

Welcome to Discover Fellowship!

Thank you for joining us in this discover of Fellowship. Anytime you go to a new place, there may be a sense of uncertainty leading to a lot of questions. We want to answer your questions and tell you about who we are. However, we hope you discover a lot more than our church. Our prayer is you discover more about Christ, His church, His Word, His heart, and His mission. We want you to experience the love of Christ here.

As you get to know Fellowship, we want to get to know you during these eight weeks. We hope you feel known, connected, and seen. We want to hear your story, get to know you, and help you find a place to make a difference at Fellowship and in your community. We are so glad you are here as we discover Fellowship together.

The Schedule

Discover Fellowship has two components: the large group sessions and the small group gatherings. The schedule is designed for maximum flexibility. You can enjoy the small group gatherings before or after the large group sessions. You can also build breaks into your small group sessions as needed.

Additionally, the schedule includes a week where your small group leader will choose something unique and special to fit your group. During this “flex week” gathering, you may be spending an evening with a leader from your congregation, another senior leader, or an elder from Fellowship. Or perhaps, a global worker home temporarily from the mission field may visit your group. You could even have a service project during your flex week. This flex week can fit your small group schedule at any point.

A word from our Elders

THANK YOU for embarking on a journey to discover more about Fellowship Bible Church of Northwest Arkansas. We pray that during this series of large and small group meetings you will gain a clear understanding of the purpose of the church and Fellowship's role within the Kingdom of God. While all evangelical churches are under the authority of Jesus Christ (the head of the Church), each local expression of the Church is distinct in philosophy and practice. Discover Fellowship helps to point out some of our own uniqueness and answers the questions, "Who is Fellowship Bible Church of Northwest Arkansas?" and "What is the Biblical basis for Fellowship's style of ministry?".

Making a commitment to join a church family is a big decision and shouldn't be taken lightly. In choosing a church home, you should consider the following:

- *Is Jesus exalted above all?*
- *Is God's Word faithfully taught and lived out by the church leadership and its people?*
- *Will I be challenged to grow spiritually and develop in my knowledge, skill, character, and vision?*
- *Do the people and leadership exhibit a love for God and others (as instructed by Jesus in the Great Commandment—Matthew 22:36-40)?*
- *Will I be equipped and released for Great Commission ministry (Matthew 28:18-20)?*

The Discover process will help you answer the important question, “Should I join Fellowship Bible Church of Northwest Arkansas?”.

We hope and trust that the information presented in Discover Fellowship will help you prayerfully make this decision. And if the answer is “yes,” then we take our responsibility to assist you in your spiritual journey very seriously. We want to help you become a fully devoted follower of Christ and realize the joy of being the person who God has called you to be.

In the weeks ahead we will share how Fellowship approaches ministry and how we use the Bible as our guide for faith and practice. Remember, the way we do things here is not “the” way to carry out the commands of scripture, it is “a” way. We need all of our sister churches who are proclaiming the gospel along with us. What we will share in this process is how the Lord has led our church, at this place and in this time, to do ministry to know Him and make Him known.

At the heart of the Discover experience is each person’s story. We will give everyone the opportunity to share how their story intersected with God’s story when they met Jesus Christ. Knowing one another well is a natural part of being a family. Our stories create the building blocks for such a relationship.

If we can help you beyond Discover Fellowship, please don’t hesitate to ask. We hope you enjoy your journey.

*GOD BLESS,
The Elders of Fellowship Bible Church
of Northwest Arkansas*

LARGE GROUP

Session 1

Grow Together

Our Story

In the fall of 1983, seven families met to consider a very important question: “Is there a need in the Northwest Arkansas area for a new church with a distinct emphasis and approach to ministry?” After much discussion and prayer, the families came together and voted unanimously to plant a church that would become Fellowship Bible Church of Northwest Arkansas. In February of 1984, the church hired Dr. Robert Cupp as its first pastor. When Fellowship officially opened to the public on Sunday, May 27, 1984, the core of the church had grown to seventeen families meeting each week in the facilities of the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Bentonville. Fellowship was engaged in ministry throughout the week in small groups that met in home and in corporate worship on Sunday mornings. The church continued to grow throughout the 1980’s and into the 1990’s. On June 16, 1991, Fellowship met for the first time in the newly constructed building on Pleasant Grove Road in Rogers. Today, the Lord has allowed Fellowship to add two additional campuses (Fayetteville in 2016 and Bentonville in 2022) with multiple congregations and ministries.

Fellowship has experienced the blessing of God and enjoyed remarkable growth since its inception in 1983. It is our heart's desire to continue down the path established by those first families of Fellowship to fulfill God's purpose for our lives and to make a difference for Christ in Northwest Arkansas and the world.

Today Fellowship is a multi-congregational church, led by our Elders, managed by our staff, and always people driven. Our congregations all share common resources, one doctrinal statement, and have identical core values.

Our Ultimate Objective is to glorify God.

Our Mission is to produce and release spiritual leaders who know and express the authentic Christ to Northwest Arkansas and the world.

Our Vision is to change the heart and soul of Northwest Arkansas and the world.

For more information on the role of our elders and staff see Appendix A: Our Leadership.

Our Philosophy

At Fellowship, our philosophy of ministry is built on four foundational principles:

Priesthood of the Believer

Peter wrote that we “are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9 NIV). This means that as followers of Jesus we are called to be His hands and feet in this world. We are His ambassadors in our homes, church, neighborhoods offices, communities, and the world (2 Corinthians 5:20). Fellowship is not a staff-driven ministry. Our staff exists to equip our leaders to do ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12).

A few important implications of this belief in the priesthood of every believer are:

- *Every member ministry - we expect all of our people to engage in ministry, including you!*
- *Our staff is an equipping staff. We are here to prepare God’s people for ministry.*
- *We are not personality driven. We are a ministry team. Jesus gets the glory and we all get our hands dirty.*
- *The influence of Christ is multiplied. Releasing more leaders means extending the touch of Christ to more people in more places.*

Form and Function

Our philosophy of ministry calls for us to distinguish between ministry functions and ministry forms. A ministry function is a Biblical responsibility assigned to the church by the Lord. Ultimately there are six functions the Lord calls the church to fulfill.

