

## THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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Whether or not “good news” is truly good news depends on the specific needs of each individual or community in question. For example, if there is a famine and people are dying of hunger, news that a cure for cancer had been found would not prove all that exciting. Does mankind have any fundamental needs apart from physical and psychological ones? Could there be good news that transcends culturally and through ethnic differences? Is there good news that is good for all people, young and old, and endures throughout time?<sup>2</sup> We have countless needs ranging from social to spiritual that we long to satisfy. This does not mean, however, that we can identify every single kind of need. Even less so does it mean that we live our lives actively trying to fulfill our every conceivable need. Depending upon the situation and environment we are in, a person will have different needs accordingly. In every culture and society there has always been religion. Man seeks and needs religion, but not every man sees or places religion as a top priority. Karl Marx said that religion was the “opium of the masses.”<sup>3</sup> If religion does nothing but give temporary relief to the oppressed, then why does human history, for as long as we can remember, testify that religion is not only for the poor and downtrodden, but also for the rich and famous? Once we diminish and define man as nothing more than a physical, psychological and social being, there is no further need for religion or God. But if we rightfully place man in a category completely different from animals or plants, then the search for meaning and fulfillment in life cannot be in vain—we cannot afford not to.

### We all have common needs beyond what we can perceive

1. According to Genesis 1:27 and 2:7, what makes people fundamentally different from all other living things (plants and animals)?

a) If God does not have any form and He is not a physical being like us, what does it mean to be “created in the image of God”?

b) What is and where did the “breath of life” come from?<sup>4</sup>

2. What makes man a moral and spiritual being?<sup>5</sup> How is that expressed in everyday life?

### Having to give an account to a higher being

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<sup>2</sup> “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:10-11)

<sup>3</sup> According to Marx, religion is an expression of material realities and economic injustice. Thus, problems in religion are ultimately problems in society. Religion is not the disease, but merely a symptom. It is used by oppressors to make people feel better about the distress they experience due to being poor and exploited. This is the origin of his comment that religion is the “opium of the masses.” (A. Cline, *Religion as Opium of the People*)

<sup>4</sup> Since man has received something of God (spirit, to be exact), he can never be satisfied unless the spirit within him is satisfied.

<sup>5</sup> Morality has to do with right and wrong and what we ought to do. Spirituality has to do with our need/longing to have a relationship with a spiritual being.

The Remnant Presbyterian Church

## MEMBERSHIP STUDY

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The Remnant Presbyterian Church seeks to fulfill our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ’s, great commission to make disciples of all nations. We want specifically to impact the campuses, the communities, and the world for Christ. We seek to fulfill this mission by challenging people to make a radical commitment to the local church, believing that it is through the church that God accomplishes His plan. Our aim is to produce kingdom workers who are faithful, available, teachable, and sacrificial by valuing worship, growth, accountability, and participation. Through the striving for these qualities, we will know that we are fulfilling God’s unique calling for our church.<sup>1</sup>

- The Gospel Message
  - The Necessity of Church
  - Public Worship
  - Discipleship
  - House Church
  - The Apostolic Paradigm
  - Stewardship of Finances
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- Declaration of Intent and Covenants of Membership

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<sup>1</sup> This vision statement was formulated shortly after the church was planted in August 1995.

In our society, being human and fallible as we are, there is much injustice, and especially in the court of law—a place where we would expect to see justice and honesty (Ecc 3:16).

3. What did Solomon, who wrote Ecclesiastes and who often sat in judgment's seat, say about social injustice and man's accountability (see Ecclesiastes 3:15b, 17 and 12:14)?<sup>6</sup>

There are two responses to morality and accountability: 1) to do the right thing for the sake of a guilty conscience, but not necessarily be accountable to God; and 2) to do the right thing in order to appease both the guilty conscience and God (trying to make our good deeds outweigh our bad ones).

### **We have good news and evidence**

4. Read Isaiah 53:4-6 and describe the purpose of Jesus' suffering and death.

a) In what way might Jesus' death be misunderstood (v. 4)?

b) What kind of "peace" is Isaiah referring to (v. 5)?

c) According to verse 6, how would you define "sin" and "atonement"?

5. Based on 1 John 2:1-2, what is the good news for us who are not perfect?

6. Read Acts 17:29-31. According to these verses, what did Jesus' resurrection prove?<sup>7</sup>

a) In what ways do people tend to make God less than who He really is (v. 29)?

b) What are we supposed to repent of (v. 30)? What can we do about God's righteous impending judgment that comes after death (v. 31)?

### **What about you? Where do you stand?**

7. Why do you need to believe in Jesus Christ? What does it mean, practically speaking, to place your utmost trust in Him?

Almost all religions share the following beliefs: relationship with god(s) or a higher being or power; a spiritual realm that is beyond the physical; destiny; meaning or satisfaction in this life. Only through Jesus can one's relationship with God be restored. Once this relationship is restored, life after death is no longer a guess, wishful thinking, speculation or mystery. One can have true satisfaction in his spirit and meaning in this life.

