

HEARTOFTHECITY

MEMBER HANDBOOK



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1

VISION AND MISSION

"Real People Enjoying
God..."



At Heart of the City we have a vision of a people who so passionately love and enjoy God that we will start a gospel revolution in our city, in our state, and out to the nations.

Vision: We intend to be one of the catalysts for revival in Anchorage, Alaska, by winning the lost and making disciples.

Our Mission: We are a church of real people, centered on the gospel, who love Jesus and love people. We meet in the center of the city and believe that our vision of a gospel revolution in this city will only take place when people understand what it means to enjoy God.

Strategy: We will use all means necessary to communicate the life-changing message of Jesus to our city without compromising the gospel. We strategically choose to be in a high foot-traffic, storefront area in the heart of the city.

Through powerful preaching, art, music, and commerce, we will boldly, unapologetically, and with love and passion proclaim the good news of the gospel. We will never stop seeking the Lord's initiatives through prayer and His Word as He unfolds His perfect plan to us.

We have a very simple purpose statement: “We are made by Him, made for Him, and will return to Him.” This statement is the simple framework for our ministry.

Made by God – We are a church that values evangelism that leads to salvation and baptism. We will declare that all people are made in the image and likeness of God, which is a truth at war with the message that humans are simply animals with animalistic desires. Sin has blinded us to our true nature, which is the *imago Dei* (image of God in each of us). Only when we are buried with Christ, putting to death the blinding effect of sin, and raised with Christ to our new, true nature in Him are we saved and set free to live life to the full. When Christ regenerates our soul, He makes us real people who no longer trade off the glory of God for images.

Made for God – We are a church that values discipleship that leads to our deepest joy in life. God is the architect and designer of the universe and has decreed that it would operate according to His plan and His will. When we seek to live in a manner that is in agreement with the way God has designed us, we find that we are seeking His glory and our

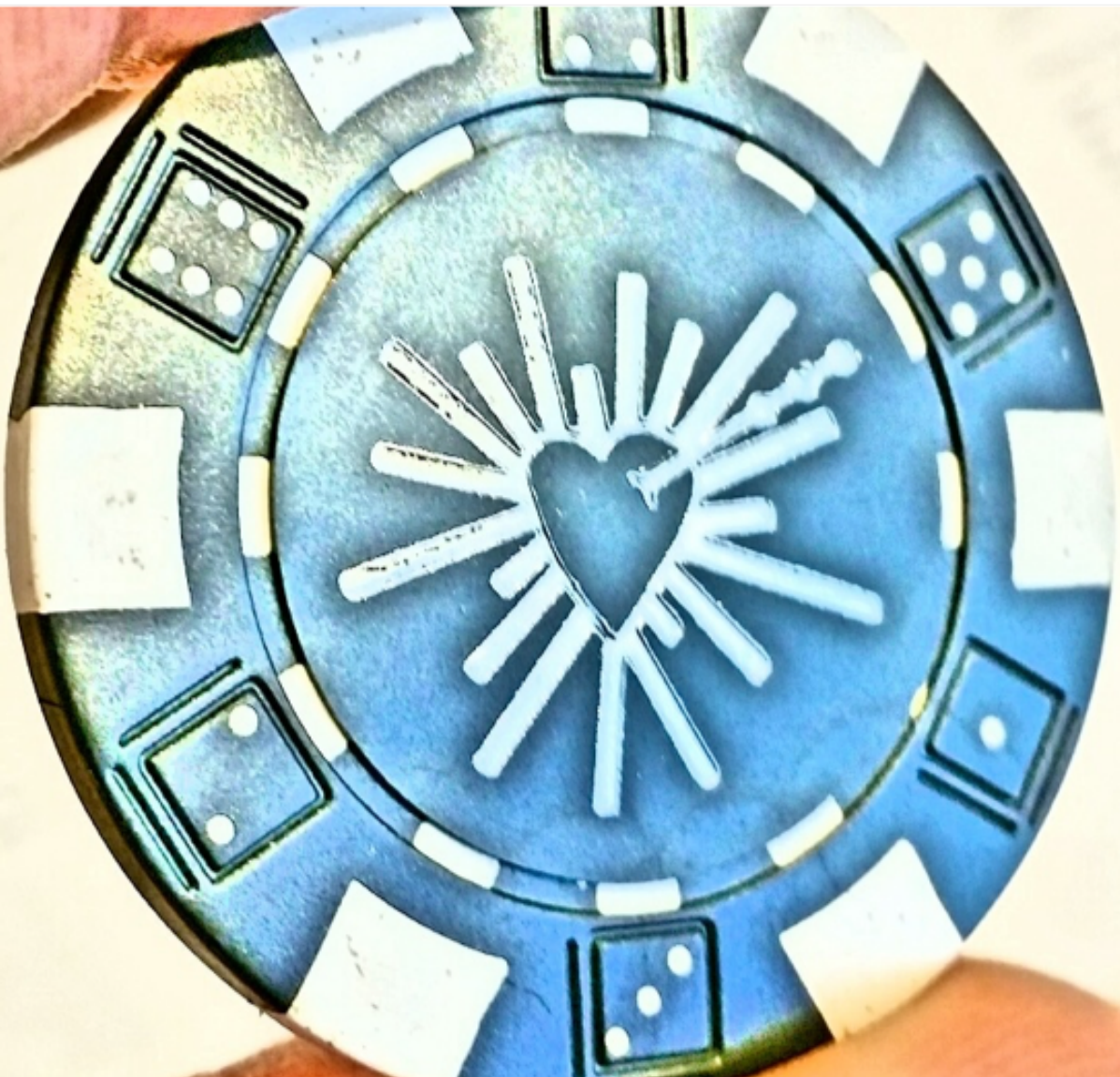
own joy, purpose, and peace simultaneously. We find that when we live for the purposes of God, our hearts are most joyful and satisfied.

We Will Return to God – Our pleasure in the Christian walk is the daily, even hourly, return of our hearts, minds, and emotions to the irresistible draw of Jesus. We seek ways to return to the Lord in prayer, in service, in community, and in the giving of all that we have to Him for our fullest joy and His highest glory. We also believe that every person who has ever been created will return to their maker, Jesus—some to share in the rewards that Christ has won for us, others to be given over to a just and final judgment.

2

WHY MEMBERSHIP

Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:25)



What is meant by the word “church”?

Universally, the church is every person who has heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and believed in it by faith. It is every person who has been regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit and justified before God by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone, to the glory of God alone, according to Scripture alone (Ephesians 4:4).

Locally, the church is the body of Christ or the collection of Christians who gather at Heart of the City and are committed to Christ and to each other. In other words, the church is its members. Jonathan Leeman defines church in this way: “The institution that Jesus created and authorized to pronounce the gospel of the kingdom, to affirm gospel professors, to oversee their discipleship, and to expose imposters”¹ (see also Acts 11:22; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Colossians 4:15). The book of Acts gives the history on how local churches came about.

¹ Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2012).

We see in Scripture that Christ, the head of the church, has given authority to the local church “to pronounce the gospel of the kingdom, to affirm gospel professors, to oversee their discipleship, and to expose imposters” (Leeman; see also Col. 2:8; Romans 16:18).

What is meant by the term “church membership”?

To borrow from Jonathan Leeman again, “Church membership is a formal relationship between a church and a Christian, characterized by the church’s affirmation and oversight of a Christian’s discipleship and the Christian’s submission to living out his or her discipleship in the care of the church. In essence, it’s a kind of marriage relationship between a Christian and the local church”² (which, again, is its members).

Organically, church membership is defined by loving, committed relationships with other followers of Christ who will encourage you, pray for you, care for you, and help you

² Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2012).

to see prevailing sin in your life. These people will also invite you to do all these things for them.

Institutionally, church membership is defined by agreeing with the church's statement of faith, affirming the church covenant as a commitment to live according to the "Realities" set forth by the church in this handbook, and participating in baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Now that our terms are defined, we can answer this question:

Why does HOTC believe in church membership?

1. **It's biblical.** The terms aren't stated explicitly in Scripture, but church membership can be seen conceptually all throughout the New Testament.
2. **It helps give assurance to members.** Discipleship is a group project, and we need help making sure our talk lines up with our walk.
3. **It provides a platform for evangelizing the world.** Like a well-oiled machine, members work together to promote and

advance the gospel to all nations through outreach and missional endeavors.