Functions of the Church:

- *Exalting (Worship)*
- *Evangelizing (Outreach)*
- *Establishing (Discipleship)*
- *Equipping (Training)*
- *Encouraging (Fellowship)*
- *Empowering (Service)*

These are non-negotiable and to ignore or fail in any one of these is to fall short of the mission the church has been called to fulfill. The way in which we accomplish these functions will vary over time and circumstances.

The ministry form is the manner in which the function is accomplished.

When Fellowship began, we asked this question: “What is the best way (form) to accomplish the functions of the church?” We were not bound by tradition or history. We created the ministry from scratch. This is still a value today. Our ministry teams are regularly at the drawing board trying to figure out the best way to fulfill our Biblical mandates as a church.

The following chart may help in understanding the difference:

FUNCTION	FORM
Timeless	Timely
Static	Flexible
Unchanging	Changeable
Non-Negotiable	Negotiable
Mission	Method

A few implications emerge from this principle:

- *Our forms of ministry may be different from your background. Departure from traditional form does not mean departure from Biblical standards.*
- *Forms are not necessarily right or wrong. Biblical functions can be accomplished effectively in many different ways. There may not be one “right” way to do it but many different ways to fulfill a Biblical mandate.*
- *Since our forms are negotiable, the Fellowship body of believers should EXPECT CHANGE. We want to maintain a creative spirit that is constantly looking to fulfill out Biblical functions in culturally relevant ways.*

Essential elements of ministry: Truth, Accountability, and Relationships

In each aspect of our ministry at Fellowship, we look for three essential elements to be present. Without these three ingredients, the ministry risks losing its effectiveness and Biblical fidelity. The three elements are:

- **Truth**—*Christian ministry is based on the Scriptures. Biblical truth is essential for any ministry to communicate Christ (John 8:32).*
- **Accountability**—*Christian ministry challenges us to faithfulness and reliability. It urges us to live a life worthy of Christ (Proverbs 27:17).*
- **Relationships**—*Christian ministry calls us to love one another (1 Thessalonians 2:8).*

What would the church be like without one of these key elements? Let's do some math:

Truth + Relationships – Accountability = Country Club Church

Truth + Accountability – Relationships = Legalistic Church

Accountability + Relationships – Truth = Cult

In addition to truth, accountability, and relationships, Fellowship has four other core values:

Gospel

Jesus Christ is central to everything we do.

Generosity

We live selflessly through stewardship of time, talent, and treasure.

Life-Change

We celebrate the transforming power of Christ.

Team

We serve effectively and efficiently through collaboration and cooperation with others.

These core values guide our ministry teams as we pursue Christ together.

Decentralized Ministry

Fellowship's ministry is not centered on our campuses. God has provided beautiful facilities that we utilize for our corporate worship services and large group trainings, but most of our ministry is done away from our campuses. Homes, restaurants, break rooms, gyms, office buildings, playgrounds, parks, coffee shops, and many other places become our ministry locations on a regular basis. We gather on the weekends to worship and be refreshed by the Lord, and then we head out into our mission field to live out our faith. Most of our adult, student, and other small groups meet off campus each week. We have always said a non-believer is much more likely to come to a home than to a church. You could say this philosophy is rooted in being an incarnational church instead of an attractional church. We are not centered on weekly events designed to draw or attract people to the church campus. Our desire is to equip the people of Fellowship to be the very presence of Christ wherever they find themselves in Northwest Arkansas. Practically speaking, we gather together on the church campuses once a week to grow and worship God together. We are then commissioned to embody Christ in our communities throughout the week.

Centralized Ministry (Attractional) - Key question: What can we do/offer to get people to come to our church?

Decentralized Ministry (Incarnational) - Key question: What can we do to enable people to live out their faith in their homes and communities?

Our story and our philosophy of ministry come together to create the culture of Fellowship Bible Church of NWA. Within this framework you will find different expressions of these same values at our various congregations. This ministry model allows us to be unified in the essentials, to feel freedom in the non-essentials, and in all things to reflect to love and charity of Christ. If the Lord leads you to join Fellowship, our prayer is that you will find a place where you can minister in your gifting and play your part in glorifying God where you live, work, and play.

Session 2

Making Our Mark

Making Our Mark

We have a saying at Fellowship: “Name nowhere, fingerprints everywhere.” Our desire is to see the heart and soul of Northwest Arkansas and the world changed by Jesus Christ, and we aren’t concerned with who gets the credit. Three key values of our ministry inform how we go about extending our influence for the Kingdom of God in our community and beyond. We are a Christ-centered, celebration/cell church, with a goal of multiplication. Let’s look at each of these values using Fellowships “mark” as our guide.



Christ-centered

Fellowship's mark is designed to help us easily remember the values that anchor our ministry, beginning with its overall shape: the cross. This reminds us that Christ is at the center of all we do.

This begins with a high view of scripture. As you will see in our doctrinal statement, "We believe that the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments are verbally inspired by God, in whole and in part, error-free in the original writings and the supreme authority of faith and practice for the believer in Jesus Christ." Jesus Himself said that the Scriptures will point us to Him (Luke 24:27). This places Jesus firmly at the center of our faith, our teaching, and our lives. Our message at Fellowship is the gospel message of Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2, 15:1-8).

We believe the Church belongs to Jesus (Matthew 16:18) and that ultimately we are here to glorify Him and live for Him (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). We can do just that because God has given us everything we need in Christ to live out His calling on our lives (2 Peter 1:3). Being Christ-centered means we depend on Christ for all we do (Colossians 2:7), we follow Christ with all we have (Matthew 16:24), and proclaim Christ at every opportunity (Colossians 1:28).



Celebration - Cell

The second value that is reflected in the mark is represented by the large and small segments that form each side. This represents our cell-celebration approach to ministry. Every part of our church is designed to have a large group gathering and a small group component. Celebration-cell, or large group-small group, is at the core of who we are.