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<sup>6</sup> "...for God seeks what has passed by." (Ecc 3:15, NASB)

<sup>7</sup> Although death is the inevitable destiny of all mankind, it is not an end in itself. No one can prove that there is life after death or that there is judgment after death (Heb 9:27) unless they can come back from the dead. The resurrection proved that death is not an end in itself and that after death there is both life and judgment.

## THE NECESSITY OF CHURCH

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In our days different people have different understandings of what church is. Although the following may not be exhaustive, it certainly reflects in general the views that people might have. There are five general views, or should I say, expectations or understandings of what church is. Some see church as a religious temple, a sacred place – the building and atmosphere are their primary concern. To them, church is a place where they meet with or pray to God. Therefore, interacting with other people is not as crucial as individually and privately praying to and experiencing God. Then there are others who see church as more of a theatrical institution – they are spectators, an audience rather than participants. Only those few who are committed – the experts – run the church while the rest expect to be served to some degree. There are some that expect church to be an institution of learning where they can be intellectually challenged. The main programs in such churches are bible-study-oriented. Some see church as a form of Christian club where one becomes a member and is committed to it. With the club mentality, there are many activities and a lot of participation. Others may see church as just a charity or humanitarian organization that provides for the needs of others, the community, and society. The church does reflect and should do all of the five aforementioned characteristics. Basically, the church is a community of believers where God is actively working to fulfill their mission/calling on a church-wide as well as on an individual basis.<sup>8</sup> This being the case, can a person be a Christian without being involved in a local church? After all, someone said about church in the following: Under the same management for more than 2000 years.

### What God Has Given to the Church

1. Based on Matthew 16:16-17, how does God play a role when it comes to confessing one's faith in Jesus Christ?<sup>9</sup> Who are the members of the church according to verses 16-17?
2. According to verse 18, how does Jesus build His church?<sup>10</sup>
3. If the keys represent authority, "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" represent heaven's authority (v. 19)?<sup>11</sup> How can a church properly exercise heaven's authority?

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<sup>8</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, in his book, "Reverse Thunder," describes beautifully the spiritual direction that takes place within the church: "The church is the place where we come to find out what we are doing that is right; it is a place of affirmation...where we come to find out what we are doing that is wrong; it is a place for correction...where we come to hear the promises; it is a place of motivation. No Christian community can do without any part of this message. We need affirmation...correction...motivation." (p.53)

<sup>9</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:3b

<sup>10</sup> He builds it with people who can confess Jesus as Savior and Lord; with those who have faith in Jesus Christ.

<sup>11</sup> The church needs to properly exercise heaven's authority. The activities of church must reflect the activities of heaven. Therefore, as a community of believers, seeking God's will for the community is imperative. It is utterly unthinkable for a church to carry out certain tasks apart from God's will.

4. According to Matthew 18:15-20, the church has the right to speak into its members' lives. Why do you think God has given the church the responsibility to exercise discipline?<sup>12</sup>

5. Based on the above two passages, why do Christians need the church?<sup>13</sup>

### What the Church Provides

6. According to 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, what happens when a person becomes a Christian?<sup>14</sup>

7. According to Romans 12:6-8, once a person becomes a Christian, how can he properly exercise his faith?<sup>15</sup>

8. We serve God with our faith. Is the way we serve a measure of our faith? Does Romans 12:3-6 mean, that what we do shows how much faith we have?

9. What does "the body" (church) provide to "its members" (Christians)? In other words, why do Christians need the church?<sup>16</sup>

### Accountability within the Church

10. According to Galatians 6:1-5, what is our responsibility to one another as fellow believers?<sup>17</sup>

11. If we were to ascribe Hebrews 10:19-25 to the church, describe attributes of the church community.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Since God has given the church the authority and responsibility to exercise discipline, and because Christ desires to see a pure church, the church needs to reflect the holiness of God.

<sup>13</sup> Jesus is building His church and one should want to be a part of or participate in what Jesus is doing. God uses the community to enable us to live a life of holiness. Church is the only community on earth where the invisible authority of heaven is to be properly manifested. God has given that privilege to church and to no other group or organization.

<sup>14</sup> One should notice that it is God who brings each believer into Christ's body, which is, the church, in order that he may participate in it and function as a member of it. Someone said, "Church is not just some place you go, but something you are."

<sup>15</sup> Faith in God is needed in order to serve God. If someone is serving but does not have a relationship with God, he may be doing good deeds in order to either win favor from God or simply because he wants to appease his conscience.

<sup>16</sup> Church is the community where a Christian can become "all that he can be" – a Christian which God has gifted with specific gifts.

<sup>17</sup> There are two types of responsibilities: 1) Caring for others and 2) checking on one's self

<sup>18</sup> Through a community, "we are able to experience God's nearness corporately." It is a community that builds relationships in love and through doing good deeds unto others. It is a community that is committed to meeting together at certain times and certain locations.