4. **It exposes false gospels.** If the world hears that “God hates fags,” as Westboro Baptist Church would have people believe, we will expose and combat this false gospel by having a church that displays the opposite and true gospel: *God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life* (John 3:16 English Standard Version—all Scriptures quoted in this booklet are ESV unless otherwise noted).

5. **It edifies the church.** Church membership fosters healthy interdependent relationships between members, which are often used by God to work in people’s lives. The Christian life is not meant to be lived alone or as a wanderer. It’s meant to be lived in the context of a family, bearing with one another in love and responsibility for mutual growth in Christ. Church membership allows members to let other members know the commitment they’ve made to the church and the invitation they’ve extended to be held to that commitment.

6. **It glorifies God.** Seeing church membership as a biblical means to give assurance to Christians, spread the gospel, expose false gospels, and bring life to the church as defined in Scripture, we can easily see it as bringing glory to God.

What does life look like as a church member?

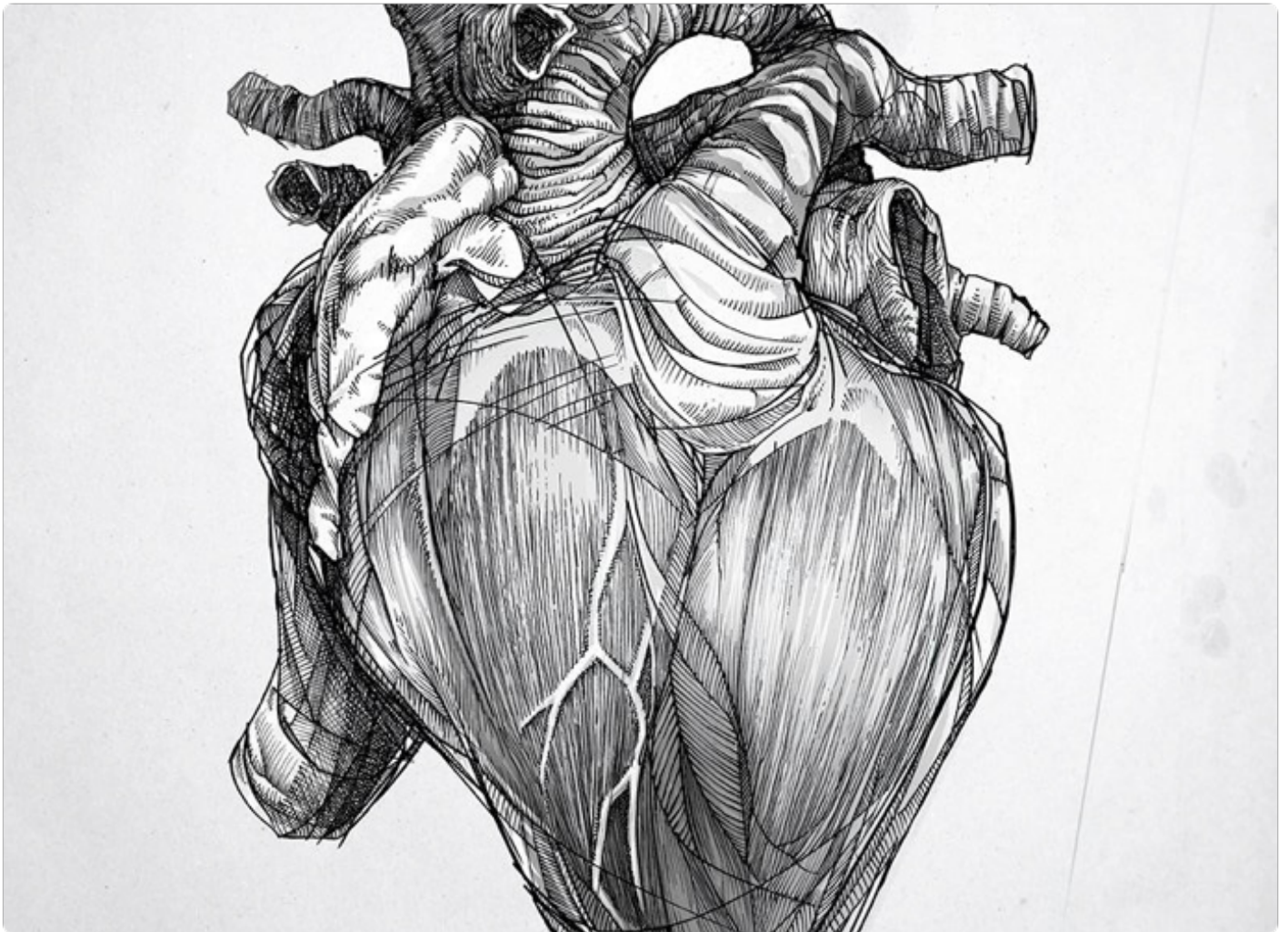
- Prayerfully live a life of repentance and belief in the Word.
- Have an open heart to the church's spiritual authority.
- Participate in baptism/Lord's Supper.
- Live life Monday through Saturday with other members.
- Attend corporate gatherings and membership meetings consistently.
- Utilize the wisdom of other Christians and/or church family/pastors on major life decisions.
- Prayerfully consider how things in your life will affect your ability to serve the church.

- Share the responsibility for the spiritual welfare and physical livelihood of all other members (love, pray for, encourage, care for, and rebuke).
- Regularly give financially to the local church.
- Pray for your pastor and the leadership of this church.

3

REALITIES

"As a church these are the realities that we live by under the perfect, loving and sovereign will of our creator Jesus Christ."



LET'S GET REAL

All of the content in this chapter can be further reviewed on our website under "sermons." Each reality has a corresponding sermon.

1. **(PURPOSE)** We face the reality that we exist to glorify God.

We are built for glory, both giving it to and receiving it from God, which is why we enjoy things like food and pleasure and the Super Bowl and the Olympics. We love awesome things, we talk about awesome things, we are drawn to awesome things, we spend tons of money and time pursuing awesome things. At Heart of the City we are firm believers in not suppressing that but rejoicing in that, because it is a basic human function. You cannot and should not suppress it. If we are willing to admit, all of the incredible things we see and take pleasure in on earth point to something even greater that is beyond us. They were all given to us to capture us with awe and wonder and get us asking the deeper questions of “where” this is all from and “why” we have it. The creation is not an end in itself, but all of creation points to an unfathomably loving and awesome and passionate Creator.

The things that we enjoy here on earth, as good as they are, are not weighty enough or important enough to be worshipped in themselves. But they are intentionally given to

us by God to be enjoyed so that we would have no other response but to look up to heaven and thank God because they are so good and well done that they should cause our hearts to overflow into praise of the One who gave them. When we do that we are simply placing all the weight and importance—all the glory—in the right place.

2. **(GRACE)** We face the reality that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

This is the Mount Everest of our faith. It is what separates us from all other systems of thought or religions known to man. Religion says, “If I can clean up, get things right, perform perfectly, and change, God will love me.” The shocking truth is that as humble as that may sound, it is not. It is rooted in pride—the pride and arrogance of man to think that he will impress God enough to cause Him to not only notice man but to owe man some sort of mutual respect, as if man were equal to God. As Christians we stand on the truth that as hard as you work and as great as you perform, you will never make God indebted to you. Period.

Good news! God loves you, not because you are good or bad but because you are His. And He wants you to come home, not when you are ready, not when you can be proud of yourself because you have accomplished so much, not when you feel a little better about yourself, not when you have learned the Christian language and the newest popular worship song, not when you get good at conversation and “shining it on”. Grace is getting something that you haven’t built up the courage to think you’re even worthy of asking for, like getting an invitation that you never should have gotten.

Grace is not leniency, it is power. It is a force. Grace is not a power that you earn; it can only be given by faith alone in Christ alone. The grace of God does not just come up to meet sin and keep it neutralized. It is the power that utterly destroys sin.

3. **(FAITH)** We face the reality that we live a life of faith.

Without faith it is impossible to please God. We realize that our faith creates nothing but simply apprehends what Jesus

has already accomplished. This frees His people from having to constantly wonder if they are in the will of God. Jesus goes before us and works all things for His plan and purpose.

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him (Heb. 11:6).