Celebration refers to corporate gatherings. Our primary celebration opportunity is our large group worship services that take place on each of campuses every weekend. We gather the church to worship the Lord and hear from His Word. Our Celebration services are a rallying point for the people of Fellowship to be encouraged and inspired to go out and express our faith during the week. We will have a more complete discussion of worship in our third small group session, “We Worship Together.” For now, let’s focus on our large group worship gatherings.

Worship is much more than just singing, but often when someone is describing a local church's style of worship, their description turns quickly to style of music. Musical style has been an issue in many churches over the years. At Fellowship, we don't focus on any one particular style of worship music in our corporate gatherings. We appreciate and utilize traditional styles as well as the most current trends in music. We have a very broad body of believers who are diverse in age and tastes. The following captures some of our thinking on this subject:

Balanced Thinking On Worship Issues

Preference ————— Appreciation
We appreciate all styles of music without demanding our preference all of the time.

Freedom ————— Responsibility
We express ourselves to God freely without distracting those around us.

Passionate ————— Authentic
We passionately worship God without the motivation of impressing others.

Excellence ————— Genuine
We pursue excellence in our services while maintaining a genuine pursuit of glorifying Christ.

Cell refers to the small groups that develop within our faith family. Just as a healthy body is made up of healthy cells, the body at Fellowship is composed of small groups, or cells, that meet all over Northwest Arkansas.

A small group is a more intimate gathering where truth, relationships, and accountability are worked out on a regular basis. These take the form of adult community groups, singles groups, student groups (called Cell Groups), children’s groups, recovery groups (called Step Studies), men’s groups, women’s groups, and many other kinds of small gatherings. Fellowship is not a church *with* small groups; we are a church *of* small groups. This is the way we make our large church feel small. This is how each person is known and cared for. The essence of small groups can be captured in three key words:

Belong

Healthy community offers a place to know others and to be known in a real, authentic way.

Grow

Healthy community offers a place where we feed our souls with the Word of God and are nourished by love and acceptance for and from others.

Serve

Healthy community is the place where we are able to serve one another, our neighbors, and perhaps even people we will never meet—all in the name of Jesus Christ.

We will look more closely at cell and community in Small Group Session 2, “We Gather Together.” At Fellowship, small groups and community are at the heart of everything we do, including our strategy to multiply.



Multiplication is at the heart of Fellowship’s ministry strategy. We want to see more people following Jesus. We want to see more small groups loving and serving their communities in Jesus’ name. We want to see more churches planted near and far. In short, we want to see the Kingdom of God expanded through multiplication. Notice that the edges of the mark are curved, representing the organic nature of the multiplication. They are also pointed out, emphasizing the outward facing nature of the church. Our mission statement says “...know and express the authentic Christ...”. For us, this means taking the gospel to as many people in as many places as possible so that the message is multiplied and lives are changed for Christ (1 Corinthians 9:22).

The book of Acts details the earliest days of the Christian Church as the gospel takes hold in Jerusalem and spreads throughout the Roman world. Through the first few chapters, we see God adding to their numbers (Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14), but then the verb switches. In Acts 6:7 (ESV) we are told “the number of disciples multiplied” greatly in Jerusalem. This multiplication continues through the rest of the book (Acts 9:31, 12:24). You don’t have to be a math major to know that numbers that are multiplied increase much more quickly than through addition.

Paul gives us a snapshot of how the Lord used the early church to multiply disciples. In 2 Timothy 2:2 NIV Paul writes, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.” In that simple statement, Paul mentions four generations. If each of those generations is making disciples who make disciples, we will see not just multiplication but exponential multiplication.

Church Practice and Membership

Fellowship’s core beliefs may be summarized as follows:

We believe in the:

- *Authority of the Scriptures*
- *Triune Godhead (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)*
- *Full deity and full humanity of Christ*
- *Substitutionary atonement of Christ*
- *Salvation by grace, through faith alone, in Christ alone*
- *Virgin birth of Christ, His visible and bodily resurrection, and His visible and bodily return*
- *Priesthood of the believer (every member ministry)*

Fellowship’s full doctrinal statement can be found in Appendix B on page 71.

Church Practice

Baptism

We believe the Scriptures command every believer to be baptized after their conversion to Christ as an outward sign of their inward life-change. Fellowship practices full immersion baptism.

Communion

The Lord's Supper is available each week in our prayer room and is observed regularly (about every six weeks) in the adult celebrations in the Worship Center at each campus.

Church Membership

In order to become a member of Fellowship Bible Church of NWA, we ask that each person fulfill the following expectations:

- *Believe - the Scriptures identify the members of the Body of Christ as those who have responded to the grace of God through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Salvation comes to those who repent from sin and place their faith in Christ's death on the cross for the forgiveness of their sins.*
- *Complete Discover Fellowship - participate in and complete the Discover Fellowship experience.*
- *Share your story - all persons are asked to share their stories of how they came to personally know our Lord. This will be done verbally in our small groups as well as in written form in the membership papers.*
- *Complete the membership papers - our membership papers officially request membership into our family of faith.*
- *Commit - make every effort to live out the expectations of our Membership Covenant found in Appendix D on page 78.*

SMALL GROUP

Intro to Small Groups Sessions

Thank you again for joining us in the Discover process. We know that you are giving your time and energy to engage in these eight weeks. We don't take that lightly. We hope this time is enriching and edifying.

What to expect in your small groups:

Your group is on a journey together. In the weeks ahead, it is our prayer that you will grow together as you learn more about Fellowship through our five promise statements. These statements sum up what you can expect to experience at Fellowship Bible Church across our different congregations and ministries.

Learn together.

Worship together.

Gather together.

Serve together.

Make disciples together.

At the heart of the small group experience is sharing stories. As you hear what God has done and continues to do in the lives of your group members, you will see how your own story fits into the tapestry that God is weaving.

During your flex week, your leader will bring something unique to your group, whether it's a special guest, an activity, or something only your group will get to experience together.

At the end of your small group experience you will have the opportunity to join the church by writing out your story and signing our membership covenant. Please know our team is praying for you as embark on this journey. It takes all of our experiences, all of our giftings, and all of our stories to make up the Body of Christ at Fellowship.

Welcome to the next step on your journey! Let's get started.