## **PUBLIC WORSHIP**

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William Temple, Bishop of England said "Worship is submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness, nourishment of mind by His truth, purifying of imagination by His beauty, opening of the heart to His love, submission of will to His purpose, all this gathered up in adoration is the greatest expression of which we are capable of."

The main goal of this study is to show that Sunday worship is not just about singing and listening to God's message given through a sermon. Then what is it? Worship is really our submitting our will to him. In order for that submission to take place, people must experience a revelation in their hearts. This is the kind of worship that we are looking for.

Worship is about giving to the Lord. We offer to the Lord, and that offering is being accepted. As a result, the prophetic gift gets released, and revelation is given. What do we offer? Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, among other things.<sup>19</sup> In the process, God answers and gives revelation. And in response we cry out, "Holy! Glory!"<sup>20</sup>

### **What is Worship?**

1. How would you describe or explain worship to people who do not know God (or to a person who has just come to know Christ)? Simply and briefly, describe the basic elements of a typical worship service and why we do them.

### **Singing in Worship: Ephesians 5:18-21**

2. Why do people over-drink in our days? Why do you think they over-drank in ancient Ephesus? Paul presents being "filled with the Spirit" as an alternative. Why do you think he chooses to make this particular comparison?

3. What are "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (v. 19)?

a) Are they all the same or is each distinct from the others?

b) Is there a difference between "singing" and "making music" (v. 19b)?

4. What does it mean when it says to "speak to one another" with psalms, etc. (v. 19)? Are we doing this in the typical evangelical church today?

5. What attitude do we need to have as we sing these songs (vv. 20-21)?

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<sup>19</sup> In Eph 1:19, the verse says we are to speak "to one another" with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, but this doesn't exclude God. "To one another" emphasizes how in worship, there has to be a corporate understanding, unity.

<sup>20</sup> Psalm 29:9

### **The Word of God in Worship: Colossians 3:15-17**

6. Compare Colossians 3:15-17 with Ephesians 5:19. What elements of worship are repeated or similar? What point does this reinforce about what our attitude should be as we worship?

7. What new elements appearing in Colossians 3:15-17 help us better understand what worship is (vv. 16-17)?

a) What is the role of the word of God in worship (v. 16)?

b) What does it mean to do all these things "in the name of Jesus" (v. 17)? Does it mean to do these things, in the manner that Christ would do them? Does it mean to do them unto Jesus?

### **Spirituality in Worship: 1 Corinthians 12, 14**

8. 1 Corinthians 12:7 provides that there is a manifestation of the Spirit in worship. What does it mean to have worship that is "spiritual" (vv. 7-11)?<sup>21</sup>

9. 1 Corinthians 14:25 tells us there is a revelatory aspect of worship.<sup>22</sup> What are the effects of God's revelation?

10. 1 Corinthians 14:26 says that everyone has a hymn (a testimony), a word of instruction, a revelation, tongue or interpretation. If this is what worship should look like, how do we practice this in our church?

### **Acceptable Worship: Malachi 2**

Most people are mainly concerned about whether they got anything out of worship, whether they were blessed through the message or not. Our concern, however, should rather be more about whether our worship was accepted by God. Somehow we think that when we've been blessed, that that was good worship; the focus is on us.

We need to realize that worship needs to be accepted by God. Do we really know or care whether it is accepted, or are we simply assuming that it is accepted? Is it possible for worship to be rejected by God? We should be concerned.

11. Based on Malachi 2:13, what are some observations you can make about worship?<sup>23</sup>

12. What were some of the problems the people had in the book of Malachi (Mal 1:7-8, 11-14)?

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<sup>21</sup> 2 Kings 4:27

<sup>22</sup> Luke 5:8 and 18:13

<sup>23</sup> See also the story of Cain in Gen 4:3-7a.

## DISCIPLESHIP

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a) What about us? When do you think that our worship is not being accepted by God?

b) In order for our worship to be accepted, what are some of the things that we need?

The word “discipleship” can have a wide range of meanings. Jesus had his 12 disciples for three and a half years, yet the term “disciples” was not limited to the twelve. For instance, we find in John 6:66, “From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.” This took place in the wilderness after Jesus fed 5,000 people. Surely, John was not referring to the twelve. Then what is “discipleship?” Today, too often the word “discipleship” is equated with “trying to control other people’s lives.” More than ever before, the art of discipleship needs to be rediscovered in order for us to touch others effectively with the gospel.

### The Twelve—Mark 3:13-19

1) What parallels do you see between Jesus choosing the twelve (vv. 13-14) and God coming down to Mount Sinai and making a covenant with the twelve tribes of Israel? In other words, what is the significance of the choosing of the twelve disciples?