We use a simple definition of faith. Faith starts with understanding that leads to conviction that completes itself in action. If you take out one of these elements, you do not have faith. For instance, if you have understanding and conviction but never take action, then you are all talk. Or if you have deep conviction and take action but are without understanding, then you are brainwashed and don't really understand what you are doing. Faith has to have all three parts to be biblical faith (read Hebrews chapter 11).

4. **(LIFE)** We face the reality that we live a Spirit-filled life.

We believe that our faith is not just an intellectual faith. It's not just a set of facts. Facts are essential to our faith, but facts are not enough. "The Holy Spirit uses facts like kindling

around a fire, to ignite affections in our hearts that cause us to burn brightly for Christ.”³ Knowing facts is not the same as knowing Jesus Christ, the living God, which is why Jesus says to the Pharisees, “*And you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life*” (John 5:38–40). Jesus says we can study the Bible in vain if we fail to see Him in it.

We believe in the activity of the Holy Spirit and that all of the gifts that lead to glorifying and revealing Jesus are still at work in His church today, except for the inspiration of Scripture through apostles. An easy way to find these gifts in the Bible is to remember the numbers 12 and 4. These are the chapters where you find lists of gifts in the New Testament: Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4. The gifts that we affirm in the church today are

³ (Some parts adapted from Matt Chandler sermon series “Ultimate Authority” <http://thevillagechurch.net/resources/sermons/series/ultimate-authority/>)

prophecy in proportion to our faith, service, teaching, exhortation, generosity, leading with zeal, acts of mercy with cheerfulness, words of wisdom, words of knowledge, the gift of faith, healing (physical, spiritual, and emotional), working of miracles, the ability to distinguish between spirits, various kinds of tongues, the interpretation of tongues, apostolic gifting (again, not the same apostolic anointing of the early church in writing Scripture), the gift of being an evangelist, shepherding or pastoral gift, and the gift of preaching. All of these gifts are supplied and sustained by God Himself for the explicit purpose to reveal Christ to us in a more full and accurate way (John 16:4–15).

5. **(LOVE)** We face the reality that to love God is to love people.

The treasure of Jesus is people, and the treasure of people is Jesus (the treasure of people is not people, it is Jesus). We want to reach the lost **not** because they are an opportunity for our church to grow but because they are the people that Jesus “misses the most.” We refer to them not as prospective members but as “the precious.”

It is only possible to truly love people when you are satisfied in yourself with all that Jesus is for you. If you are not, you will try to get from people what you can only get from God. Jesus changes the way we interact with, think about, and handle people. He delivers us from using people as a resource from which we receive the fulfillment of our needs, and He releases us to have a true, generous relationship as we seek our joy in the joy of the other person.

If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen (1 John 4:20).

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing (1 Cor. 13:1–3).

There is a gain to be realized and a benefit to receive when we love people the way that God designed us to. The benefit we receive when we put others ahead of us is the joy of seeing people helped, loved, and saved, which puts the glory of God on display for the world to see. It is the love of Jesus Christ in us that is continually poured out through us to the lost and hurting people of this city.

This side of heaven no one will love people perfectly, but as a church we will seek our joy in being poured out for the joy of our fellow man.

6. **(PROBLEM)** We face the reality that the greatest problem in the universe is not moral failure but failure to love God.

We're not going to oversimplify or pretend that people are not complicated, but our problem is not that we are too complicated. There is one main problem with mankind and it is not a moral failure. Moral failure is external evidence of an internal reality. As people we get so busy trying to fix external symptoms like debt, marital problems, greed, and impatience, but we fail to deal with the real problem.

The universal problem with all mankind is not sinful **behavior**, but the real problem is that we fail to love God, which causes paralysis of all life. If we would simply honor, enjoy, include, and trust Him, our symptoms would begin to clear and not return. Knowing that you are sinful is not enough. Confessing your sin is not enough. Therapy and counseling are not enough. To only get that far is to be standing still, paralyzed in life.

If symptoms are all we are trying to fix, then we are stuck, standing still, fixing and re-fixing symptoms of a greater problem. What Jesus is always doing is getting to the disease, getting to the cause of the external effect. When He was on earth He didn't just run around and point out all the external sinful behavior. Instead He continually cut to the heart and challenged the motive or intention rather than just the action.

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

We go miserably wrong thinking that the symptom is the problem. The Christian life is not so much a life of what you should stop doing but of what to apprehend—the glory of God.

7. **(JOY)** We face the reality that seeking our joy is not a sin but a basic human function.

All humans on the planet, if they are honest, would agree that at the end of the day, they just want to have joy, peace, shalom, centeredness, relief . . . to be “OK.” Call it what you will, frame it with whatever words you would like, but we all know what we are talking about. We cannot help but continually calculate our next step to that end. This is a God-given function so that we might find Him. Our problems begin when we stop short and settle for an inferior joy.

Blaise Pascal, born in the 1600s, introduced an understanding that all humanity seeks happiness. From the person who deliberates whether they should go to the mall and buy something nice to the person who deliberates to end his or her life, all people are seeking what would make

them most happy. This is a basic human function and cannot be changed or denied. Seeking joy is not a sin. However, what we find our joy in can be sinful. We are born blind to what will truly meet that need, yet we convince ourselves that we know what will achieve it. Apart from your pursuit of Christ you are simply settling for an incomplete, conditional, and expiring joy. Your pursuit of Jesus and your pursuit of your own joy are inseparable. If you are not seeking God, you are not really seeking your joy, and if you do not seek Jesus ultimately for your joy, you are not seeking Him. In other words, if your relationship with Jesus does not bring about joy, you do not know Him. The chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him.

8. **(WRATH)** We face the reality that as children of God, we are not under wrath but are under mercy.

God the Father is angry at sin because sin is destroying His beautiful people. A good father does not let his children continue to be destroyed; he does something about it. Because God loves us, He made a way to destroy our sin without destroying us. He made a way to put an end to the

destructive force of sin in our lives. He sent His own Son to take the wrath of God so that we wouldn't have to. Jesus Christ has completely absorbed the wrath and anger of God that is directed toward our sin. His propitiation was so complete that no wrath or anger from God remains for us whatsoever.

Now, because Jesus stepped in to absorb the just wrath of God on our behalf, everything that happens to us in our lives is working for our good and God's glory, not our demise or destruction. Romans 8:28 could not be clearer about that fact, and it is an anchor for our soul. When we are grafted into the family of God, He looks at us only with eyes of love and compassion. Our life is perfectly designed by God based on our temperament, personality, gender, social position, etc., to give us the deepest, fullest revelation of Jesus possible. When something "bad" happens to us, it is not God punishing us because He is angry with us. In Jesus Christ we have a rock-solid assurance that it is in God's perfect plan to allow it for our fullest revelation of Him. Through His perfect work in us He is building a depth of character that will start a revolution when we are observed by the world. God

takes what the devil means for evil and uses it to bring even more glory to Himself and more power and joy to those who love Him.

9. **(STUFF)** We face the reality that we find the fullness of all things, especially life and joy, is in Christ.

Second Corinthians 4:17 and Romans 8:20–21 tell us that God makes real people.

We have exchanged the glory of God for images. A reality that we have to face as people is that a life of fullness and power and strength is found not in “stuff” but only in Jesus. Why is that true? Because God has decreed it to be so. God purposely spun the world into frustration so that nothing would really satisfy us but God Himself.

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:20–21).

Sadly, we prefer to worship images and idols rather than God. We are intoxicated with new phones and shoes and cars and houses and “stuff.” When we do that, we are settling for the shifting shadows of this world and are leveraging everything that we are in something that will ultimately shift, change, or end and will leave us empty. If “stuff” didn’t break or decay or die or change, it would be eternal, and it is not; it is not supposed to be. God is giving us a clear picture of the fleeting pleasures that this world extends to us through “stuff.” It breaks and decays and ends up in the trash. He intentionally causes “stuff” to be frustrating to us so that we would be captured by a superior satisfaction, prefer something greater, and long to make Jesus the unchangeable, unfading, undefiled, and infinitely valuable treasure of our soul. That we would learn to crave Him; after all, everything else is just an apple . . . (inside joke)

10. **(HOME)** We face the reality that God has purposely placed us here at this time, in this place, with these people.

