instruments or contracts as may be necessary to comply with God's leading for the church as to real property belonging to, or being acquired, improved, or sold by the church.

## Calling Elders

Elders are raised up by God to provide spiritual leadership for the church. They are called by the existing Elders to serve in the office of Elder for the benefit of the church.

A prospective elder will be examined as prescribed below to determine his:

- personal knowledge and comprehension of the Word of God, especially as it relates to his being sound in doctrine and his knowledge as to the qualifications for an Elder;
- personal philosophy concerning the purpose of the local church and his responsibility as a leader within the church;
- agreement with the Beliefs & Governance of this church, in its entirety;
- ability and willingness to serve and participate actively as an Elder, to attend faithfully the services and programs of the church and to support the various programs and activities of the church;
- ability to teach and his desire to cultivate this ability for the Lord;
- life of making disciples for Christ; and
- history of being in biblical community including accountable, caring, submissive, and enduring relationships with other believers.

*\*See appendix Article IV: Our Officers for more information about the role of our leaders.*

# Community Core Values

## Devote Daily

Devote daily by leading yourself well, pursuing Christ, and connecting with the source of life is the most important thing you can do for your community group (John 15:5).

## Pursue Relationally

Pursue relationally by being committed to one another, not bailing when things are tough, and knowing the details of your community group members' lives (Romans 12:10).

## Counsel Biblically

Counsel biblically by using God's Word as your guide over experience or opinions, collectively seeking truth together, and asking the question, "what does God's Word say about that?" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

## Live Authentically

Live authentically by owning the responsibility to let your brother know where you are prone to wander (James 5:16).

## Admonish Faithfully

Admonish faithfully by being true friends who speak truth to one another (Colossians 3:16).

## Engage Missionally

Engage missionally by "breaking the huddle," knowing and using your gifts, and remembering we are God's plan A (Matthew 28:19-20).

# Belong to his body

## Community Groups at Watermark

**The Purpose:** Watermark Community seeks to guide every Member to be known and loved, rooted in God's word, and committed to God's mission.

### Why Community?

In a world full of loneliness and pain, life can be confusing, frustrating, and difficult to navigate. Jesus promised us we would experience trouble in this world; but the good news is He didn't leave us alone. He has given us His Church. We were never meant to carry life's burdens or even celebrate its joys in isolation. We have been uniquely made by God for relationships, both with Him and with His people. You don't have to do life on your own, and in fact, it's not possible to do life alone and experience all God desires for you. We are created for community, called to it, and changed by it.

#### 1. We were created for community

- "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

#### 2. God has called us to community

- "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).
- "He who separates himself [from God and others] seeks his own desire, he quarrels against all sound wisdom" (Proverbs 18:1).

#### 3. We are changed by community. It is one of the most effective ways for a believer at any point in his/her spiritual journey to grow closer to Christ.

- "As iron sharpens iron so does one man sharpen another" (Proverbs 27:17).

### Count the Cost

- Being authentic with friends
- Making time to develop deep relationships
- Giving and receiving admonishment
- Hard, sometimes frustrating, conversations
- Working through conflict
- Being misunderstood
- Running at different paces

### Consider the Reward

- Wisdom for the War – Proverbs 11:14
- Strength for the Storm – Proverbs 17:17
- Provision for the Path – Proverbs 12:28
- Trust in God's Design – Psalm 133
- Celebration and Comfort – Romans 12:15
- Strength and Help – Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

# Live out the “One Anothers”

Church happens more in our living rooms than on Sunday mornings

**Be at peace** with one another – **Show hospitality** with one another –  
We are members one of another – **Honor** one another – Do not judge  
one another – **Encourage** one another – Do not excuse one another –  
Do not fight with one another – **Serve** one another – Do not envy one  
another – **Admonish** one another – **Wait for** one another – **Greet** one  
another – **Care** for one another – **Bear the burdens** of one another –  
**Show deference** to one another – **Forgive** one another – **Be kind** to  
one another – **Submit** to one another – Do not lie to one another – **Be in  
unity** with one another – **Comfort** one another – Concern yourself in  
the affairs of one another – Do not hate one another – Do not speak evil  
of one another – **Pray** for one another – **Be like-minded** toward one  
another – Do not hold a grudge against one another – Highly esteem one  
another – Do not be partial toward one another – **Have fellowship** with  
one another – **Edify** one another – **Teach** one another – **Do good** to one  
another – **Exhort** one another – **Minister spiritual gifts** to one another

## Conflict FIELD GUIDE

**CONFLICT IS OUR CONSTANT OPPORTUNITY.** Watermark Community Church is committed to resolving conflict in a way that glorifies the Lord, edifies the body of Christ, and reflects the principles laid out in Scripture. Since all relationships – including those among believers – will be faced with disagreements at different times, all Watermark Members, as followers of Christ, commit to the following biblical principles as a guide for resolving these issues. We trust that the following information will serve as a continual resource for you as you strive to serve others, grow personally, and glorify the Lord in the context of conflict.

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**Scriptures to read and remember** when considering how you are going to handle conflict: *Proverbs 16:1-9; Proverbs 21:14; Proverbs 20:3; Matthew 5:23-24; 1 Peter 3:15-17; Ephesians 4:1-5; Proverbs 10:1.*

**Watermark's Commitment to Biblical Conflict Resolution:**

**THE PEACEMAKER'S PLEDGE**  
As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict. We don't believe conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, separate people, and grow in the life of Christ. Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on His grace, we commit ourselves to respond to conflict according to the following principles:

**GLORIFY GOD:** Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will seek to please and honor God – by depending on His leading power, and by faithfully obeying His commands and by seeking reconciliation in a loving, sacrificial, and inspiring attitude.