2) In those days, when an Israelite traveled outside of Israel’s territory and was about to re-enter Israel, he would shake the dust off his feet. In light of this tradition, what is the meaning of the instruction Jesus gave to His disciples in Matthew 10:14?<sup>24</sup>

3) Consider the nature of discipleship from Mark 3:14-15:

a) Who does the choosing (v. 14a)? What application does this have for us in terms of discipling others?

b) Verse 14 provides that the disciples were appointed - “that they might be with him.” How can people learn by being with their teacher/discipler (v. 14b)?<sup>25</sup>

c) What did the Sanhedrin members take note of about Peter and John in Acts 4:13? In what ways do you think discipleship training is *more* than just having a group bible study?<sup>26</sup>

d) What type of authority is the “authority to drive out demons” (v. 15)?<sup>27</sup> Why do you think this is needed especially in our modern-day setting?<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Discipleship is not a one-on-one thing or a private matter but it involves the people of God, a new community.

<sup>25</sup> Discipleship is not so much about information-giving but rather modeling which is something we really lack in our days

<sup>26</sup> Bible study is an essential part of discipleship (Acts 19:9-10), but discipleship cannot be limited to bible study alone.

<sup>27</sup> Jesus’ authority (Mk 3:11).

## HOUSE CHURCH

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A typical understanding of “church” in our days is that it is a group of Christians coming together on Sundays for the purpose of holding a worship service. In the bible, however, we see that the community life of the early Christians involved much more than just getting together once a week for worship. It is the intent of this study to rediscover “what church really is” (i.e., what church is/should be according to the bible) and to draw applications for putting that discovery into practice.

### From Institutional Organization to Dynamic Organism

1. Based on Romans 16:5a and 1 Corinthians 1:11, it is clearly evident that in most (if not all) cases, the early churches met at someone’s house:

- a) Why do you think this was the case? See Acts 10:28 and 16:15.
- b) How would meeting at someone’s home have been different from meeting in a large gathering place (i.e. temple, auditorium, and marketplace)?

### Closer Community

2. In Acts 2:42-47, Luke, the author, gives us a summary of what the early Christians practiced. List and discuss what they did as they lived out their Christians lives together.<sup>32</sup>

- a) What aspects of Christian community are mentioned more than once in this passage?
- b) Of the practices of the early church, which do you think would be more appropriate in a house or apartment as opposed to elsewhere?
- c) Discuss the different aspects and emphases of Sunday worship, house church gatherings, and small group meetings.<sup>33</sup>

### The Nature of the Gathering

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<sup>32</sup> They held God’s *word* as the standard for faith and practice; built relationships through *fellowship*; remembered the Lord through *rituals*; petitioned and experienced God in *prayer*; witnessed God’s supernatural work and the authentication of his message through *miraculous* signs and wonders (Acts 14:3); affirmed their unity and connection through fellowship and *giving*; received clear *recognition* from outsiders (Mt. 5:16); praised God in *worship*; grew in numbers through *conversion*.

<sup>33</sup> House churches are organized with the vision that each one will eventually function as an “ideal church”; they will be built on a stronger foundation of currently established small groups.

## Those “Sent”<sup>29</sup> with Authority— John 20:21-23

4) How would you explain John 20:23?<sup>30</sup>

- a) What do we learn about discipleship based on verses 21-23?
- b) Consider the blind man of John 9:6-7. In order to find his way to the Pool of Siloam, the blind man had to ask people. What was he being reminded of when he was asking people for direction? In other words, if it had been anyone else who had told him to go to the pool and wash his eyes, would the healing have taken place? Why do you think there is authority and power when one is sent by God?<sup>31</sup>

5) According to Matthew 28:18-20, do you think discipleship is limited to the twelve? Why or why not?

- a) When you are discipling others, what is actually involved in discipleship based upon this passage?
- b) What steps do you need to take in order to disciple others or be discipled? Let’s go around and share!

6) Based upon John 14:12, what is the goal for those who are being discipled? Discuss how this is possible based on verses 13 and 16 (also John 16:7)? As discipled, what do we need to achieve the goal of discipleship?

7) In what ways have you been challenged as you were going through this study?

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<sup>28</sup> In our days with the advancement of technology and medicine, we tend to “psychologize” what is spiritual to interpret and find solutions to problems rather than see them as demonic.

<sup>29</sup> The word “apostle” means “sent one”

<sup>30</sup> Mark 2:7 and Matthew 18:18. The point is that the nature of their ministry resembles Christ’s ministry.

<sup>31</sup> Mark 1:27

**THE APOSTOLIC PARADIGM**

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In our days many if not most local churches belong to a larger community of churches. The specific community that they are a part of is a function of their individual needs. An example of one such community is the “denomination,” which is a community of churches connected by doctrines and bylaws. Another example is the “association.” Churches belonging to an association may share resources in order to enhance their ministries, but unlike denominations, they place less emphasis on doctrines and bylaws. In addition, when churches network<sup>38</sup> with one another, it means that they are working or ministering together towards a specific goal. Finally, an “apostolic” church can be described as one that is connected to a community of churches that share with each other relationally, spiritually, and in terms of vision. The bonds within the apostolic community are particularly strong between the leadership teams of member churches. What makes an apostolic community different from a denomination, association, or a network of churches is that every apostolic church is under the spiritual covering of an apostolic leader or team of trans-local leaders.<sup>39</sup> If we look in the book of Acts at how the early churches were planted and how they operated, each local church had a group of elders who served as the leaders, whose roles of overseeing and shepherding<sup>40</sup> were under the spiritual covering of an apostle(s). Apostles were used by God not only to plant churches, but also to provide such churches, as well as others within the apostolic community, with a source of spiritual influence. As a result, each church recognizes God’s calling upon those who minister trans-locally and places itself under their spiritual authority.<sup>41</sup>