Session 1

Learn Together

Whether it's a young plant, a puppy, or a newborn baby, we expect living things to grow. Jesus told Nicodemus that to enter into a relationship with Him we must be born again (John 3:1-8). After someone is reborn in Christ, they are a spiritual infant needing to grow. Spiritual growth does not just happen, though. It requires intentionality from us as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit who is at work in our lives. The writer to the Hebrews admonishes his readers that they should be maturing in their faith (Hebrews 5:12-14) and Paul encourages us to train ourselves to be godly (1 Timothy 4:7). Spiritual growth to maturity is a theme of the New Testament letters and an important part of our Christian lives.

Fellowship is committed to helping people grow spiritually.

Pray

Pray for your small group to be comfortable with one another quickly. Ask God to be at the center of the relationships in your group. Pray for grace in your group's relationships.

Pray that the Lord will continue to reveal Himself through your study. Ask Him to help you assess where you need to grow spiritually.

Discuss

Take a moment to let each person introduce themselves. Consider having each person share a small fact, such as favorite dessert, or how they like to spend their free time.

After the introductions, you are ready to begin the session! Where have you grown and changed in the past year? How about the past five years? What spurred your growth on?

Read

Read this passage aloud:

Ephesians 4:11-16 NIV

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Interact

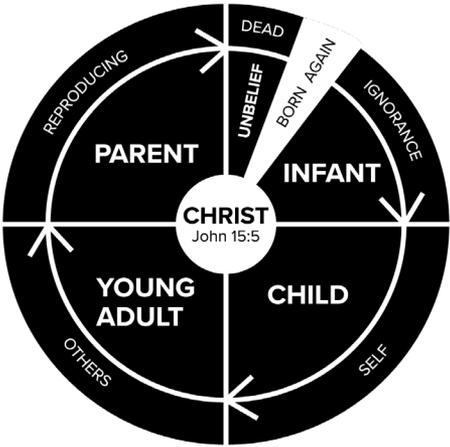
What is Paul referring to in verse 14 when he mentions “the Body of Christ”? How is this body to be built up?

How could “works of service” contribute to our spiritual growth? What would it mean for us to “reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God”? How would prayer, Bible reading, and community help us attain the maturity described in this passage?

According to verse 14, what are some things that will “blow (us) here and there”? What are some things that knock believers off course today? According to verse 15, how can we avoid being tossed around by these forces?

The word love appears twice in the final two verses of this passage. What is the role of love in our spiritual growth? Why is this important for us to remember?

Take a look at the figure below showing the stages of spiritual development. Consider how each stage of physical development is similar to our spiritual growth.



Where are you on this wheel? What are some things you need to do, in commitment to the Lord, to move to the next quadrant on this diagram?

Share

Give some group members the opportunity to share the story of their life before Christ, how they met Christ, and their life since coming to know Christ. Remember to keep the sharing of stories brief so that everyone will have the opportunity to tell about what God has done for them.

Respond

Spiritual growth begins with coming to know Christ. Colossians 2:6-7 is rephrased below as a prayer. Pray these verses back to the Lord and close your time together asking God to help you grow into the mature believer that He wants you to become.

Father, thank You that I have received Christ Jesus as Lord. Help me to continue to live in Him, to be rooted and built up in Him, to be strengthened in the faith as I have been taught. Father, I am overflowing with thankfulness for all You have done for me in Christ.

Notes:

Session 2

Gather Together

In the beginning of the Bible, God states that it is not good for man to be alone. We are created for connection. The Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) existed in perfect community before the creation of the universe. Since we are made in the image of God, community and relationships are at the essence of who we are as human beings.

Adam and Eve sinned, and brokenness entered our world. Perfect relationships were broken...with God, with self, with creation, and with one another. The good news is Jesus came to redeem that which was broken. Followers of Jesus are part of the redemptive plan— to restore and make right the wreckage sin produces. We want to help people live out healthy relationships.

The simplest and most adaptive form we've found to accomplish the function of relationships is small groups. Jesus used small groups in His earthly ministry as did the earthly church.

Fellowship's small groups are where people can BELONG, GROW, and SERVE. We also believe small groups to be a good way to MULTIPLY our influence and reach out to others. Fellowship's mission is to produce and release spiritual leaders... Small group leadership is the primary means to develop spiritual leaders at our church as we belong, grow, serve, and multiply together.

Pray

Pray your Discover Fellowship small group will be a place where people can belong, grow, serve, and multiply. Pray that the people of Fellowship will be in healthy relationships and that they be a blessing to our community and the world.

Discuss

Where was your favorite place to hang out in high school? What made that place special?

Read

Read this passage aloud:

Acts 2:41-47 NIV

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Interact

This description of the early church is informative and inspiring. What stands out to you from this description of the early church in this passage?

Where do you see Belonging? Growing? Serving?
Multiplying?

Why do you think it's significant that the believers were "together" rather than going at life/ministry alone?

Have you ever been in a small group? If so, how did being part of a small group help spur you on toward love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24)?

Turn to page 40 and review some of the frequently asked questions about small groups at Fellowship. What other questions do you have concerning Fellowship's approach to small groups?

How could participating in a small group be beneficial in your walk with Christ?

Share

Give other group members the opportunity to share the story of their life before Christ, how they met Christ, and their life since coming to know Christ. Remember to keep the sharing of stories brief so that everyone will have the opportunity to tell about what God has done for them.

Respond

Close your time together by celebrating what has been shared in your group meeting. This week, have everyone write a prayer request on an index card. Have women trade cards with women, men with men, and commit to pray for that prayer request every day this week. Close your time praying for people to be connected to Christ and to each other.

Notes:

Small Groups Frequently Asked Questions

Where do community groups meet?

Community groups most often meet in homes and apartments. Some community groups meet at offices, parks, restaurants, and coffee shops.

How often do community groups meet?

Our recommended cadence is to meet three times and then have a off week. Some groups meet every week and some meet every other week.

How many hours does a typical community group last?

Most groups meet for two hours. The core elements of a community group meeting are relationship building, Bible discussion, and prayer.

Are community groups just for couples?

Community groups are a place to Belong, Grow, Serve, and Multiply. Community groups can be made up of people in varied seasons of life, ages, and marital status, etc.