**GET THE LOG OUT OF YOUR OWN EYE:** Instead of attacking others or dwelling on their wrongs, we will take responsibility for our own contribution to conflict – examining our sins, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict and seeking to repair any harm we have caused.

**GO AND GENTLY RESTORE YOUR BROTHER:** Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will choose to overlook minor offenses, or we will talk directly and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook. When in conflict with another Christian, cannot be reconciled in private, we will talk others in the light of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner.

**GO AND BE RECONCILED:** Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation – forgiving others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences.

**By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an opportunity, not an accident. We will remember that success in God's eyes is not a matter of specific results but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers brings praise to our Lord and leads others to know His infinite love. These principles are so simple that they can be used to resolve the most basic conflicts of daily life, that they are so powerful that they have been used to mediate and arbitrate bitter divorce and child custody actions, embezzlement situations, church divisions, multi-million dollar business disputes, malpractice lawsuits, and terrible sexual abuse cases. These principles are freely discussed below for your double-edged enjoyment, please see *The Peacemaker: A Bible of Guide to Resolving Personal Conflicts* by Ken Koski (Baker Books, 3rd ed. 1997).**

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\*"We must picture Hell as a state where everyone is perpetually concerned about his own dignity and advancement, where everyone has a grievance, and where everyone has the deadly serious passion of envy, self-importance, and resentment!" - C.S. LEWIS

### Conflict Field Guide

## Care and Correction

When Members are struggling, there are times when God's Church needs to come around a believer to care and correct. Watermark's model for care and correction follows Matthew 18:15-17.

When you think of care and correction, know most of the care and correction that happens at Watermark occurs weekly in community groups with believers that are sharing life together. God's people helping us grow should be an "all the time" process.

*\*See appendix Article II: Our Membership, Section 4*

# Commitment to Biblical Conflict Resolution

As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict. We also believe conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ. Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on His grace, we commit ourselves to respond to conflict according to the following principles:

**Glorify God** – Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will seek to please and honor God.

**Get the log out of your own eye** – Instead of attacking others or dwelling on their wrongs, we will take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts.

**Go and gently restore your brother** – Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will choose to overlook minor offenses, or we will talk directly and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook.

**Go and be reconciled** – Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation – forgiving others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us.

By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an opportunity, not an accident. We will remember that success, in God's eyes, is not a matter of specific results but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers brings praise to our Lord and leads others to know His infinite love. These principles are so simple that they can be used to resolve the most basic conflicts of daily life. But, they are so powerful that they have been used to mediate and arbitrate bitter divorce and child custody actions, embezzlement situations, church divisions, multi-million dollar business disputes, malpractice lawsuits, and terrible sexual abuse cases.

*\*See appendix for a full version of Watermark's Conflict Field Guide*

# Community Groups Defined

## Watermark Community Groups:

As leaders, we believe that by maintaining, at a minimum, the following identifiable criteria, we will be more effective in our shepherding role in your lives.

- **Men/Women Community Groups:** Each community group should include a minimum of three people that are all Watermark Members. “A cord of three strands is not quickly torn about” (Ecclesiastes 4:12).
- **Married Community Groups:** Each married community group should include a minimum of three couples that are all Watermark Members. “Know well the condition of your flock and pay attention to your herds” (Proverbs 27:23).

## How do I get started?

1. **Organic Connection** - If you have a group of people with whom you'd like to do community, contact them about forming a group together. You'll need to contact the Community Team at Watermark so we can assist and guide you in forming your own group.
2. **Existing Connection** - If you know of an existing group you want to join, contact the leader or the person you know in the group. Ask them if they would be open to adding a member(s) to their group. Find out when they meet and if there is anything you need to do to get on the same page as the group. Once you have joined the group, please contact the Community Team at Watermark so we can update the change within the group.
3. **New Connection** - Attend Community Formation where people who are interested in community get connected with others in their same stage of life.

# Appendix

## Article I: Name and History

### The Meaning Behind Our Name

A watermark represents...

- Authenticity. Higher denominations of currency are watermarked to prove they are genuine. In the same way, we want to be people whose lives and relationships are marked by authenticity, integrity, and truth.
  - “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5).
- Excellence. Fine paper often features a watermark as evidence of its quality. We strive for excellence, without compromise, in all areas of our ministry and lives, believing that excellence honors God and inspires people.
  - “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men” (Colossians 3:23).
- A lasting impression. The continual presence of water at a certain level leaves a mark long after it is gone. It is our hope, because we have lived faithfully as God’s people, that long after we have gone we would make an impact for His Kingdom that would be seen for generations to come.
  - “You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men” (2 Corinthians 3:2).

### History

The major events leading up to the founding of Watermark Community Church are as follows:

- In the summer of 1998, a group of friends began to meet and consider what it would look like if they prayerfully pursued a life of faithfulness to Scriptures as they devoted their lives to Christ together in Dallas.
- As they prayed and studied God’s Word, it became increasingly clear that the best way to accomplish God’s purposes for them was through the formation of a new local gathering of God’s people.
- After months of prayer, planning, and agreement on purpose and values, the core group grew from eight families to dozens more. On October 30, 1999, 150 prayerful, passionate people covenanted together to serve Christ and His purposes in Dallas as Watermark Community Church. They spent their first evening together discussing, praying over, and agreeing that the beliefs, purposes, and values in the following pages would guide them to be faithful servants of Christ’s purposes in their city.
- On November 7, 1999, Watermark Community Church held its first corporate gathering and began intentionally ministering to the unchurched, de-churched, dead-churched, and unmoved.