**New Testament Churches were Apostolic Churches**

1. From the following verses, describe the kinds of relationships and issues that local churches had with trans-local leaders:

a) 1 Thessalonians 2:6b-12<sup>42</sup> (past tense verbs are used – notice how Paul is still able to exercise spiritual influence in the present)

b) 1 Corinthians 3:5-10 (described as “only servants,” but the people considered them as more than just servants)

c) 1 Corinthians 4:15-17 (references the role of a father with that of teachers)

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<sup>38</sup> Churches can still function independently and be in a network

<sup>39</sup> *Acts Ministries International* uses the term “trans-local leaders” for leaders who exercise spiritual authority over more than one local church.

<sup>40</sup> Acts 20:17, 28

<sup>41</sup> AMI is a community of churches that seeks to model the spirituality, community, and vision to reach all peoples exemplified in the book of Acts. Because AMI churches recognize God’s anointing and calling upon the team of trans-local leaders to oversee local churches, each local church willingly places itself under the team’s authority. It is never an imposed authority, but rather, an invited relationship.

<sup>42</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:11-13

3. It is more appropriate for ordained elders who are recognized by the church to lead the house churches. Why is this the case?<sup>34</sup>

4. Why do you think “specialized house churches” (i.e. married couples, artists, teachers, etc.) would be inappropriate under the house church model which we have seen in the Bible?<sup>35</sup>

5. What different roles do we need in order to have a house church?<sup>36</sup>

6. What can we expect from the house church gathering, which may be less possible in a larger group gathering?<sup>37</sup>

## 7. Suggested Gathering Format

- Food (Encourages giving, opportunity to serve, getting to know one another)
- Worship
- Study/Discussion (Provides an opportunity to participate, hear, and understand each other in a much smaller group setting)
- Teaching (Gives clear guidance and direction)
- Prayer (Makes the people vulnerable to one another, helps to build accountability, and allows the Holy Spirit to minister)

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<sup>34</sup> It is more appropriate to have house churches led by an elder (“shepherd”) or under an elder. The person who is not an elder must have a successful track record of leading small groups. Each house church will also be co-led by a shepherdess. There also may be several small group leaders within each house church.

<sup>35</sup> We want the house churches to reflect the diversity of our church and our people to benefit from that diversity (1 Cor. 12:27-30).

<sup>36</sup> Host, administrator, activities coordinator, teacher, and shepherd.

<sup>37</sup> Discovering, identifying, recognizing, exercising, and testing one’s gift(s). Building relationships and identifying / meeting individual needs. Shepherding of souls.

d) 2 Corinthians 10:6, 13-18 (addressing: (i) relationship with a team of leaders of a local church; and (ii) spiritual influence in the area of foundation-laying)

10. What is required in order for a local church to become an apostolic church?

2. How would you define an “apostle” based on Paul’s (and other apostles’) relationships with the two churches mentioned above?

### **Ministries of an Apostolic Church**

3. Please identify and describe the five ministries set forth in Ephesians 4:11.

4. According to Ephesians 4:11-13, how is the church being built up?

a) What ministries does God equip His people with?

b) When do you think verse 13 will be completed/fulfilled? Why?

5. What makes a church apostolic based on what you have learned so far?

### **Role/Function of Leaders**

6. From the following passages in the book of Acts, describe Philip’s role:

a) As described in Acts 6:2-5

b) In relation to a city (Acts 8:4-8), to an individual (v. 35), and to towns (v. 40)

c) As described in Acts 21:8

7. What were Barnabas and Saul (Paul) identified as in Acts 13:1? Why do you think they were known as apostles based on verses 2-3?

8. According to Acts 14:21-25, how were leaders/elders raised in each church?

a) Why do you think Paul and Barnabas were able to exercise such authority?

b) How is this different today? How are modern-day missionaries’ roles and the way in which the work is done differ from what we observe from Paul and Barnabas?