We are the freest people in the history of mankind, in the most independently spirited state in the Union, yet if we are

really honest we all long for home. We all need a place we call home, a people whom we are at home with, and a sense of home (meaning protected, less vulnerable, understood, loved, and at rest). When Jesus was a little boy He decided to separate Himself from His parents and stay at the temple. He did this at a time when His father Joseph was to pass everything on to Him as a son, so Jesus would become a bar mitzvah. Yet Jesus makes a massive statement about who and what He considers "home." He was found at the temple after three days and His only justification for it was, *"Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"* (Luke 2:49) Our truest sense of home is found only in the presence, protection, and care of our Father, God Himself.

11. **(DISCONTENTMENT)** We face the reality that there is a holy discontentment with where our lives are and a hope for where they could be.

In our minds we are convinced that if we could get to where we are going, we would finally be content. We will give ourselves permission to have peace when and only when we get to where we are going, and until we get there, we cannot

rest. The reality is that life has a discontentedness we have to deal with. Our problem is that getting to a place of contentment in this life through our met demands and set goals has no end. So we live a life of being discontented and never really settled.

The answer to our problem lies in the fact that the antithesis to discontentment is not contentment, it is maturity—or fully developed character (see 1 Cor. 13:4–7 and Galatians 5:22–23). To reach contentment means to reach a perpetual state of peace, and on this side of heaven, you will simply not get to that point. We face the reality that contentment won't happen until we have learned to draw on the fathomless wealth of Christ, and to do that takes growing and maturing in Him day in and day out.

The essence of spiritual maturity is simply coming to know and understand Jesus being our all in all.

12. **(WAR)** We face the reality that life is war and we are called to win.

Life is war. You can fight to a death that brings life, or you can fight against “the way, the truth, and the life” and die. Simply put, if you are not fighting sin, you miss the essence of Christianity. Saying “I can go ahead and sin because God’s grace is going to cover it. I can continue in it, and enjoy it . . .” is the same as saying “Wrestling is closer to a Broadway musical that I get to perform than a competition against an opponent that I am called to beat.” If you don’t see your faith as a war, you miss the very nature of it.

To say you are a “Christian” but to not actively fight sin is as delusional and ridiculous as a Broadway star identifying as a wrestler. The implication is that if you consider yourself a Christian and you do not have an antagonistic relationship with your sin, you are **not** actively fighting; you are giving no evidence that you are a Christian. Wrestlers don’t dance and sing their way to a pin. In this life you will have to be determined to fight for your joy. We do not fight against people (flesh and blood), we fight against the soul-shrinking, destructive power of sin and evil in ourselves.

God doesn't just ask us to struggle against sin, He tells us to kill it! *For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live* (Rom. 8:13). It is clear that God wants us to win in our battles against sin and not just wrestle with it.

The main way to kill sin is with an offensive weapon. We can pray, we can fast, we can hope, we can confess; but if we want to kill sin, we must have the right weapon. In Ephesians 6 we see a list of spiritual weapons, but only one of them is an offensive weapon: *the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God* (Eph. 6:17). So if you want to kill sin, you will be best served by applying the Word of God to what you are fighting in order to kill it.

13. **(VICTORY)** We face the reality that there is such a thing as a victorious life, but we have trouble defining it.

We are in a war that is not winnable unless we understand how to define victory. You can have all the weapons that you want, but if you don't know what victory looks like, how will you advance? How will you know if you are winning or have

won? How will you celebrate? How will you rejoice? Most importantly, how will you thank God for the victory? Unless we understand what it means to win and recognize when we are winning, it feels like the pressure to be victorious is rubbed in our face as we go from battle to battle and lose.

This is God's definition of victory in Christ: victory is not simply defeating your enemy to the point of annihilation, but real victory is when your enemy rises up to serve your purposes. We get confused about victory, because we sin and we know it. Every one of us. Before the end of the week we're going to make a bad call or lack wisdom. Before too long we will reject a person who is hard to love, we will lack faith, we will doubt, we will lack courage, we will worry, etc. But we see in the gospel that everything the devil threw at Christ simply made Christ more glorious and the devil all the more thwarted. The enemy's intent was that sin would lead to the death of God and His work in mankind. The plot was to crucify Him and show the world how weak God is and how easily He can be defeated. It didn't work; God mocked the devil by rising from the dead!

Sin is irrational, illogical, baseless, and delusional. It is stupidity that leads to stupidity. Sin is like a fever; as it grows, it makes a person less and less coherent. Sin is not able to deliver on what it promises . . . ever. It promised to hand over the Son of God, but it did not! In fact, at the cross sin walked up to the feet of Jesus, bowed down, and did what it was told: "Be defeated, be exposed as a sham, be powerless against me, be swallowed up. Where is your sting? Where is your victory?" The enemy played into the hand of God. Sin that was supposed to lead to death now leads to a resurrected Jesus.

So what does victory look like? When you sin—and you will—what does it lead to? More sin? The next thing? The next person? The next job? Or does it lead to the resurrected Christ? For reasons only held by God, sin is still in the world, but in Christ we now have a choice. You have to decide: will your sin lead to death, or will it lead to the resurrected Christ? Stated clearly, if as a result of your sin you end up at the foot of the cross, you win! If in the middle of your sin you repent, you win! If in the middle of your broken promises to God and to people you repent and turn toward God, you

win! If in the middle of your inconstancies and wandering you turn toward God, you win! To God be the glory! *But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us* (Rom. 5:8).

14. **(SUPERNATURAL)** We face the reality of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit and desire them earnestly.

You have a spirit, there is a spiritual realm, and we can interact in the supernatural. And all of it ultimately exists for one purpose—to glorify Jesus. We can make two huge mistakes as human beings. We can give zero attention to the supernatural or live only in the supernatural and blame everything on a “spirit.” We need to be honest and deal with the fact that both a supernatural realm and a natural realm exist.

Because of Jesus our faith goes infinitely in both directions, and the Bible never asks us to find moderation or balance in it. Actually, the Bible is constantly asking us to wager it all for the sake of Christ and His gospel. So moderation and

balance are not what we see the Bible is getting at when it comes to the supernatural and the natural realms.

God doesn't want us to be moderate as a church. He would rather that we be 100 percent supernatural people and 100 percent natural people. He wants us to be 100 percent spiritually minded and 100 percent human. Not sometimes spiritual and sometimes human, but always human and always spiritual. Where do you see that tension held perfectly? Only in the incarnate Son of God.

Christ is 100 percent God and was 100 percent man—not half and half. If we want to be more “spiritual” we fix our eyes and our hearts on Jesus and not just “spiritual things.” If we want to do more good works and make a huge difference in this generation we fix our eyes and our hearts fully on Jesus. To be fully spiritual and fully human, we put everything we have in both extremes without an ounce of doubt in either one.

We fully embrace miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit and His supernatural intervention and action in this day and age. We

are also fully convinced that God uses human means to carry out His perfect will.

15. **(SUFFERING)** We face the reality that God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him in the midst of suffering.⁴

Just because you are a Christian does not mean that you will not suffer. The Christian life is not the absence of pain, loss, injury, or injustice in your life. As a child of God, you are not all of a sudden unaffected by or immune to the tragedies of life.

Our faith says that our suffering has purpose. Suffering has serious meaning and worth. Our suffering requires serious attention. “Suffering well” has a massive amount of influence and power on who you become, but also, **your** suffering has a profound affect on what the body of Christ becomes. Your testimony of how Jesus is sustaining you or has sustained you

⁴⁴ (Some parts adapted from Matt Chandler sermon series “Ultimate Authority
<http://thevillagechurch.net/resources/sermons/series/ultimate-authority/>)

through your pain is living water to a generation with an unquenchable thirst for truth and reality.

Suffering is the advent of your glory. Suffering is the birth pangs of you partaking of the “divine nature.” Suffering in Christ is the dawn of your resurrection. To be resurrected you must first die. God uses our suffering to glorify Himself through us so that the world can more clearly see Christ. We face the reality that we are not victims of circumstance, but we are products of intention.

I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death (Philippians 3:10 New International Version).

Suffering well forms and shapes who we are; therefore, it forms and shapes the body of Christ and has purpose way beyond us. One of the worst human tragedies is to suffer and be miserable for no reason. If you live for nothing, you are miserable and suffer for no reason. Not us! Every second of our suffering is gaining for us our glory.