## Article II: Our Membership

### SECTION 1: MEMBERSHIP

While we acknowledge that all true believers in Jesus Christ are positionally members of the church universal, Membership in this local body requires participation in, and commitment to:

- the Beliefs & Governance of this church; intentional community with Members of this local body; and
- the use of whatever gift(s) he/she has received to serve others, in order that he/she may do his part in faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.

As a result, we acknowledge two types of membership of Christ’s Church:

1. **Positional Membership**—which includes all true believers in Jesus Christ; and
2. **Participatory Membership**—which includes true believers in Jesus Christ who have committed themselves to this local body as outlined above (hereinafter “Members”).

### SECTION 2: QUALIFICATIONS FOR PARTICIPATORY MEMBERSHIP

Individuals may present themselves for Membership upon making a profession of personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Each potential new Member shall: 1) make a written and verbal statement of his or her faith in Christ and his intent, with God’s help, to pursue a life that will bring glory to God; 2) assent to the Beliefs and Governance of

Watermark Community Church; 3) attend the church's New Member Class; and 4) become part of a Community Group; 5) choose and commit to an area of service; and 6) sign the Membership Covenant.

### **SECTION 3: PARTICIPATORY MEMBERSHIP ROLES**

A person is a Member of this church only as long as he lives within this community of faith and is actively pursuing the Calling, Convictions, and Commitments of this church. It is the Elders' responsibility to "know well the condition of the flock," to encourage steadfastness of all individual Members, and to advise Members of the consequences of not abiding by their commitments as Members, including eventual removal from Membership.

### **SECTION 4: CARE AND CORRECTION OF PARTICIPATORY MEMBERS**

It is the responsibility of the Elders, as described in Acts 20:28, to "be on guard for themselves and all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Shepherding includes care, encouragement, admonishment, and grace-filled correction of the Members of our flock at Watermark. Although it is never our desire to separate an individual in the flock from Watermark Membership, after pursuing restoration and reconciliation with the Member, as set forth in Matthew 18, the Elders may separate from a Member of the flock at Watermark for:

- departure from his previously expressed agreement with "Our Beliefs";
- conduct that mars the testimony of the church or evidences a continued unrepentant departure from biblical morality;
- manifesting disinterest and/or inactivity in the life of the church;
- or other reasons as set forth in the Scriptures.

The separation process shall follow the process laid out in Scripture. By applying for and accepting Membership in this church, all Members submit themselves to the care and correction of the Elders, and may not resign from Membership in an attempt to avoid such care and correction.

### **SECTION 5: TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

**Voluntary Member Termination:** Members who move from the local area, change churches, or no longer meet the requirements for active Membership may be removed from Watermark Membership. The Elders may reinstate voluntarily terminated Members upon the fulfillment of any outstanding Member requirements.

**Involuntary Member Termination:** As shepherds of the flock entrusted to us, the Elders are grieved any time a Member "separates himself, seeks his own desire, [and] quarrels against all sound wisdom" (Proverbs 18:1). After following the process laid out in Scripture and diligently pursuing the Member with opportunities for encouragement, admonishment, repentance, restoration, and reconciliation, Membership may be involuntarily terminated at Watermark at the discretion of the Elders. In accordance with Matthew 18, the facts of and reasons for the involuntary termination of a Member may be communicated with a former Member's Community Group, ministry leaders, and other parties, at the sole discretion of the Elders.

## **Article III: Our Leadership Structure**

This church, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, is an autonomous body of believers voluntarily submitting themselves to a form of government that we believe is in accordance with the Scriptures. The official offices of this church, through which all of its powers are administered, are covered in subsequent sections of this document. These offices shall be occupied by men, or women where specifically permitted, who are raised up by the Holy Spirit, called by the personal conviction of God, and appointed by the Elders. The responsibilities of these offices are also defined and described in subsequent sections of this document.

## Article IV: Our Officers

### SECTION 1: GENERAL

We believe that holding office in the church is by:

- the calling of God by the Holy Spirit;
- the conviction of the will of God on the part of the candidate; and
- the approval of the Elders.

The officers in this church shall be the Elders and those to whom they delegate authority and designate as officers. Selection of new Elders, Deacons, and the Pastoral Elder shall be by appointment of the Elders. The Pastoral Elder shall appoint all pastoral and ministerial staff (other than the Pastoral Elder), and as there is wisdom in the counsel of many, consult with his fellow Elders on major hires.

### SECTION 2: THE ELDERS

#### Description of the Office

Consistent with the exhortation of Scripture, Watermark is led by a team of Elders/Pastors, not one man who reports to a board. This team of Elders/Pastors governs, corrects, cares for (shepherds), and oversees the spiritual interests of this church. An Elder must be a Member of this church and lead a life that meets the qualifications of Scripture and embodies the “Calling, Convictions, and Commitments” of Watermark Community Church.

The Elders shall be comprised of not less than three (3) nor more than ten (10) men. The number of Elders must be limited by the number of qualified men that the Lord raises up and the ability of the Elders to maintain intimate, deep, and growing relationships between its members. It is imperative that the Elders model accountability, care, and every other aspect of authentic biblical community. Great care should be taken as to the effects of the number of Elders so as to ensure relational trust and intimacy amongst them.

#### Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Elders include:

- providing spiritual leadership for the church;
- directing the affairs of the church;
- receiving and dismissing Members;
- making provision for teaching during worship services;
- praying for and with the people and watching over their spiritual and physical needs;
- leading the church’s outreach to a lost world;
- providing care and correction for Members; and
- executing on behalf of the church, deeds, notes, deeds of trust, releases, copyrights, intellectual property, and any other instruments or contracts as may be necessary to comply with God’s leading for the church as to real property belonging to, or being acquired, improved, or sold by the church.

#### Calling Elders

Elders are raised up by God to provide spiritual leadership for the church. They are called by the existing Elders to serve in the office of Elder for the benefit of the church.