### **Today’s World**

9. What changes are necessary today to recover a biblical model of evangelism and church planting?

## STEWARDSHIP OF FINANCES

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“People who want to get rich fall into temptation and trap themselves with many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from their faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” (1 Ti 6:9-10) Why is having the desire to be successful in our business world by making more than what we are already making, unbiblical? Can a person be financially wealthy and still be a good Christian? Does this apply to all Christians? As long as I do not love money, does that mean I am safe from falling into that temptation? These are the questions and more that go through our minds when we are confronted with this type of straightforward teaching on finance from the Bible. The word “greed” is equated with “idolatry” in the Bible.<sup>43</sup> It is this greed that is in the heart of every person. Having “not enough money” could be one of the factors of inconvenience in life. Almost everyone, regardless of one’s financial status, would rather have more than what he already has, if the choice were to be given. Is it really true, the more money we have, the more we can enjoy life? Can we really? There are a number of significant incidences in the Bible where greed is related to material things or money that brought immediate harsh judgment upon those people.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand we have someone like Paul who confessed, especially the latter part of his life, that finance does not determine life’s contentment.<sup>45</sup> In that context Paul said, “I can do everything through Him who gives strength.”<sup>46</sup> Being able to do what? What type of strength is Paul referring to? The God of the Bible does not only relate to us in the spiritual realm, but also in our daily everyday life—even in our finances. We cannot make God as someone who is ready to bless financially to those who are faithful to Him. Nor can we say, the less we have, the more spiritual we are. But I believe that when it comes to rightly handling the issue of finance from God’s Word—God is not silent at all. Living in the proximity of the world’s most powerful financial district - New York, unless we address the issue of finance, many Christians either dichotomize life between the spiritual and the practical (real life issue, finance), or barely meet the minimum requirements of giving to appease their own religious conscience. Most people are sensitive in regards to their hard-earned money. Concerning money, many years ago, John Wesley taught the following principles: Give a “tithes” of what you earn, use another tenth to help others and save another tenth to prepare for future good works. This may be a good beginning but it gets more complicated for those who would be making “a lot more” than others.

### Am I a Slave Serving Money or Am I Free? (Matthew 6:19-34)

1. How can we store up treasures in heaven (vv. 19-20)?
2. Rewrite verse 21 in your own words. If you store up treasures in heaven, where do you think your interests and concerns will be?

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<sup>43</sup> Colossians 3:5b

<sup>44</sup> Achan of Joshua 7, Gehazi of 2 Kings 5, Judas Iscariot of Mark 14, and Ananias and Sapphira of Acts 5

<sup>45</sup> Philippians 4:12-13 and also 1 Timothy 6:6-8

<sup>46</sup> Philippians 4:13

3. The Bible tells us that we are the “light of the world.” (Matt. 5:14) How can our whole bodies be “full of light”?<sup>47</sup> (Matthew 6:22) Discuss what it means when the Bible says, “If your eyes are good” based on the scriptural text.

4. What do you think it means for people to “serve money” (v. 24)?
5. Explain how one can be set free from money using the following verses:
  - a) Concerning priorities (v. 25)
  - b) Father-child relationship (vv. 31-32)
  - c) Kingdom of God and righteousness (v. 33)

### Being Set Free from Money and Released Into Generous Giving

6. According to Matthew 19:21-22, is it impossible for the rich to become disciples of Jesus?
7. According to Mark 12:43-44, what is more important than the amount when giving your offering?<sup>48</sup>
8. When looking at Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32-35, how much did the believers give in offering? What does it mean when they took the offering and “left it at the feet of the disciples?”<sup>49</sup> (Acts 4:35, 37)
9. According to 2 Corinthians 8:14-15, if it is not dependent on how much one earns, what is the key to enjoying money?<sup>50</sup>
10. According to 2 Corinthians 9:11, what constitutes “giving generously”?<sup>51</sup>
11. How does today’s study challenge you? What do you think you need to pray about?

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<sup>47</sup> How one earns or uses his/her money has a direct effect on one’s life interest: what your goal or focus is.

<sup>48</sup> 2 Samuel 24:24 shows how sacrifice on our part is imperative when we want to give something to the Lord.

<sup>49</sup> Leviticus 3: After the fellowship offering was presented, a good amount of it could be eaten only at the temple, not at home. It shows that once we offer something to the Lord, we are to acknowledge that it belongs completely to the Lord. When the person ate, it was no longer the offering that he brought (i.e., his own possession) but now belonged completely to God. God was giving it to him and allowing him to enjoy.

<sup>50</sup> Ecclesiastes 5:10, 19 and 6:2

<sup>51</sup> Psalm 112

## DECLARATION OF INTENT AND COVENANTS OF MEMBERSHIP

The Remnant Presbyterian Church exists to fulfill Christ's great commission to make disciples of all nations. To this end, we want specifically to impact our campuses, our communities, and the unreached world for Christ. We seek to fulfill this mission by challenging people to make a radical commitment to the local church, for we believe that it is through the church that God works to accomplish his plan. By valuing worship, growth, accountability, and participation, our aim is to produce kingdom workers who are faithful, available, teachable, and sacrificial. It is by the extent to which our people display these qualities that we will know that we are fulfilling God's unique purpose. To this end, we have adopted the following covenants of membership:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby declare my desire to become a member of The Remnant Presbyterian Church and wish to attain the rights and privileges accompanying membership<sup>52</sup>.

I hereby declare that I am in full accord with the doctrine of this church<sup>53</sup> and agree that my teaching will be in accordance with such doctrine.