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:17–18).

16. **(CULTURE)** We face the reality of sexuality, marriage, gender, and the sanctity of life.

This section of the “Realities” is provided to bring unity and clarity. We live in a time when clarity on certain issues is incredibly helpful in our pursuit of joy and the glory of God. At Heart of the City we want to be transparent about our stance on important topics relevant to the culture we are a part of so that we can remain unified in our pursuit of Jesus. We understand that the topics included in this section are probably the most controversial of our cultural climate, which is why we felt it necessary to provide clarity on what we believe will lead us to our highest joy and God’s highest glory concerning them.

The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God, speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and how people should conduct themselves relative to God and other people. Our pastor and elders are Heart of the City’s

interpretive authority on the Bible's application of doctrine, practice, policy, and the disciplines our church embraces. The leaders and members of Heart of the City welcome spirited and respectful discourse on matters within our statement of faith and ancillary documents as long as it follows our fundamental belief that all people must be embraced with compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity, without exception (see Mark 12:28–31; Luke 6:31; 1 John 2:9–11). We realize that not all people agree on these issues, but we can agree that hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture or the beliefs or practices of our church.

We deeply believe in and practice the kindness of God that leads to repentance (Rom. 2:4). Disagreements don't grieve God; how we handle our disagreements determines whether God is grieved or not (John 13:35).

Marriage

Marriage is not simply a cultural institution. Marriage is created by God, and He has defined it as the covenant relationship of one man and one woman under the headship of Jesus Christ for life.

First and foremost, marriage between one man and one woman for life uniquely reflects Christ's relationship with His church (Eph. 5:21–33). Also, the marriage covenant exists as one of the most prominent ways that God displays His gospel to the world. No other union can challenge and invite us to be more like Christ than the union of marriage. God uses the institution of marriage to make us more like Him, and we need both a man and a woman to do that.

It should go without saying that marriage matters to culture. God created and sanctioned marriage to bring together the complementary halves of humanity, men and women, by joining them in "one flesh" unions to tell us something about Himself (Genesis 2:18–25). This union displays the image of God in His fullness as a Father and as described in His feminine attributes, as seen in Matthew 23:37, for instance: "As a hen gathers her chicks under her wings" (NIV).

Marriage as designed by God also serves as the foundational unit of a stable society because it provides the best chance that children will grow up in a home with both their mom and dad, who will in turn reflect the fullness of God in the home (see 1 Cor. 7:2; also listen to the sermon “Home” from 5/14/14).

We believe that the term marriage has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen. 2:18–25).

The pastor, elders, members, and staff of Heart of the City will reserve our participation to weddings that reflect our understanding of marriage as God has designed it. Finally, the facilities and property of Heart of the City will be used to promote and host weddings between one man and one woman based on our deep spiritual and biblical convictions.

Gender Roles

God wonderfully and immutably created both male and female humans, and these distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen. 1:26–27; Psalm 139:14–15). God made men and women in perfect equality as human beings, 100 percent equal and yet distinct. We have a deep biblical conviction that for a person to reject their God-given gender is to reject the image of God in which they were made. We believe to change gender is to be presumptuous as to what will ultimately make that person the most joyful and bring God the most glory. We have a deep biblical conviction that we are who God says we are and not who “we” or anyone else says we are. God is the maker of all things, and He does not make mistakes.

This God—his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him (Ps. 18:30).

Each person on the planet is fearfully and wonderfully made by God, and to compromise that is to compromise the glory of God. However, we are committed to walk with and

embrace those who are born as “intersex,” androgynous, or hermaphrodite, with both sets of genitalia. We will lovingly seek the wisdom of God to care for and minister to those beautiful people in whatever way we are permitted and asked to. We will not turn anyone away, nor will we look down on any human for any reason.

Sexuality

At Heart of the City we believe that the Bible clearly states the moral boundaries for sex and sexuality. Sex is reserved for one man and one woman who have been joined together by God in the union of a legal marriage, and anything outside of that is considered “sexually immoral.” The Bible gives us very clear descriptions of sex outside the boundaries of moral action, which includes adultery, sex outside of marriage, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and lust after another person (which would include pornography). Jesus even says that the intention to commit a sexual act outside of the marriage covenant is sexually immoral. However, a standard being high does not relieve us from endeavoring to meet it (see Matthew 15:18–20; 1 Cor. 6:9–10; Matt. 5:27–28; also Rom. 1:18–32).

Sanctity of Life

At Heart of the City we believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all of its forms, including preborn, elderly, physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through death. God is passionate, He's protective, and He's the provider for all human life, and we are called to reflect Him by defending, protecting, and providing for all human life (Ps. 139; Proverbs 31:9; Ps. 82:3; Isaiah 1:17).

God's Mercy

At Heart of the City we believe God is merciful to all sinners. He offers redemption to all who confess and forsake their sins, seeking His forgiveness and mercy through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19–21; Rom. 10:9–10; 1 Cor. 6:9–11).

We also believe that every person must be embraced with compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28–31; Luke 6:31). Hateful, harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any person, regardless of their biblical convictions, is inconsistent with the gospel of Christ and the practices of Heart of the City.

We are a church of real people who understand that the more we become like God, the more joy and freedom and satisfaction we receive as a result. It often takes an entire lifetime to apprehend and fully develop in just one of God's truths. We serve a patient and loving God who continues to forgive and remain faithful. Our intention as a church community is to continue to be radical and risky in our love for God and for people. We will fearlessly wrap our arms around every person who will let us with the love of Jesus and watch as He melts away sin in all of us.

Gender Roles in the Church

Jesus calls qualified men and women to lead His church. We understand that the roles of men and women in the church are shared equally, except one. We find no biblical evidence that the role of elder should be or can be filled by a woman. There is no biblical evidence or support for this distinction to have anything to do with the competency or capacity of women. Biblical eldership is the distinction of who will ultimately be held responsible for the preserving of the doctrine of the church to the point of discipline.

First Timothy 2:12 says, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.” There are three main interpretations of this text:

1. “It is completely cultural and has no bearing today.” I refute that by what the apostle Paul says next, bringing in the creation of man and woman from the beginning of time to show that this is not a cultural issue but a design issue.
2. “There are two things women are not permitted to do: teach in the assembled church meeting or exercise authority over a man in the church.”
3. “There is one thing that a woman should not do. A woman is not permitted to exercise authoritative teaching over a man (men) in the assembled church.”

We conclude that 1 Timothy 2:12 means one thing: a woman should not take up the responsibility to exercise authoritative teaching over the men of the church.

The reason for that interpretation starts with the fact that we see in the Bible women praying and prophesying in the church like men do—in an assembly, on a Sunday (if that were the actual day of the week they met), in front of people, when people are quiet and listening to a word given by a person (1 Cor. 11).

In general we see women often opening a Bible and teaching men. Priscilla, with her husband Aquila, took aside Apollos and corrected his teaching. It says they taught him, not "Aquila taught him and his wife stayed silent." Timothy was brought up by his grandma Lois and then his mother Eunice. When Paul gives his final greetings in 2 Timothy 4, he sends thanks from and to not just the men who were laboring for the gospel but the women as well, Prisca and Claudia.

So based on the facts, not the interpretations, we can safely conclude that a woman is permitted to impart insight and wisdom in a way where everyone stops and listens in a church service and in the home.

Therefore we conclude that 1 Timothy 2:12 means one thing.

A woman should not take up the responsibility to exercise authoritative teaching over the men of the church.

Tim Keller uses this example: "If a member of our church started going around teaching that all of you need to be circumcised to be saved... 'that is a destructive, non-Biblical teaching which is hurting people spiritually. A man or a woman could tell that person that they must desist from teaching it or they will have to leave the church.' However it is up to the male elders of the church to enforce that this person desist from such destructive behavior. That is

‘teaching authority’—it belongs only to the elders.”⁵

If the wife of an elder heard about it, it would be right for her to say to her husband, “We have a problem that you need to deal with.”