A prospective elder will be examined as prescribed below to determine:

- his personal knowledge and comprehension of the Word of God, especially as it relates to his being sound in doctrine and his knowledge as to the qualifications for an Elder;
- his personal philosophy concerning the purpose of the local church and his responsibility as a leader within the church;
- his agreement with the Beliefs & Governance of this church, in its entirety;
- his ability and willingness to serve and participate actively as an Elder, to attend faithfully the services and programs of the church, and to support the various programs and activities of the church;
- his ability to teach and his desire to cultivate this ability for the Lord;

- his life of making disciples for Christ; and his history of being in biblical community including accountable, caring, submissive, and enduring relationships with other believers.

The Elder selection process shall generally follow the process described below.

### **Elder Selection Process**

The selection of a new Elder shall, at a minimum, follow the four (4) steps below:

1. **Candidate Identification**—Any potential elder shall be identified by the Elders as a man fitting the biblical qualifications of an elder of the church and shall be submitted to a period of prayerful consideration by the existing Elders.
2. **Notification of the Potential Elder**—Following a season of prayer, the Elders, upon initial confirmation of the potential elder, shall notify the potential elder that he is being considered to hold the office of Elder at the church. The potential elder shall submit himself to a time of prayer concerning God’s call upon his life and his possible service as an Elder of the church.
3. **Validation**—Upon the confirmation by the potential elder of God’s call on his life, the Elders shall begin a validation process which, at a minimum, consists of: the potential elder’s completion of a “Potential Elder Questionnaire” to determine whether he meets the qualifications of an elder as set forth above; a re-affirmation that the potential elder is in agreement with the Beliefs and Governance of the Church; and various interviews with third parties concerning the potential elder’s character, life, and Christian witness.
4. **Confirmation**—Upon satisfactory completion of the validation process, the potential elder shall be presented to the congregation for its comment on his character, qualifications, or any other issue which would affect his suitability to serve as an Elder of the church.

### **Removal**

No person can be removed as an Elder except for just cause as determined by a unanimous vote of the Elders (exclusive of the Elder whose removal is being considered). Just cause includes, but is not limited to: an Elder being under the care and correction referred to in Article II - Section 4 of this document; events that would disqualify him as set forth in this Article IV – Section 2; or behavior, schedule or stage of life that affects his ability to maintain biblical community with the other Elder members. If any Elder fails to maintain biblical community with the other Elder members, he should be informed and asked to make immediate adjustments to his schedule or voluntarily resign his office. The Elders will accept the written resignation of an Elder whenever submitted.

### **SECTION 3: THE PASTORAL ELDER**

The Pastoral Elder is the vocational spiritual leader of the church and has oversight of the spiritual life of the church in conjunction with the Elders. The Pastoral Elder should be fully prepared for his ministry as required by the Elders. He should live a consistent Christian life, ruling his own house well and having a good testimony with non-Christians.

#### **Responsibilities of the Pastoral Elder**

The Pastoral Elder is accountable to the Elders for the oversight of the Beliefs and Governance of the church. He is responsible for leading the staff and church body in carrying out the purpose and values of the church and overseeing the church’s ministries.

#### **Calling the Pastoral Elder**

The Elders shall call a Pastoral Elder. When the Elders desire the church have a new Pastoral Elder, it may appoint a search committee to assist in identifying qualified candidates or search for a qualified candidate on its own. Ultimate responsibility and authority for calling a Pastoral Elder rests with the Elders. Since the Pastoral Elder will serve as an Elder of the church, at a minimum, the Elder selection process shall be followed.

#### **Removing a Pastoral Elder**

When the Pastoral Elder resigns or is removed by the Elders, the Elders may call a meeting to inform the congregation

of the reasons for the removal or resignation, so far as is honoring to God, the Pastoral Elder, and the congregation. When the Pastoral Elder resigns, the Elders shall accept his resignation. When the Pastoral Elder resigns or is removed from that office, the Elders shall make provision for the interim fulfillment of the Pastoral Elder's responsibilities. In that event, an Interim Pastor may be appointed by the Elders as a minister to carry on the pastoral duties while the church is without a Pastoral Elder.

#### **SECTION 4: OTHER CHURCH LEADERSHIP**

##### **Description of Office**

The Elders may appoint participatory Members within the church to positions of leadership. Their appointment may be to key areas of responsibility in the Operating and Ministry Committees of the Church, provided that such appointments shall be made in accordance with the mandates of the Holy Scripture as relates to positional differences between men and women.

##### **Qualifications**

These positions of servant leadership shall be occupied by men or women of spiritual maturity, exemplary lives, good reputation, sound judgment, and who, in their God-ordained roles, serve their own houses well.

##### **Ministerial Staff**

The Pastoral Elder shall appoint all pastoral and ministerial staff (other than the Pastoral Elder) and, as there is wisdom in the counsel of many, consult with his fellow Elders on major hires. The Pastoral Elder may appoint pastoral and ministerial staff as required to provide care, teaching, counseling, and administration to the congregation. The number and types of Ministers required will vary from time to time, depending on church growth, financial resources available, and discerned need.

### **Article V: Our Workers (Ordination & Commissioning)**

It is our confidence that God will raise up Spirit-filled and gifted men and women from among us who will be called to a life of proclaiming the gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ. Such men and women may be given a commission to lead God's people, as is appropriate in Scripture, and share in the privileges and responsibilities thereof. The Elders shall determine the process, requirements, timing, and forms leading to ordination. The Elders may also commission Members to serve as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ under its authority, while they are Members in good standing at this church.