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<sup>52</sup> In the New Testament church, you will not find the concept of membership. This was because membership was not needed. In those days, if someone participated in church, it often meant that he or she had given up everything in order to do so. The early church was a time wrought with persecution and much suffering for believers. Things are very different, however, in modern-day America. Today, church attendance is not necessarily synonymous with commitment. Sacrifice does not exist as a serious barrier to entry when it comes to going to church. Furthermore, with a church on every corner, "church-hopping" is an obstacle to commitment much less frequently encountered in the early church. Because of the context within which we find ourselves today, we strongly believe a declaration of commitment to The Remnant Presbyterian Church in the form of a membership covenant is necessary.

The term "covenant" is used because throughout the bible we find relationships involving serious commitment confirmed by a covenant. God made a covenant with Noah (Gen 6:18), Abraham (Gen 15:18), Isaac (Gen 17:19), and the Jewish nation as a whole (Exodus 24:7). In the New Testament, Jesus defines His relationship with the Church in terms of a "new covenant" (Luke 22:20). Likewise, men made covenants with one another. God warned the Israelites not to make a covenant with the nations around them (Exodus 23:32). Jonathan expressed his commitment to David and vice versa by means of a covenant (1 Samuel 20:16). Therefore it is highly appropriate that commitment within a local church body be expressed in terms of covenant.

<sup>53</sup> The following statement of faith has been adapted from *The Evangelical Presbyterian Church: The Book of Order*. Even though AMI is not a Presbyterian denomination, the statement is the basic statement of historic evangelicalism and

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defines core beliefs of the Christian faith. It expresses the historic Christian beliefs common to all true believers and churches throughout the world.

### The Declaration of Faith

1. All Scripture is self-attesting and being Truth, requires our unreserved submission in all areas of life. The infallible Word of God, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is a complete and unified witness to God's redemptive acts culminating in the incarnation of the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible, uniquely and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks. On this sure foundation we affirm these additional essentials of our faith.
2. We believe in one God, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To Him be all honor, glory and praise forever.
3. Jesus Christ, the living Word, became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. He who is true God became true man united in one Person forever. He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. On the third day He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where, at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He now is our High Priest and Mediator.
4. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Christ and to apply the saving work of Christ to our hearts. He convicts us of sin and draws us to the Savior. Indwelling our heart, He gives new life to us, empowers and imparts gifts to us for service. He instructs and guides us into all truth, and seals us for the day of redemption.
5. Being estranged from God and condemned by our sinfulness, our salvation is wholly dependent upon the work of God's free grace. God credits His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, thereby justifies them in His sight. Only such as are born of the Holy Spirit and receive Jesus Christ become children of God and heirs of eternal life.
6. The true Church is composed of all persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit are united together in the body of Christ. The Church finds her visible, yet imperfect, expression in local congregations where the Word of God is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered in their integrity; where scriptural discipline is practiced, and where loving fellowship is maintained. For her perfecting, she awaits the return of her Lord.
7. Jesus Christ will come again to the earth – personally, visibly, and bodily – to judge the living and the dead, and to consummate history and the eternal plan of God. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20).

As a condition of membership, I acknowledge and commit to uphold the following covenants:

In recognition of the local church as a representation of the body of Christ, I commit to faithful and regular participation in the corporate Lord's Day worship.<sup>54</sup>

In order to further the kingdom of God through the local church, I commit to being a faithful steward of the finances that God has entrusted to me by tithing and giving generously. This is not done for man to see but to demonstrate to the Giver of all good things my faith in His promises to meet all my needs, now and in the age to come.<sup>55</sup>

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8. The Lord Jesus Christ commands all believers to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and to make disciples of all nations. Obedience to the Great Commission requires total commitment to "Him who loved us and gave Himself for us." He calls us to a life of self-denying love and service. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10).
  9. In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.

<sup>54</sup> In the bible we find the early church gathering together regularly on the first day of the week (Cf. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2), which was Sunday. Christians throughout history and throughout the world have continued this tradition up to present times. Consistent participation in the Lord's Day worship is a crucial element in Christian growth that the church cannot afford to neglect (Heb 10:25). Because of this, it is important that members be accountable to their house church shepherds by notifying them in advance if they are planning on missing service at TRPC. As it is also much easier to miss service in an unfamiliar environment, it would be best to look into suitable churches to attend beforehand.

In addition to participation in the Lord's Day service, there are two holidays that are fundamentally Christian in nature and should therefore be celebrated within the context of one's local church: Christmas and Easter. Because of this, members are expected to participate in whatever Good Friday/Easter and Christmas/Christmas Eve services or events that are planned.

<sup>55</sup> Jesus spoke a great deal about money. In fact, of all the idols against which he could have contrasted our devotion to God, He chose money (Matt 6:24). This is because how we handle our finances not only reveals, but also dictates the direction of our hearts. As Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt 6:21). Members are expected to tithe because we want their hearts to be "with God". By practicing faithfulness with the resources that God has given them, we long for our members to be able to hear God say, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" (Matt 25:21).