What's the ideal size for a small group?

The ideal size for a community group is 8-14 people. Less than eight and it can be tough to get momentum. More than 14 can make it tough for everyone to share and feel a part of the group.

What do small groups study each semester?

Our recommended curriculum is the Bible. Most groups follow our sermon series. However, there is freedom to do a topical study as well. We recomend groups study the Bible at least every other semester.

Who leads the lesson each week in small group?

Because we want leaders to be facilitators, this responsibility can easily be spread around the group. The facilitators job is to launch the discussion, guide the conversation, and summarize key points. We recommend that the facilitation of the discussion be shared among group members.

How do small groups handle childcare?

The four most common ways groups handle childcare are:

- *The group hires a sitter to come to the host home. Everyone who has kids pitches in \$5/child to pay the sitter.*
- *If no one in the group has a home that can accommodate adults and children, one home can be the designated as the “childcare-home” and another home/apartment can be the meeting place for the adults.*
- *Everyone gets their own sitter.*
- *Groups set up a rotation where women meet one week, men meet one week, couples meet together one week, and then there is either an off week or a family week. This necessitates childcare only once per month.*

How long does a typical community group stay together?

A community group’s life cycle is often between one-three years. It takes time to form relationships, build trust, and grow together. However, if a group stays together for longer than three years without producing and releasing leaders or bringing in new people, the group can stagnate or become complacent.

Once a group is formed, can others be invited to join?

Inviting others to join is encouraged. New faces bring energy and excitement. It’s good to discuss ahead of time with your group a healthy rhythm of inviting new people to join. Having new people every week can make the group feel chaotic.

Is there a difference between a Sunday school class and a community group?

Here are the main differences between Sunday school and a community group:

- *The leader of a Sunday school class is called a teacher. The leader of a community group is called a leader.*
- *A group of people assembled at Sunday school is called a class. The group assembled at community group is called a group.*
- *Oftentimes the focus of a Sunday school class is acquiring Bible knowledge. The focus of a community group is being a place to belong, grow, serve, and multiply. Additionally, the focus is on life-change.*
- *The goal of a Sunday school teacher is to teach the content well. The goals of a community group leader are facilitation and developing spiritual leaders.*
- *The setting of Sunday school is in a classroom in the church building. The setting for community group is in a home/apartment within the community.*
- *Outreach in Sunday school is often inviting someone to class or doing a service project together. Outreach in a community group can be inviting someone to small group, serving as a group in your neighborhood, etc.*
- *The outcomes of a healthy Sunday school class are increased knowledge of the Bible, spiritual growth, and a sense of community. The outcomes of a healthy small group are community (belong), spiritual growth (grow), outreach (serve), and leadership development (multiply).*

How does someone become a community group leader?

Leaders are most often asked to lead by staff, community group leaders, or members of a community group. Leaders are often recognized for their spiritual maturity, interest in ministering to others, and vision to raise up future leaders.

How do new community groups get started?

Here are the most common ways:

- *Discover – Community groups form out of Discover small groups.*
- *Group multiplication – Groups decide to multiply their group into two or three groups depending on leaders willing to launch new groups.*
- *Two-three couples decide to start a group and invite others to join.*

Session 3

Worship Together

Coming from our various backgrounds, we may have differing views on the meaning of worship. Here at Fellowship, we unite around the teachings of scripture regarding worship. Scripture teaches us that worship can be both collective (something we do when we come together) and also deeply personal (individually expressed). Worship is lived out in the attitude and actions of God's people toward their infinitely trustworthy Lord.

How might we define worship? **Worship is seeing God as He truly is and giving an appropriate response.**

While worship gatherings and worship music are examples of "an appropriate response," we see in the Bible that worship is so much more! Worship is responsive engagement with God throughout our daily lives. We can worship through the way we work and play. From how we treat loved ones and strangers, to how we spend our time and money, all of our interactions can be expressions of worship. The more we see God for who He truly is, the more appropriate and comprehensive our response will be. What we will find is that worship is not an act, or a few hours of our week, but the all-embracing description of the Christian's life.

Pray

Does anyone have any answered prayers from the prayer cards exchanged last week? What has the experience of praying for someone daily been like for you?

In John 4, Jesus says God seeks “true worshipers” who worship both “in spirit and in truth.” Invite God’s Spirit to fill your heart with increasingly truer worship. Ask God to reveal Himself in truth as we study what His Word says about Him and the worship He desires.

Discuss

God designed us for worship and it has been said that we all worship something or someone, allowing it to rule over our choices. When we worship something other than God, the Bible calls that an idol. What are some common idols in our culture that people worship? Where do you see people putting their time, energy, money, and passion?

Read

Read this passage aloud:

Romans 12:1-2 NIV

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. ² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Interact

While Old Testament worshipers repeatedly brought animal sacrifices to God, God provided a once-and-for-all sacrifice for the sins of mankind in the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus. In the book of Romans, the author (Paul) explains how worshipers can now engage with God through the provision of the person and work of Jesus Christ (Romans 1-11). So “in view of God’s mercy,” the verses above spell out the appropriate response! How would you explain to someone how Jesus’ death serves as a sacrifice that satisfies our Holy (perfect) God, being the sacrifice to end all sacrifices?

In response to Jesus’ sacrifice of death on a cross, what are some practical ways we can present ourselves as living sacrifices? How can we, as living, breathing beings exalt God with our energy, activities, work, thoughts, intellectual pursuits, and health?

Brainstorm with the group some answers to these questions:

- *How could the way you take care of your body be an act of worship?*
- *How could the way you work in your workplace be an act of worship?*
- *How could your conduct in your home be an act of worship?*
- *How could you worship on vacation in your recreation?*
- *How could you worship with your checkbook, credit card, and other expenditures?*
- *How could you worship with your time in front of the computer?*

What makes our dedication of all-that-we-are “holy and acceptable” to God? Isn’t everything we do contaminated by “The Fall” and selfishness? What makes it possible for our efforts to qualify as “spiritual worship”?

What are some ways it is easy for us to conform to our world? How does that impact our worship of God? What does the transformation of our mind have to do with worship? Name some things that compete with God for our worship, our trust, and our obedience?