This church, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, is an autonomous body of believers voluntarily submitting themselves to a form of government that we believe is in accordance with the Scriptures. The official offices of this church, through which all of its powers are administered, are covered in subsequent sections of this document. These offices shall be occupied by men, or women where specifically permitted, who are raised up by the Holy Spirit, called by the personal conviction of God, and appointed by the Elders. The responsibilities of these offices are also defined and described in subsequent sections of this document.

### **Article VI: Our Responsibilities**

The Elders may delegate to individuals, committees, or organizations the right to transact any of its business or to exercise any of its powers, but the exercise of such delegation shall be subject to the supervision and control of the Elders.

## Article VII: Amendments to Our Beliefs And Leadership Structure

Our Beliefs & Leadership Structure may be amended by the unanimous approval of the Elders. Copies of any amendment(s) must be made available to Members not more than thirty days following such amendment(s).

### Values

#### OUR CALLING

As a church, our purpose is to call all people to be fully devoted followers of Christ. Calling implies both introduction to and encouragement in a life of full devotion to Christ are necessary. As such, we articulate our devotion in this way. We exist to reach the uncommitted, unchurched, de-churched, dead-churched, and unmoved and to encourage, equip, serve, and sustain those already devoted to Christ.

- The unchurched—those who have never been exposed to a faithful body of Christ-followers
- The de-churched—those who have previously been in a “church” environment but have left it
- The dead-churched—those involved in a “church” that is not pursuing biblical Christianity
- The unmoved—those nominally involved with Christ or His purposes

#### OUR CONVICTIONS

A healthy church intentionally and zealously pursues a balanced ministry. Such a ministry, through the power of the Holy Spirit, results in:

- New converts to Christ through the work of the ministry
- New commitments to the local body and the cause of Christ
- New growth in the grace & knowledge of Christ
- New leaders for tomorrow’s harvest for Christ

Stated another way, our desire is to call others to:

- Believe in Christ
- Belong to His body
- Be trained in truth
- Be strong in ministry

#### OUR COMMITMENTS

We commit to measure our success only by our ability to realize our conviction of being and making disciples. (Disciples are individuals who understand what it means to follow Jesus Christ into a life of worship, fellowship, sacrifice, service, and yielding to the Spirit.)

In summary, we are in the business of changed lives. We live to turn the uncommitted and opposed into unashamedly committed, fully devoted followers of Christ. Everything we do is measured by its usefulness, effectiveness, and contribution toward this purpose.

#### OUR CORE VALUES

We unashamedly and uncompromisingly strive to be:

- **Biblically Based** - God’s Word is our guide, authority, and conscience in everything. We stand firm where it stands firm and remain flexible where it is flexible (2 Timothy 3:16).
- **Fully Devoted To Christ** - We measure our success by our ability to be and make disciples. Full devotion to Jesus is normal for every believer (Luke 9:23).
- **Grounded In Grace** - We acknowledge our complete dependence on the goodness and grace of God. We have benefited from the kind intention of His will; therefore, we eagerly extend it to others (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- **Passionate About Prayer** - We believe the attitude and action of prayer is essential to everything we do (Colossians 4:2).

- **Authentic In Our Walk** - Authenticity, integrity, openness, and sincerity will define us. “The goal of our instruction is love, from a good conscience, a pure heart, and a sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5).
- **Committed To The Uncommitted** - We believe that lost people matter to God; therefore, they matter to us. Jesus came to seek and save the lost and has left us here, in part, to do the same. Our individual lives and corporate efforts will reflect this conviction (Luke 19:10).
- **Relevant & Innovative** - The Bible does not tell us to use only certain styles of music, or to present our message only through words. The Bible does make it clear, however, that we are to find ways to effectively bring the message “into all the world” in order to make disciples. We believe this will require careful scrutiny of everything we do - new practices and old - and a willingness to change when necessary within biblical parameters, in order that we, “by all possible means might save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22).
- **Committed To Community** - Belonging to our community requires a commitment to being intentionally involved with others in accountable, encouraging relationships. We believe life-change happens best in the context of relationships. In clusters of caring people, participants share and encourage each other toward spiritual growth. Here people can experience both the benefits of a larger church and enjoy the kind of relationships that only develop in small, safe settings (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- **Focused On Ministry & Service** - We believe that each believer has received a special gift and should employ it in serving others, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Spiritual giftedness and maturity determine where and how a believer serves. We believe excellence honors God and reflects His character. We strive for excellence without compromise in all areas of our ministry and lives (1 Peter 4:10; Colossians 3:17).

#### OTHER POSITIONS

- **Children** - We view children not only as the future, but as a significant part of the church right now. Our goal is to raise passionate followers of Christ, so we believe our children are worth all the time and energy we can invest in them.
- **Training & Discipleship** - Intentional participation in relationships with others at different levels of spiritual maturity is essential. While we provide many formal occasions for growth, we place a higher priority on the value of relationships. Jesus apprenticed His disciples, even as His disciples today are called to mentor or be mentored by others.
- **Diversity** - We agree that churches more easily attract others with similar preferences and/or life experiences and therefore acknowledge that simply by being who we are, we are necessarily “targeting” a certain segment of our society. Our desire, however, is that the Holy Spirit will bless us with a rich diversity of ages, life stages, religious, racial, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds. We desire to foster an atmosphere of unity that communicates warmth and acceptance of all who care to join us. It is our hope that the things that ultimately define us are those that speak to the need to the entire human race, not only specific ethnic or demographic ones. Therefore, we stress such universal concerns as forgiveness, redemption, significance, peace, meaning, and truth above styles, tastes, and preferences.
- **Unity** - We embrace diversity but require unity in the essentials, understanding in the non-essentials, and seek in every way to love others as Christ has first loved us. We have a great commitment to the great commandment and the Great Commission, believing by this alone God will make us a great church.
- **Healing** - We believe Jesus is the divine physician, so healing and hope should be the norm where His people gather in community. We believe Jesus continues to provide freedom, redemption, deliverance, healing, salvation, and hope as best glorify His name and purposes.
- **The Poor** - We are God’s extended hands. We purpose, with vision and servant leadership, to increasingly learn to minister directly to the poor, sometimes with our money, sometimes with our lives. We must live in fellowship with an awareness of our blessings and corresponding responsibility to others.
- **Excellence** - We believe excellence honors God and reflects His character. We strive for excellence without compromise in all areas of our ministry and lives.