It is also important to understand that giving ten percent by no means fulfills one's Christian "duty" before God. In the Old Testament, the Israelites were mandated

Because God has given me spiritual gifts for the edification of the body of Christ, I agree to serve the church faithfully in whatever capacity is pleasing to God, recognizing that service and ministry are necessary for my maturity as a Christian.<sup>56</sup>

Because Christian life is not meant to be lived alone (Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Corinthians 12), I commit to seek accountability from the leadership of the church. I understand that such accountability can only be achieved through participation in smaller communities within the church.<sup>57</sup>

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by God to give ten percent of all that they received back to God. In the New Testament, with the empowering of the Holy Spirit, we witness God's people – the Church, giving far more than ten percent. Acts, one of the primary sources for understanding the life and times of the early church, records that believers regularly sold all that they possessed and put the proceeds "at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need" (Acts 4:35). In reality, giving ten percent, a tradition established early on in church history to the end that believers' hearts would be regularly engaged in giving and not become tightfisted, should be seen as the very least that one could give.

Lastly, it is important to mention that our giving, at least ten percent of what one earns, should be given to the church to which one is committed. Members are expected to give to TRPC in order to support TRPC. One's tithe should not be dependent upon the needs of other organizations – there will always be needier churches and Christian organizations beyond TRPC. When we give, we are trusting the leadership of the church to determine the most appropriate use of the resources (a principle we find in Acts 4:35) – whether it be for the strengthening of TRPC or churches in other parts of the world.

<sup>56</sup> Church is about participation, not observation. Speaking in the context of spiritual gifts, Paul said that, "to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7). We are to use our gifts, talents, and resources for the furtherance of the kingdom of God in the hearts of believers as well as non-believers. To this end, we strive to produce people who are FATS – faithful, available, teachable, and sacrificial.

<sup>57</sup> Currently, these "smaller communities" are called "house churches." In house churches, members seek accountability not only with their peers, but also with their shepherd. Shepherds are committed to "keeping watch over the souls" (Hebrews 13:17) of those under their care by teaching them to obey all that Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:20). By using the Scriptures to "teach, rebuke, correct, and train in righteousness," the goal of every shepherd is that every Christian under their care would be "thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16). Shepherds are committed to being faithful, available, teachable, and sacrificial in the ministry of discipleship.

While accountability is not limited to only a few areas in life, but rather, involves an intimate, mentoring relationship, there *are* however certain areas where accountability is extremely important, as decisions made in these areas tend to have significant bearing upon the direction of one's life. Decisions concerning relationships with the opposite sex, career changes, and relocation, among others, should not be made alone, but with the counsel of one's shepherd.

I agree to submit humbly to biblical discipline (Matthew 18:15; Galatians 6:1) by the leadership of the church. I further agree not to hold the Remnant Presbyterian Church or any of its agents, including any member of the pastoral staff, responsible for any damage or loss incurred in connection with such biblical discipline. I acknowledge and agree that discipline is necessary in the church for the purposes of restoration of a believer, maintenance of purity in the church and deterrence to sin.

In order to avoid becoming a stumbling block, to exercise self-discipline and to edify the body of Christ, I agree to exercise discretion by following the guidelines concerning “gray areas” set forth by the leadership team of The Remnant Presbyterian Church.”<sup>58</sup>

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereto set my hand this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please sign)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print)

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It is important to realize that modern-day America is an extremely individualistic society that places great emphasis upon personal autonomy. Most people would likely balk at the biblical concept of “accountability.” Although people may initially be open to advice or suggestions, once they feel like such counsel runs contrary to their ultimate desires, most people tend to reject such counsel as impinging upon their personal freedom. When it comes to the people of God, the bible, on the other hand, paints a much different picture of relationships. The community of God is just that: a community. Interdependence, rather than independence, rules the day and is one of the pillars upon which the church of God rests. The bible takes very seriously the role of shepherds (1 Peter 5:1-5), spiritual authority and submission (Hebrews 13:17), and the need for accountability in all areas of life (James 5:16). In fact, of the four uses of the Scriptures that Paul lists in his letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 3:16), two of the four involve directly opposing actions, thoughts, or ways of life that are out of line with the bible. Because spiritual maturation is a process, and we recognize that not all people are in the same place, we affirm the need for others who will take an active role in speaking into our lives, that we all may be presented “mature in Christ” (Colossians 1:28).

<sup>58</sup> Because drinking is often an issue in many people’s consciences, members are asked to refrain from drinking in the context of Christian fellowship. Although we have the freedom to drink, Paul makes it clear that our freedom should not be exercised with disregard for those around us. Even though on the one hand “Everything is permissible,” on the other, “Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others” (1 Cor 10:24). Paul instructs us to surrender our “rights” for the sake of other believers’ consciences (1 Cor 10:28-29). In this area the leadership team will be held to a higher standard by not only refraining from drinking in the context of Christian fellowship, but from drinking at all.