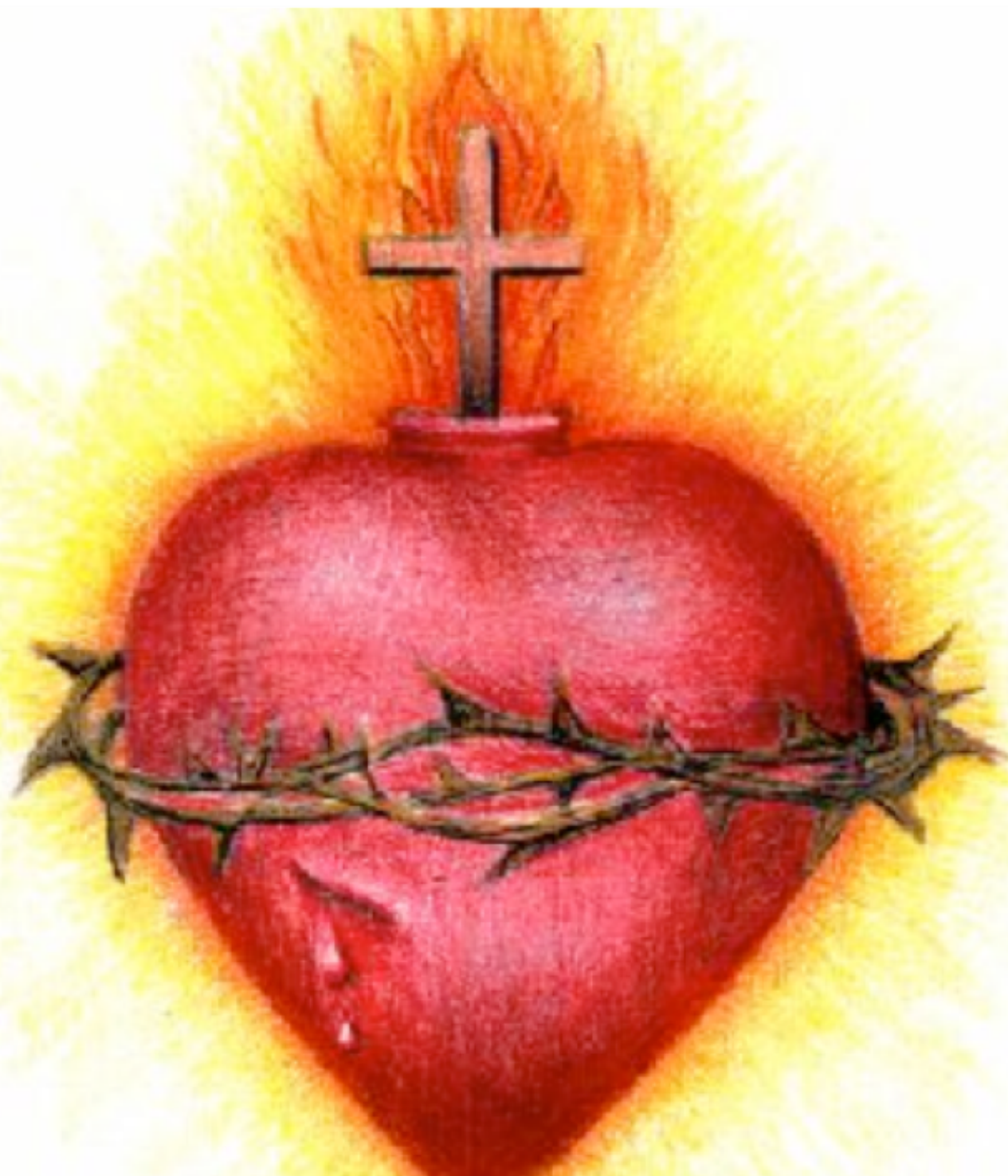
We do not believe that 1 Timothy 2:12 or 1 Corinthians 14:35–36 precludes women teaching the Bible to men or speaking publicly. To “teach with authority” (1 Tim. 2:12) refers to disciplinary authority over someone in a matter of doctrine. In no case will we expect the women who are among us to take responsibility for the things that we know God has entrusted to men.

⁵ Tim Keller quote from article cited - <http://9marks.org/article/can-women-teach-under-the-authority-of-elders/>

4

MEMBER COVENANT

"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Pet. 4:8–10).



Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Rom. 12:1–2).

Here is how we define a disciple. Simply put, a disciple is a person who loves Jesus, loves people, and has these distinctions:

1. **BY GOD** – (A life of secured identity) We know who we are and how we are made—in the image and likeness of God, who is Jesus Christ. We have a rock-solid identity as a Christian.
2. **FOR GOD** – (A life of worship) We have a purpose and live intentionally to the glory of God by enjoying God.
3. **RETURN TO GOD** – (A life of community) The fullness of the Christian life is best expressed and can only be fully achieved when done in community.

As Christians, we are members of God's "household," called to function, participate, and minister in a particular place within the body of Christ (Eph. 2:19). A healthy body requires that each member does its part well. A healthy church requires the same: members who are sacrificially committed and well equipped to do the works of service that God has prepared in advance for them to do (Eph. 2:10; 4:12). Heart of the City holds its members in high regard; we expect them to lead as missionaries of the gospel to the culture. God in His sovereignty placed us in this city, among these people, in this century, for a reason (Acts 17:26–27).

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them (Rom. 12:3–8).

Being a member of Heart of the City is really about being part of a family in a “house.” All members are disciples of Jesus, unified by their identity in Christ. This unity is expressed in the way they collaborate in loving God, loving fellow Christians, and loving non-Christians. Members who enter into a covenant with this local church are called to enjoy and be entrusted with a higher degree of responsibility and service. At the same time, the elders and deacons are covenanted to assist members, first and foremost, and to love and lead, provide counsel and aid, pray for, teach, and guide them.

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace (1 Peter 4:8–10).

What do we mean by “membership covenant”?

A covenant is a promise by which we obligate ourselves to one another in such a way that the obligation of one party is

not dependent on the faithfulness of the other (Ps. 76:11; Ezekiel 20:44; 36:22; Hosea 2:19–20; 3:1; 2 Tim. 2:13).

If at any time one of the parties of this church covenant continues in a state of unfaithfulness to its provisions, the other is released from certain obligations.

The covenant of Heart of the City contains many obligations that are general Christian conditions of faithfulness. For example, all Christians, whether members of Heart of the City or elsewhere, are required to submit to the Scriptures, pursue holiness, steward resources, etc. Such requirements are universal obligations for the Christ follower regardless of any failures on the part of the local church.

Conversely, if an individual member feels that Heart of the City's corporate church body is not remaining faithful to the requirements of this covenant, it is the responsibility of the individual member to lovingly and humbly express his or her concerns to the leadership of the church. If Heart of the City church elders are unwilling to change and maintain faithfulness to this covenant, then the member is freed from

his or her membership obligations and encouraged to seek membership elsewhere, given the church's disobedience.

The requirements of this membership covenant are not intended as any additions to the biblical obligations of a believer. This covenant document functions primarily as an overall, yet not exhaustive, explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the obedience that faith produces in followers of Jesus.

Core Doctrinal Beliefs

The following beliefs represent the core of central orthodox beliefs from a biblical and historical perspective. While a full understanding of and the ability to adequately articulate these beliefs is not required for membership, the explicit rejection of any one of these particular beliefs disqualifies a person from membership at Heart of the City.

I believe . . .

- The Bible (the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments) is the infallible Word of God, verbally inspired by

God, and is without error in the original manuscripts. The Scriptures are true, authoritative, and sufficient, and they are the ultimate doctrinal authority on all matters (Ps. 19:7–11; Isa. 55:11; 1 Cor. 15:3–4; 2 Tim. 3:15–16; 2 Peter 1:20–21; Heb. 4:12).

- There is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isa. 45:5–6; Isa. 46:9–10; John 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:4–6; 1 Tim. 2:5).
- The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. The Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit. The Son is neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son (Gen. 1:26; Ps. 45:6–7; Ps. 110:1; Matt. 3:13–17; Matt. 28:17–20; 1 Cor. 12:4–6).
- I am, along with all humanity (Christ excluded), by birth and action a sinner (Gen. 6:5; Ps. 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Rom. 3:23; 5:8,12–21; 7:18; Eph. 2:1–3).
- The deserved penalty for sin is death, both physical and spiritual (Gen. 2:15–17; Gen. 3:19; Rom. 5:12; 6:23; James 1:14–15).

- Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, was born of a virgin, and is both fully God and fully human (Matt. 1:20; Luke 2:52; John 1:1–4,14; Col. 1:15–20; Heb. 1:1–3).
- Jesus Christ died as my substitute to pay the penalty for my sin (John 1:29; 10:1–18; Rom. 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:1–4; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 1:4; 1 Peter 3:18).
- Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead (Matt. 28:1–20; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–53; John 1:20–21 1 Cor. 15:12–34).
- Jesus Christ physically ascended into heaven and will one day physically return (John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Heb. 9:28; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 1:7).
- There will be a future physical resurrection of the dead. Those who trust in Jesus Christ alone will be raised to eternity with God. Those who have not trusted in Jesus Christ will be raised to eternal separation from God (Matt. 25:31–46; John 5:28–29; Acts 24:15).
- Only by trusting in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone can I be saved and reconciled to God and experience

true life and joy (John 3:18; 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom. 3:21–26; 1 Tim. 2:5–6).

I understand that the above “Core Doctrinal Beliefs” (further explained in the attached statement of faith) are universal Christian beliefs held historically by all followers of Jesus and are required for Heart of the City membership. I also understand that Heart of the City has secondary beliefs that will be passionately preached and taught. I have read the Heart of the City “Realities” that expounds on these secondary beliefs. Although complete agreement with secondary beliefs in Heart of the City’s “Realities” is not a requirement for membership, I understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace. I will adhere to Heart of the City’s position on primary theological issues, and I will not be divisive over secondary issues (Eph. 4:1–3; Heb. 13:7,17).

Members’ Basic Statement of Faith

- I am a Christian saved from eternal separation from God by faith in Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, through His death

and resurrection, by which I am assured of eternal life (John 3:16–18; Rom. 3:23–26).

- I believe Jesus Christ is exactly who He claimed to be (Isa. 5:6; Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:70; John 4:25–26; 6:29; 8:58; 11:25–27; 14:6–7; 15:5).
- I have repented of my sins and have been made a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 1:9).
- In obedience to Scripture, I have been baptized to personally identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and to publicly demonstrate my commitment as a disciple of Jesus (Col. 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21).

Obligations of Heart of the City to Its Members

We covenant:

- That your elders and deacons will meet the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:1–13; 5:17–22; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Peter 5:1–4).

- To seek God's will for our church community to the best of our ability as we study the Scriptures and follow the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1–5).
- To care for you and seek your growth as a disciple of Christ, in part by equipping you for service (Eph. 4:11–13) and praying for you regularly, particularly when you are sick (James 5:14).
- To provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture (Acts 20:27–28; Gal. 6:6, 1 Tim. 5:17–18).
- To be on guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28–31).
- To exercise church discipline when necessary (Matt. 18:15–20; 1 Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1).
- To set an example and join you in fulfilling the duties of church members (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Tim. 4:12).
- To offer all members an ability to vote on issues that the bylaws of Heart of the City allow.

Obligations of Members to Heart of the City

- I covenant to maintain a close relationship with the Lord Jesus through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, and the practice of spiritual disciplines. My relationship will be evident through a life that glorifies Jesus and my participation in weekly worship services, communion, Heart of the City community, and service (Ps. 105:1–2; 119:97; Acts 2:42–47; Heb. 10:23–25; 2 Peter 1:3).
- I have read and understood the Heart of the City “Statement of Faith” and will not be divisive to its teaching. I also understand the importance of opening my heart to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace. I will adhere to Heart of the City’s position on primary theological issues, and I will not be divisive over secondary issues (Eph. 4:1–3; Heb. 13:7,17).
- I covenant to submit to the authority of Scripture as the final arbiter on all issues (Ps. 119; 2 Tim. 3:16–17).
- I covenant to submit to discipline by God through His Holy Spirit, to follow biblical procedures for church discipline in my

relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ, to submit to righteous discipline when approached biblically by brothers and sisters in Christ, and to submit to discipline by church leadership if the need should ever arise (Ps. 141:5; Matt. 18:15–17; 1 Cor. 5:1–5; 2 Cor. 2:5–8; Gal. 6:1–5,8; 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 2:25; Titus 1:9; 3:10–11; Heb. 12:5–11; Rev. 2:5–7,14–25).

- I will steward the resources God has given me, including my time, talents, and treasure (Prov. 3:9–10; Rom. 12:1–2; Gal. 5:22–26; Eph. 4:1–16; 5:15–18). This includes regular financial giving, service, and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary (Rom. 12:1–8; 2 Cor. 11:8–9; 12:7–31; 1 Peter 4:10–11).
- I covenant to attend all member meetings to the best of my ability and vote when asked.
- I agree, by God's grace, to walk in holiness as an act of worship to Jesus Christ, who has saved me from my sin so that I could live a new life (2 Cor. 5:17). I agree to confess my sins to Christian brothers or sisters and seek help to put my

sin to death as the Bible, my pastors, and my conscience inform me (1 Cor. 8:7; Gal. 5:19–21; Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5; 1 John 1:6–10).

My Commitment to the Mission of Heart of the City

Heart of the City Mission Statement: *“Heart of the City is a church of real people, centered on the gospel, who love Jesus and love people. We meet in the center of the city and believe that our vision of a gospel revolution in this city will only take place when people understand what it means to enjoy God.”*

Heart of the City Vision Statement: *“We intend to be one of the catalysts for revival in Anchorage, Alaska, by winning the lost and making disciples.”*

Affirmation of Membership:

I have read the mission statement and vision statement of Heart of the City and commit to live out this mission and vision as a diligent, faithful disciple of Jesus, that my identity would be in Him, my worship would be for Him, my

fellowship would be through Him, and my interaction with the culture would be for His glory.

This is my commitment to the member covenant of Heart of the City: With God enabling me, I will strive to be faithful in my commitment to my church family at Heart of the City. I understand that the member covenant is an evaluative tool, as well as affirmation of my continuing conviction and purpose. I understand that this covenant obligates me to the members of the Heart of the City "house" and is an acknowledgement of my submission to the beliefs and vision of the church. I accept the responsibility to notify Heart of the City leadership if at any time I can no longer commit to this covenant or if I have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding Heart of the City Church.

5

STATEMENT OF FAITH

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians



Scripture Is the Word of God Written

We believe that the Bible (the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments) is the infallible Word of God, verbally inspired by God, and is without error in the original manuscripts.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16).

For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).

The work of the Holy Spirit is essential for right understanding of the Bible. A person who is not regenerated by the Holy Spirit cannot understand the Bible. In matters not addressed by the Bible, what is true and right can be known by what is consistent with the teachings of Scripture. It is not legitimate to infer from one portion of text in the Bible a meaning that is not carried by or consistent with the entire inspired Word of God."

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things

freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:12–16).

We believe that the written Word of God is the only answer for any condition a human may endure or suffer.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence (2 Peter 1:3).

The Trinity, God in Three Persons

We believe in one living, sovereign, and all-glorious God, infinite and eternally existing in three persons: God the Father, Creator of everything; God the Son, eternally begotten, not made, without beginning, of one essence with the Father; and God the Holy Spirit, the full, divine essence, a

person, proceeding from the Father and the Son. We believe each person in the Godhead is fully and completely God.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one (Deut. 6:4).

There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist (1 Cor. 8:6).

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him (Col. 1:15–16).

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1).

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily (Col. 2:9).

God Created All Things and Created Man in His Image

We believe that God created the universe and everything in it out of nothing, by the power of His Word. We believe that the account of creation is literal.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1).

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell in it therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers (Ps. 24:1–2).

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible (Heb. 11:3).

But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world (Heb. 1:2).

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made (John 1:1–3).

We believe that God directly created Adam from the dust of the ground and Eve from his side. We believe that Adam and

Eve were the historical parents of the entire human race; that they were created male and female equally in the image of God, without sin; that they were created to glorify their maker by trusting His all-sufficient goodness, admiring His infinite beauty, enjoying His personal fellowship, and obeying His all-wise counsel; and that they were given differing and complementary roles in marriage as a type of Christ and the church.

Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature (Gen. 2:7).

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Gen. 1:27).

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man (Gen. 2:21–22).

With [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God (James 3:9).

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband (Eph. 5:22–33).

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him" (Gen. 2:18).