# Conflict Field Guide





# Conflict

## FIELD GUIDE

**CONFLICT IS OUR CONSTANT OPPORTUNITY.** Watermark Community Church is committed to resolving conflict in a way that glorifies the Lord, edifies the body of Christ, and reflects the principles laid out in Scripture. Since all relationships – including those among believers – will be faced with disagreements at different times, all Watermark Members, as followers of Christ, commit to the following biblical principles as a guide for resolving these issues. We trust that the following information will serve as a continual resource for you as you strive to serve others, grow personally, and glorify the Lord in the context of conflict.

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*Scriptures to read and remember when considering how you are going to handle conflict: Proverbs 6:16-19, Proverbs 17:14, Proverbs 20:3, Matthew 5:23-24, 1 Peter 5:5-7, Ephesians 4:1-3, Proverbs 18:19.*

### Watermark's Commitment to Biblical Conflict Resolution:

#### THE PEACEMAKER'S PLEDGE

As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict. We also believe conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ. Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on His grace, we commit ourselves to respond to conflict according to the following principles:

**GLORIFY GOD** - Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will seek to please and honor God – by depending on His wisdom, power, and love; by faithfully obeying His commands; and by seeking to maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude.

#### GET THE LOG OUT OF YOUR OWN EYE -

Instead of attacking others or dwelling on their wrongs, we will take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts – confessing our sins, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict and seeking to repair any harm we have caused.

#### GO AND GENTLY RESTORE YOUR

**BROTHER** - Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will choose to overlook minor offenses, or we will talk directly and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook. When a conflict with another Christian cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner.

**GO AND BE RECONCILED** - Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation – forgiving others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences.

By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an opportunity, not an accident. We will remember that success in God's eyes is not a matter of specific results but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers brings praise to our Lord and leads others to know His infinite love. These principles are so simple that they can be used to resolve the most basic conflicts of daily life. But they are so powerful that they have been used to mediate and arbitrate bitter divorce and child custody actions, embezzlement situations, church divisions, multi-million dollar business disputes, malpractice lawsuits, and terrible sexual abuse cases. These principles are briefly discussed below. For a more detailed explanation, please see *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, by Ken Sande (Baker Books, 2nd ed. 1997).

# 1. At The Trailhead: Understanding the Landscape

## SEE CONFLICT AS AN OPPORTUNITY

Conflict is not necessarily bad or destructive. Even when conflict is caused by sin and causes a great deal of stress, God can use it for good. (Romans 8:28-29) As the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1, conflict actually provides three significant opportunities. By God's grace, you can use conflict to:

Glorify God by trusting, obeying, and imitating Him.

Serve other people by helping to bear their burdens or by confronting them in love.

Grow to be like Christ by confessing sin and turning from attitudes that promote conflict.

These concepts are totally overlooked in most conflicts because people naturally focus on escaping from the situation or overcoming their opponent. Therefore, it is wise to periodically step back from a conflict and ask yourself whether you are doing all that you can to take advantage of these special opportunities.

## GLORIFY GOD

When the Apostle Paul urged the Corinthians to live "to the glory of God," he was not talking about one hour on Sunday morning. He wanted them to show God honor and bring Him praise in day-to-day life, especially by the way that they resolved personal conflicts. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

As mentioned above, you can glorify God in the midst of conflict by trusting Him, obeying Him and imitating Him. (Proverbs 3:4-6; John 14:15; Ephesians 5:1) One of the best ways to keep these concerns uppermost in your mind is to regularly ask yourself this focusing question: "How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?"

## Preparing for the Journey

### GET THE LOG OUT OF YOUR OWN EYE

The most challenging part of peace-making is set forth in Matthew 7:5, where Jesus admonishes us to "...first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

There are generally two kinds of logs you need to look for when seeing your part in the conflict. First, you need to consider your own attitudes and biases. Critical, negative or overly sensitive attitudes easily lead to unnecessary conflict. One of the best ways to do this is to spend some time meditating on Philippians 4:2-9, which describes the kind of attitude Christians should have, even when they are involved in a conflict.

The other log you must deal with is actual sinful words and actions. Because we are often blind to our own failures, we must have honest friends who will help us take an objective look at ourselves and face up to our contribution to a conflict.

The most important aspect of getting the log out of your own eye is to go beyond the confession of wrong behavior and face up to the root cause of that behavior. The Bible teaches that conflict comes from the "desires at war within you" (James 4:1-3; Matthew 15:18-19). Some of these desires are obviously sinful, such as wanting to conceal the truth, bend others to your will or have revenge. In many situations, however, conflict is fueled by good desires that you have elevated to a sinful place, such as an unhealthy craving to be understood, loved, respected or vindicated (1 Peter 2:23).