What are some ways the mind can be renewed? What does this verse say is the result of a renewed mind?

Consider breaking into groups of men and groups of women to discuss to discuss these questions in a more intimate setting:

- *What aspect of your life are you holding back from offering to God?*
- *What aspect of your life do you suspect is not pleasing to God—and therefore not a spiritual act of worship?*
- *Are you willing to ask God to transform you so you can offer this as your sacrifice of worship?*
- *Can you think of any action steps that would allow God to transform your thinking?*

Share

If you split into men and women, gather back together for a time of sharing. Give some group members the opportunity to share the story of their life before Christ, how they met Christ, and their life since coming to know Christ. Remember to keep the sharing of stories brief so that everyone will have the opportunity to tell about what God has done for them.

Respond

One of the ways we worship is by praising God for who He is. Pray and invite each member of the group to praise God for an aspect of His character (such as His grace, His mercy, His love, etc.) Consider closing your time together by singing a verse of “Amazing Grace” together as an act of worship.

Notes:

Session 4

Serve Together

If you've experienced the joy of giving and serving, you know that Jesus' words are true— "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35 NIV). Jesus' life and words are the model for us. The perfect God-man "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14 ESV). Jesus "made himself nothing by taking on the very nature of a servant" (Philippians 2:7 NIV). Isn't it amazing to think that the One through whom everything was created (Colossians 1:16), lived a life of complete service to others?!

As broken humans, it is a struggle to follow Jesus' example, living a life of service to others. Even if we realize that a sacrificial life is the best way to live, it can be extremely difficult for us. The world's system, our sinful humanity, and Satan's attacks ensnare many to live selfish, independent lives. However, God created us to live interdependently on one another and to truly live for the benefit of others. May we remember that "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 NIV).

Pray

Begin by sharing any answered prayers you have seen in since your last meeting. Do you have any updates on the prayer cards?

Next, take a few moment and pause as a group. Pray silently in your own hearts.

Ask the Lord to open your eyes to see how you are living your life...to have an honest evaluation of how you spend your time and money. Ask the Lord to mold you to look more like Christ in how you use the precious moments and resources He has given you for your time on earth.

Discuss

Who do you know who lives a life of service, who truly believes that they exist for the benefit of others? (A family member? Boss? Neighbor? Teacher? Coach?)

Read

Read this passage aloud:

John 13:1-17 NIV

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

² The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

⁷ Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

⁸ "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

⁹ "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

¹⁰ Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." ¹¹ For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Interact

What are some observations you have about this passage of scripture? (Notice key words, people, actions, and ideas. Notice connections and relationships.)

What are some questions you have about the passage's meaning?

What does this passage teach you about God? What does this passage teach you about humans?

What does this passage teach you about the way to live?

What's your application of this passage in your own life?

John 13:1 says that Jesus loved His own "to the end." How did Jesus love His own disciples during His earthly ministry? What stories stand out in your mind?

Verse 3 says Jesus knew "the Father had put all things under his power." This security poured out of Jesus in love, sacrifice, and service. Do you sense you are secure in His love, able to pour out to others because of the security you have in God's love?

Verses 6-11 describes Jesus' interaction with Peter as Peter was uncomfortable with the idea of the master washing his feet. Take a moment and imagine Jesus Christ kneeling at your feet with a basin of water, looking you in the eyes, and washing your feet. How does that make you feel?

In verses 13-17, Jesus brings it home for the disciples. He acknowledges He is their teacher and master but He uses His position in their lives to serve them. He tells them they should do the same. In Verse 15 Jesus says, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." What are some ways you can follow His example?

At Fellowship, serving has three main forms:

- *Serving during a weekly worship service— There are countless opportunities to serve during your congregations weekly celebration gatherings.*
- *Serving within and serving with your community group— There will be times to serve one another in your community group. Being the Body of Christ to one another within your community is a beautiful thing. Jesus reminds us, “by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35 NIV). Also, serving together is a wonderful way groups can bless others.*
- *Serving in your community— There are needs in your neighborhood, at local schools, with non-profit organizations, and all around your community. We want to have a released body of believers who make a difference in our community. As believers, we want to have fingerprints everywhere and name nowhere. We want to point others to Jesus in our service to others.*

Please visit **fellowshipnwa.org/serve** to explore how you can serve within your local church and community.

Share

Take the rest of your time together and hear spiritual stories from group members. Pray for them before they share.

Respond

As a group, pray about how you could serve. Ask God to reveal an opportunity in your group, your church, or your community where your group could engage as an act of service.

Notes:

Session 5

Make Disciples Together

At Fellowship, we make disciples together. We learn, gather, worship, and serve all with the end goal of seeing more and more people come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior and follow Him obediently as their King.

You may have heard it said Jesus never wrote a book, never held an office, and never traveled more than about 200 miles from where He was born; yet He changed the world forever. He accomplished that by training 12 men through a process called discipleship. Before He ascended to heaven to sit down at the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 1:3), Jesus told His followers to continue the work of making disciples (Matthew 28:19, Acts 1:8).

The job of the church today is to “pass the baton” of faith as we share the love of Christ and challenge each other to live lives of joyful obedience as disciples and disciple makers.

Pray

Pray the Spirit will give you supernatural understanding of discipleship. Pray for God to show you *specifically* how you can engage in the process of being discipled and discipling someone else.

Discuss

Have you ever had a mentor? Maybe it was in school, or work, or in a skill you wanted to develop. How did they mentor you? Have you ever mentored someone else in that same area? Share with the group.

Read

Read this passage aloud:

Matthew 28:16-20 NIV

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Interact

This passage is at the end of Matthew's gospel, after Jesus has been crucified and resurrected. Consider the scene on the mountain in Galilee. Who is there? How can some still doubt? What do you think it tells us that Jesus does not address their doubt?

Jesus talks about authority in verse 18. Who has authority in our daily lives? What does it mean that Jesus has been given "all authority in heaven and on earth"? How does knowing that Jesus has this authority change how we understand the commands that follow?

The only command in the original Greek sentence is "make disciples." How does knowing the other verbs (go, baptizing, teaching) all modify "make disciples" help you understand the passage? What does it mean to "make disciples"?