The Depravity of Man

We believe that although God created man morally upright, he was led astray from communion with God by the deceit of Satan and chose to take what was forbidden, which resulted in his independence from and distrust and hostility toward his Creator.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" (Gen. 3:1)

Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate" (Gen 3:13)

But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ (2 Cor. 11:3).

We believe that through Adam all of mankind after him is then born into guilt, death, a depraved mind, and condemnation. Mankind is born corrupt by nature, enslaved to sin, and morally unable to delight in God and overcome his own pride

and preference for building his own earthly kingdom, and he instead gives glory to himself and not God.

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous (Rom. 5:12–19).

In [sin] you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (Eph. 2:2–3).

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience which leads to righteousness? . . . When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness (Rom. 6:16,20).

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:7–8).

But to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear (Deut. 29:4).

God's Eternal Purpose

We believe that God, from all eternity, for His glory, and for the eternal and ever-increasing enjoyment of all who love Him, by the counsel of His will, freely and unchangeably

ordains and foreknows whatever comes to pass, all to His glory.

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen (Rom. 11:36; see also Eph. 1:6,12,14).

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will (Eph. 1:11).

Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose" (Isa. 46:9–10).

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord (Prov. 16:33).

Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand (Prov. 19:21).

We believe that God upholds and governs all things.

[God] commands the sun, and it does not rise; [God] seals up the stars (Job 9:7).

Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing (Isa. 40:26).

We believe that God's election is an unconditional act of free grace, which was given through His Son, Christ Jesus, before the world began. By this act God chose before the foundation of the world those who would be delivered from bondage to sin and brought to repentance and saving faith in His Son, Christ Jesus.

Though [Jacob and Esau] were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." So then he has mercy on

whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills (Rom. 9:11–18).

Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? (Rom. 9:21)

Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God

We believe that in the fullness of time God sent forth His eternal Son as Jesus the Messiah, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. We believe that when the eternal Son became flesh, He took on a fully human nature, so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person, without confusion or mixture. Thus the person, Jesus Christ, was and is truly God and truly man, yet He is one Christ and the only mediator between God and man.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law (Gal. 4:4).

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn

the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him (John 3:16–17).

Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16).

And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God (Luke 1:34–35).

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us) (Matt. 1:23; see also Luke 1:34–35).

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14).

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high

priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people (Heb. 2:17).

Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2:6–8).

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5).

We believe that Jesus Christ lived without sin, though He endured the common infirmities and temptations of human life.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15).

We believe that Jesus Christ fulfills the Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah, the redeemer of the world and the Jewish people.

We believe that Jesus Christ suffered voluntarily, that He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and that He died, was buried, and on the third day rose from the dead to complete the saving work of His life and death and to take His place as the invincible, everlasting Lord of glory. He ascended bodily into heaven, where He is seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding for His people on the basis of His all-sufficient sacrifice for sin and reigning until He puts all His enemies under His feet.

Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. . . . He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 52:13; 53:3–6).

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father (John 10:18).

This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men (Acts 2:23).

For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place (Acts 4:27–28).

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (John 19:30).

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3).

So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in

the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid (John 19:40–41).

He was buried (1 Cor. 15:4).

He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:4).

He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay (Matt. 28:6).

[He] who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification . . . (Rom. 4:25).

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9–11).

[God] has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead (Acts 17:31).

He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9–11).

But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God (Luke 22:69).

Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing (Acts 2:33).

God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31).

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God (Col. 3:1).

Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us (Rom. 8:34).

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession (Heb. 4:14).

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John 2:1).

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet (1 Cor. 15:25).

And to which of the angels has ever said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”? (Hebrews 1:13)

The Saving Work of Christ

We believe that by His perfect obedience to God and by His suffering and death as the immaculate Lamb of God, Jesus Christ obtained forgiveness of sins and the gift of perfect righteousness for all who trusted in God prior to the cross and all who would trust in Christ thereafter. Through living a perfect life and dying in our place—the just for the unjust—Christ absorbed our punishment, appeased the wrath of God against us, vindicated the righteousness of God in our

justification, and removed the condemnation of the law against us.

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous (Rom. 5:18–19).

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3).

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed (1 Peter 2:24).

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

[They] are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins (Rom. 3:24–25).

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died (2 Cor. 5:14).

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6).

Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died (Rom. 8:34).

For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living (Rom. 14:9).

I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose (Gal. 2:21).

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace (Eph. 1:7).

In [Him] we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:14).

Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you (Acts 13:38).

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

[May I] be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith (Phil. 3:9).

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction (Rom. 3:21–22).

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross (Col. 2:13–14).

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree” (Gal. 3:13).

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

We believe that the atonement of Christ for sin warrants and impels a universal offering of the gospel to all mankind. All mankind may come for cleansing at this fountain, and whoever does come, Jesus will not cast out.

And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17 King James Version).

Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again (John 4:14).

Whoever comes to me I will never cast out (John 6:37).

We believe that God's new covenant of mercy, repentance, and faith unto righteousness is made with any person who entrusts his or her life to Christ.

But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises (Heb. 8:6).

Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the

transgressions committed under the first covenant (Heb. 9:15; see also 12:24).

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen (Heb. 13:20–21).

The Saving Work of the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit has always been at work in the world, sharing in the work of creation, awakening faith in God's people, performing signs and wonders, giving triumphs in battle, empowering the preaching of prophets, inspiring the writing of Scripture at given historical times, and quickening our minds to understand the Bible. The Holy Spirit gives the disciples of Jesus great power to preach the gospel of the glory of Christ by opening the hearts of hearers, that they might see Christ and believe. He is also manifesting Himself in spiritual gifts for the building of the body of Christ. The main role of the Holy Spirit is to reveal to us the Son.

We believe that, apart from the effectual work of the Spirit, no one would come to faith. This is because all are dead in trespasses and sins, and they are hostile to God and morally unable to submit to Him or please Him, because the pleasures of sin appear greater than the pleasures of God.

We believe the Holy Spirit does this saving work in connection with the presentation of the gospel of the glory of Christ.

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5).

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus

Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction (Rom. 3:19–22).

The Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (Eph. 3:6).

Through [Christ] we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations. (Rom. 1:5).

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead (Acts 17:30–31).

For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” (Rom. 10:13–15)

Therefore we do not believe that there is salvation through any other means than through receiving the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit—except that infants and severely mentally ill persons with minds physically incapable of comprehending the gospel may be saved.

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse (Rom. 1:19–20).

Regeneration

We believe that regeneration is an act of God in which He imparts to us a new spiritual life, removing from us our hostile and dead spirit and replacing it with a new “usable” and alive spirit. It is also known as being born again, or born of the spirit.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:1–2).

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules (Ezek. 36:26–27).

Justification by Faith

We believe that God justifies the ungodly by faith alone apart from works, pardoning their sins and reckoning them as righteous and acceptable in His presence. Faith is the sole instrument by which we, as sinners, are united to Christ, who alone is the ground of our acceptance with God. This acceptance happens fully and permanently at the first instant of receiving Christ. Thus the righteousness by which we come into right standing with God is not anything worked in us over time by God or imparted to us at baptism, but rather it is accomplished for us, outside ourselves, and is imputed to us.

However, we believe that faith without works is dead (see sanctification).

He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the

washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:5–7).

For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law (Rom. 3:28).

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:23–24).

Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness (Rom. 4:4–5).

We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified (Gal. 2:16).

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1).

So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24).

You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4 New American Standard Version).

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

Sanctification

Sanctification is the process through which divine power and transformation flow to the soul; the sanctifying work of God through faith transforms the human condition into the likeness of Christ. While justification is the act of God's imputing and reckoning, sanctification is God's act of transforming and imparting. Sanctification begins at the point of regeneration.

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits

to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth (2 Thess. 2:13).

I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me (Acts 26:17–18).

To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power (2 Thess. 1:11).

So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead (James 2:17).

For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead (James 2:26).

He made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith (Acts 15:9).

By this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says “I know him” and does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 John 2:3–4).

Bear fruit in keeping with repentance (Matthew 3:8).

Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God (Heb. 6:1).⁶

⁶ Statement of Faith adapted and inspired from Bethlehem Baptist Church
<https://www.hopeingod.org/about-us/who-we-are/our-beliefs>