Any time you become excessively preoccupied with something, even a good thing, and seek to find happiness, security, or fulfillment in it rather than in God, you are guilty of idolatry. Idolatry inevitably leads to conflict with God. It also causes conflict with other people. As James writes, when we want something but don't get it, we kill and covet, quarrel, and fight (James 4:1-4). Having done the hard work of discovering your part in the

conflict, it is time to take action. Below is a clear, seven-step process to help you first examine yourself and then move forward as a peacemaker:

- 1. Ask the Lord and others for help with self-awareness. (1 John 1:8)**
  - Ask God to show you where you have been guilty of "wrong worship," which is to say where you have been focusing your attention and love on something other than the Lord and His desires. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me; And lead me in the everlasting way." (Psalm 139:23-24)
  - Specifically identify and renounce the desire contributing to the conflict.
  - Deliberately pursue right worship. Fix your heart and mind on God, and seek joy in Him alone.
  - Give others permission to speak into your life, and regularly ask them to help you see any "logs" both in attitude and action.
- 2. Address everyone involved as soon as possible. (Matthew 5:23-24, Proverbs 6:1-5)**
- 3. Avoid "if, but, and maybe." Don't make excuses; be specific, when possible, with both attitudes and actions. (Luke 15:17-24)**
- 4. Apologize. Express sorrow for the way you affected someone. (Luke 15:21)**
- 5. Ask for forgiveness. (Proverbs 28:13)**
- 6. Accept the consequences. (Luke 19:1-9)**
- 7. Alter your behavior. Commit to changing harmful habits. (Ephesians 4:22-32, John 8:11).**

As God guides and empowers these efforts, you can find freedom from the idols that fuel conflict and be motivated to make choices that will please and honor Christ. This change in heart will usually speed a resolution to a present problem, and at the same time improve your ability to avoid similar conflicts in the future.

## 2. Beginning the Journey: Hitting the Trail to Love Your Friend

### Go and Gently Restore Your Brother

#### DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF OVERLOOK MINOR OFFENSES

Another key principle of peacemaking involves an effort to help others understand how they have contributed to a conflict. Before you rush off to confront someone, however, remember that it is appropriate to overlook minor offenses. (Proverbs 19:11) As a general rule, an offense should be overlooked if you can answer “no” to all of the following questions:

- Is the offense seriously dishonoring God?
- Has it permanently damaged a relationship?
- Is it seriously hurting other people?
- Is it seriously hurting the offender himself?

### Don't Spread the Big Stuff

#### TALK IN PRIVATE

If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, an offense is too serious to overlook, in which case God commands you to go and talk with the offender privately and lovingly about the situation (see Matthew 18:15).

As you do so, remember to:

- **Pray for humility and wisdom.** (1 Peter 5:5)
- **Plan your words carefully;** think of how you would want to be confronted. (Proverbs 15:1-2; 16:23)
- **Anticipate likely reactions,** and plan appropriate responses; rehearsals can be very helpful. (Proverbs 20:18)
- **Choose the right time and place.** Talk in person whenever possible. (Proverbs 16:21; 27:12)
- **Assume the best** about the other person until you have facts to prove otherwise. (Proverbs 18:17)
- **Listen carefully.** (Proverbs 18:13)
- **Speak only to build others up.** (Ephesians 4:29)
- Ask for feedback from the other person. (Proverbs 18:2)
- **Trust God.** (Psalm 37:3)

### Don't Stop if You've Been Stuffed

#### TAKE OTHERS ALONG

(Matthew 18:17)

If an initial confrontation does not resolve a conflict, do not give up. Review what was said and done, and look for ways to approach the other person more effectively. Then try again

with even stronger prayer support. If you have done all you can to share your concern, and the matter is still unchanged in that it is “too serious to overlook,” you should ask one or two other people to meet with you and the person you have approached to help you resolve your differences. (Matthew 18:16-20)

#### DON'T STOP IF IT GETS STICKY

As unfortunate as it is, there are times when the only solution left is to expand the circle of accountability and wisdom to include an even wider community within the body of Christ. It is imperative that the process is not stopped short of any Scriptural admonition to diligently preserve the unity that the Lord intends. Where conflict persists, it is the job of the wider community of faith to speak boldly into the matter and, where necessary, separate itself from hard hearts that refuse to deal with matters “too serious to overlook.” (Matthew 18:17a; 1 Corinthians 5:1-2) That may include necessary separation until such a time as when the sin issues creating the conflict are acknowledged and dealt with.

#### GO AND BE RECONCILED

One of the unique features of biblical peacemaking is the pursuit of genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. Even though followers of Christ have experienced the greatest forgiveness in the world, we often fail to show that forgiveness to others. To cover up our disobedience, we often use the shallow statement, “I forgive her; I just don't want to have anything to do with her again.” Just think, however, how you would feel if God said to you, “I forgive you; I just don't want to have anything to do with you again.”

Praise God that He never says this! Instead, He forgives you totally and opens the way for genuine reconciliation. He calls you to forgive others in exactly the same way: “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” (Colossians 3:12-14; see also 1 Corinthians 13:5; Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 43:25) One way to imitate God's forgiveness is to live with these actions and attitudes when you forgive someone:

- I will not dwell on this incident.
- I will not revisit this incident or use it against you.
- I will not talk to others about this incident.

- I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

Remember that forgiveness is a spiritual process that you cannot fully accomplish on your own. Therefore, as you seek to forgive others, continually ask God for grace to enable you to imitate His wonderful forgiveness toward you.

#### NEGOTIATE IN A BIBLICAL MANNER

Even when you manage to resolve personal offenses through confession and forgiveness, you may still need to deal with substantive issues, which may involve money, property, or the exercise of certain rights. These issues should not be swept under the carpet or automatically passed to a higher authority. Instead, they should be negotiated in a biblically faithful manner. As a general rule, you should try to negotiate substantive issues in a cooperative manner rather than a competitive manner. In other words, instead of aggressively pursuing your own interests and letting others look out for themselves, you should deliberately look for solutions that are beneficial to everyone involved.

As the Apostle Paul put it, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4; see Matthew 22:39; 1 Corinthians 13:5; Matthew 7:12).