What is the scope and duration of this commission? What does it mean for us today?

Paul picked up on Jesus' command to make disciples and reinforced it with the early church. Read this instruction from the Apostle Paul to Timothy aloud:

2 Timothy 2:2 NIV

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

How many generations of discipleship do you see in this verse, beginning with Paul? How could we see a similar passing of the gospel in our own time?

Who are the people you are around on a regular basis who need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ? Who are the people in your world to whom you could pass on the spiritual truths you are learning week by week? What would it take for you to begin building those kind of spiritual friendships? Right now, pause and ask God to bring three people to mind who you can talk to about spiritual things. Write those names down, and commit to the Lord to reach out to them in the next week.

Do you need to be mentored in the faith, just as Timothy was by Paul? Talk with your Discover Fellowship leaders or other trusted Christian friends about finding someone who can invest in you so you, in turn, can invest in someone else.

Share

This is your final Discover Fellowship small group session. If anyone in the group has not had the opportunity to share the story of their life before Christ, how they met Christ, and their life since coming to know Christ, now is the time for them to share it with the group. Remember to keep the sharing of stories brief so everyone will have the opportunity to tell about what God has done for them.

Respond

Discuss what's next for the people in the group. It might be that this group can continue to meet as a community group. It could be that some need to meet with their leaders to talk through what they should do next. If the Lord leads some to join the church, they may submit their signed membership papers at this time. Consider closing your final group meeting by taking communion together and claiming the promise of scripture "that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6 NIV).

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We are governed and led by a Board of Elders. Fellowship practices “elder rule” in our governance strategy. The Scriptures teach that elders (or overseers or shepherds) are responsible for the health and direction of the church. Our church is not run by any one individual, a select few staff, or by the proxy of the whole. We are led by our Elder Board through the ministry of the Directional Leader. Elders are nominated by the church body and prayerfully selected by the existing Elder Board. The spiritual qualifications for elders are found in I Timothy 3:1-16 and Titus 1:5-9. The church is to recognize those who are spiritually qualified for church leadership. These individuals are then to minister to the church by godly service and rule. Our staff and community group leaders carry out the functional parameters and policies of the Elder Board.

What is the role of an elder?

The Bible gives guidelines concerning the functional responsibility of the office of elder.

Biblical Parameters of Elder Leadership

To oversee or rule well

I Thessalonians 5:12; I Timothy 3:1; I Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17

The first function of an elder is to direct the affairs of the church (cf. I Timothy 5:17 NIV). In a mutual-ministry approach, the shared responsibility of elder rule will minimize individual weaknesses and maximize strengths. Therefore, the proper administration of the church rests with the elders. The Elder Board may choose to delegate their responsibilities to the church staff, but the authority for the leadership of the church remains with the overseers.

To shepherd the flock of God

Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2

A major function of elders is to shepherd the church. “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care...” (1 Peter 5:2a NIV). The imagery of shepherding suggests tender care, protection, and feeding. These principles lie at the heart of the shepherd-minister who would serve as an elder. They form a Biblical framework for effective ministry.

To be an example

1 Peter 5:3-5; Hebrews 13:7

In emphasizing this point, the writer of Hebrews noted the function in this way: “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith” (Hebrews 13:7 NIV). Elders cannot lead further into spiritual things than they have personally gone. Each elder within God’s church must have the attitude of the Apostle Paul. “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1 NASB).

To guard right doctrine

1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9

A critical ingredient to effective overseeing is the elder’s command of Scripture. He is to be one who is “holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:9 NASB). Doctrinal purity is a prerequisite to spiritual health and vitality. Elders are charged with the task of maintaining the church on solid, Biblical ground.

To confront and initiate discipline when necessary

Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1-2; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; see also 1 Thessalonians 5:12

If the tasks of careful oversight and doctrinal purity are taken seriously, then a proper administration of church discipline will naturally follow. Spiritual discipline is never easy, but it is commanded. The elders must assume their responsibility for the care of the church. It is no wonder, then, that the local body of believers is encouraged in the following way: “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17 NASB).

To minister to the sick (or weak) and needy

James 5:14-15; 1 Timothy 5:3-16; compare also God’s concern for the needy in Psalm 12:5; 69:33; et al.; see also “hospitable” in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:8

A part of the elders’ responsibility is to shepherd those in need. While there is debate as to whether the “sick” of James 5 are physically sick or spiritually weak (perhaps both), one definite principle is sure: the elders are to evidence their concern for those who are in need by faithful prayer. For certain, an elder’s ministry reaches out to those in need.

To appoint and commission leadership

1 Timothy 5:22; 1 Timothy 4:14; compare with Ephesians 4:11-12

As elders oversee and shepherd the church, they will, of necessity, be equipping the saints for the work of the ministry. Not only do elders care for the administrative organization of the church, but they are responsible for the raising up of new leadership as well. Such an ongoing task requires the utmost spiritual discernment and care.

Our elders are charged with sustaining the mission and extending the vision of Fellowship. They accomplish these goals by establishing yearly staff parameters and goals and evaluating and approving the staff ministry plan. Our elders ensure that resources are deployed properly and that the health of the staff and congregations is maintained. Our elders define the operating principles of the church and evaluate the role and ministry of the Directional Leader. The Directional Leader is responsible for leading the ministry staff.

Our staff embraces the concept of team. We use these teams to facilitate and manage ministry. The staff team, under the leadership of the Elder Board and Directional Leader (who also serves as an elder), exists to serve the greater team of our lay leaders. The staff team is here to equip and enable lay leaders to do ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12). Our desire is to produce and release spiritual leaders. The staff team concept also keeps Fellowship from becoming a personality-driven church. This is Christ's church, and we are here to serve Him. We often say around Fellowship, "we want our name nowhere and our fingerprints everywhere." This is not only true of our church, but also of our staff. Our staff ministers are to be humble servants.