A biblical approach to negotiation may be summarized in five basic steps, which we refer to as the PAUSE principle:

- Prepare (pray, get the facts, seek godly counsel, develop options)
- Affirm relationships (show genuine concern and respect for others)
- Understand interests (identify others' concerns, desires, needs, limitations, or fears)
- Search for creative solutions (prayerful brainstorming)
- Evaluate options objectively and reasonably (evaluate, don't argue)

If you have never used this approach to negotiation before, it will take time and practice (and sometimes advice from others) to become proficient at it. But it is well worth the effort, because learning the PAUSE principle will help you not only resolve your present dispute but also negotiate more effectively in all areas of your life.

# 3. Enduring Difficulties On The Journey: What To Do When The Trail Gets Rough

## BE PREPARED FOR UNREASONABLE PEOPLE

Whenever you are responding to conflict, you need to realize that other people may harden their hearts and refuse to be reconciled to you. There are two ways you can prepare for this possibility.

First, remember that God does not measure success in terms of results but in terms of faithful obedience. He knows that you cannot force other people to act in a certain way. Therefore, He will not hold you responsible for their actions or for the ultimate outcome of a conflict.

All God expects of you is to obey His revealed will as faithfully as possible (see Romans 12:18). If you do that, no matter how the conflict turns out, you can walk away with a clear conscience before God, knowing that His appraisal is, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Second, resolve that you will not give up on finding a biblical solution. If a dispute is not easily resolved, you may be tempted to say, "Well, I tried all the biblical principles I know, and they just didn't work. It looks like I'll have to handle this another way" (meaning, the world's way).

A follower of Christ should never close the Bible. When you try to resolve a conflict but do not see the results you desire, you should seek God even more earnestly through prayer, the study of His Word, and the counsel of His church. As you do so, it is essential to keep your focus on Christ and all that He has already done for you (Colossians 3:1-4).

It is also helpful to follow five principles for overcoming evil, which are described in Romans 12:14-21:

- Control your tongue; "Bless those who curse you." (See also Ephesians 4:29).
- Seek godly advisors; identify with others, and do not become isolated.
- Keep doing what is right (1 Peter 2:12, 15; 3:15-16).
- Recognize your limits, instead of retaliating, stay within proper biblical channels.

- Use the ultimate weapon: deliberate, focused love (John 3:16; Luke 6:27-31).

At the very least, these steps will protect you from being consumed by the acid of your own bitterness and resentment if others continue to oppose you. And in some cases, God may eventually use such actions to bring another person to repentance. (1 Samuel 24:1-22) Even if other people persist in doing wrong, you can continue to trust that God is in control and will deal with them in His time. (See Psalms 10 and 37) This kind of patience in the face of suffering is commended by God (1 Peter 2:19) and ultimately results in our good and His glory.

## GET HELP FROM ABOVE

None of us can make complete and lasting peace with others in our own strength. We must have help from God. But, before we can receive that help, we need to be at peace with God Himself.

Peace with God doesn't come automatically, because all of us have sinned and alienated ourselves from Him. (Isaiah 59:1-2) Instead of living the perfect lives needed to enjoy fellowship with Him, each of us has a record stained with sin. (Matthew 5:48; Romans 3:23) As a result, we deserve to be eternally separated from God. (Romans 6:23a) That's the bad news.

The good news is that "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) Believing in Jesus means more than being baptized, going to church, or trying to be a good person. None of these activities can erase the sins you have already committed and will continue to commit throughout your life. Believing in Jesus means, first of all, admitting that you are a sinner and acknowledging that there is no way you can earn God's approval by your own works. (Romans 3:20; Ephesians 2:8-9)

Second, it means believing that Jesus paid the full penalty for your sins when He died on the cross (Isa. 53:1-12; 1 Peter 2:24-25). In other words, believing in Jesus means trusting that He exchanged records with you at Calvary – that is,

He took your sinful record on Himself and paid for it in full, giving you His perfect record.

When you believe in Jesus and receive His perfect record of righteousness, you can really have true peace with God. As you receive this peace, God will give you an increasing ability to make peace with others by following the peacemaking principles He gives us in Scripture, many of which are described above (Phil. 4:7; Matt. 5:9). If you have never confessed your sin to God and believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior, Lord, and King, you can do so right now by sincerely praying this prayer:

*Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I realize that my good deeds could never make up for my wrongs. I need your forgiveness. I believe that you died for my sins, and I want to turn away from them. I trust you now to be my Savior, and I will follow you as my Lord and King, in the fellowship of your church.*

If you have prayed this prayer, it is essential that you find fellowship with other Christians in a church where the Bible is faithfully taught and applied. This fellowship will help you to learn more about God, grow in your faith, and obey what He commands, even when you are involved in a difficult conflict. Let us know how Watermark might be able to serve you as your place of fellowship.

## GET HELP FROM THE CHURCH

As God helps you to practice His peacemaking principles, you will be able to resolve most of the normal conflicts of daily life on your own. Sometimes, however, you will encounter situations that you do not know how to handle.

In such situations, it is wise and appropriate to turn to others in your community or to spiritually mature persons around you who can give you advice on how you might be able to apply these principles more effectively.

When individual advice does not enable you to resolve a dispute, you should ask one or two mutually respected friends to meet with you and your opponent to help you settle your difference through mediation or arbitration (Matt. 18:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:1-8).



If there is any way that we can serve you or help you apply these principles to your relationships, please let us know. To watch or listen to the series messages that accompany these notes, please visit [watermark.org](http://watermark.org).

Material adapted or borrowed from Ken Sande whose generosity in sharing his excellent work on conflict in *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*. © 1997 made this material possible.