The Scripture

We believe that the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments are verbally inspired of God, in whole and in part, error-free in the original writings and the supreme authority of faith and practice for the believer in Jesus Christ. We further believe that there is but one true interpretation of any Biblical passage and this is only found when one accurately applies the literal-grammatical-historical method of interpretation. (Psalm 119:160; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Hebrews 1:1-2, 4:12)

God

We believe there is but one living and true God who is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. We further believe that God is one in essence while existing in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Though each person of the Godhead possesses precisely the same nature and attributes, each function differently in respect to God's purposes and dealings with man. (Deuteronomy 4:39; 6:4; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

The Father

The first person of the Trinity orders and directs all things according to His own purpose, pleasure, and grace. The Father is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption. He has decreed all things that come to pass for His own glory. He graciously involves Himself in the affairs of men, hears and answers prayer, and saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. (2 Chronicles 29:11; Psalm 103:19; Matthew 6:9; John 5:19-24; Ephesians 1:2-6)

The Son

The second person of the Trinity is both the eternal Son of God and virgin-born Son of man. Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, surrendered nothing of His deity during His earthly life. Having led a sinless life, He satisfied the Father's justice concerning sin by His substitutionary death. We believe in His bodily resurrection, His physical ascension, and His visible return to earth to establish His earthly kingdom. (John 1:14-18; Acts 1:11; Romans 3:24-26; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 2:17-18; Revelation 20:11-15)

The Holy Spirit

The third person of the Trinity executes the will of God in the world of men. It is the Holy Spirit who applies the salvation that Jesus Christ secured through His death on the cross. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers the church to live a lifestyle pleasing to God, endowing it with special gifts which equip believers to accomplish distinct ministries, planned beforehand by God the Father. (John 3:1-8; 15-16; 16:4-15; 1 Corinthians 12; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 1:13-14; 5:18-21)

Mankind

We believe that mankind was directly created in the image of God to enjoy His fellowship and to fulfill God's will on earth. Man sinned by voluntary act of personal disobedience to the will of God; as a result, all human beings are spiritually dead and subject to the certainty of physical death. The fall of mankind was a non-repeatable historical fact; the effects of which are transmitted to all human beings, each of whom is born with a sinful nature and sins habitually in thought, word, and deed. (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7; 3:3-4; Romans 1:18-32; 3:10-23; Ephesians 2:1-3)

Salvation

We believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins as the only sufficient, substitutionary sacrifice. All who believe in Him are declared justified by the Father on the grounds of Jesus' death and resurrection. All who receive the Lord Jesus Christ by grace through faith have been regenerated by and baptized in the Holy Spirit. They become, thereby, the children of God, forever, and members of the one true church, the universal Body of Christ. This salvation will result in righteous living and good works as the believer submits his life to the control of the Holy Spirit who directs the life of the believer in harmony with the Word of God. (John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24; 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:21-26; 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Galatians 3:26; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; Titus 3:4-7; Hebrews 10:10-12; 1 John 5:11- 13)

The Church

We believe that all who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit belong to the one true universal church and are directed by the Scriptures to associate themselves in local, visible churches. The local church is the only scriptural representation of Christ's invisible Church and consists only of regenerated believers. The local church is autonomous in its government and recognizes its own members for the biblical offices of elder and deacon. Two ordinances have been committed to the local church-Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The purpose of the church is to lead others to Christ, mature them in the faith, and equip them for personal ministry. (Matthew 16:13-28; 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-47; 4:1-16; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29; Ephesians 2:19-22; 4:11-13; Hebrews 10:23-25; 1 Peter 5:1-3)

Marriage

We believe that God has established marriage as a lifelong, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman and that all intimate sexual activity outside the marriage relationship, whether heterosexual, homosexual, or otherwise, is immoral and therefore sin (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:24-25; Exodus 20:14, 17; Matthew 19:4-6, 9; Romans 1:18- 31; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 15-20; Jude 7). Marriage ceremonies conducted on Fellowship Bible Church premises or by Fellowship Bible Church staff should represent the establishment of this covenant relationship. We believe that God created the human race male and female, and all conduct with the intent to adopt a gender other than one's birth gender is immoral and therefore sin (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6).

Future

We believe that prophetic scriptures teach the imminent return of Jesus Christ (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). We believe the second coming of Christ will occur in a bodily, visible manner with great glory (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Revelation 20:1-4)

Your story is your most powerful tool for sharing Christ!

What is “your story”? Your story is the retelling of when and how you trusted Jesus Christ. It is your most powerful tool for sharing Christ with people who do not know Him because no one can deny your personal experience. With a little preparation you can be ready to share your story—ready to share Christ!

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV84) says, “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” Being able to share your story is a great way to obey this passage.

Paul’s Example

Your story should follow a basic outline. Paul shares his story in Acts 26, giving us a good outline we can follow with our own story.

Acts 26:4-11— **Paul’s life before he trusted Christ**

Acts 26:12-19— **How Paul trusted Christ**

Acts 26:20-23— **How Paul’s life changed after trusting Christ**

Developing your Story

Some things you should try to do as you prepare your story:

- *Ask God to guide you as you prepare.*
- *Follow the Acts 26 outline: my life before believing and receiving (trusting) Christ; how I came to know and trust Christ; how my life changed after trusting Christ.*
- *Emphasize your life since trusting Christ if you accepted Him as a child.*
- *Begin with a thought provoking or attention getting statement.*
- *Include enough detail to keep it interesting.*
- *Weave the Gospel into your story.*
- *Practice your story with a mature believer, get feedback, then practice it until it becomes natural.*
- *Smile! Remember, you are sharing “Good News!”*

Some things you should avoid as you prepare your story:

- *Don't use Christian jargon such as “saved,” “convicted,” or “born again” as these might confuse and alienate non-Christians.*
- *Don't emphasize how bad you were.*
- *Don't use superlatives like “glorious,” “best ever,” “wonderful”...*
- *Don't mention denominations or other groups even if you have positive feelings about a specific ministry or church. Your listener might not share your opinion.*
- *Don't give the impression that the Christian life is a “bed of roses” or that you no longer have struggles.*

As you share your story, remember the ABC's:

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Be brief.

Center on CHRIST.

Your story can be effective in any casual situation: over a meal, on the golf course, at the lake, at a ball game; anywhere you are having a conversation with a non-believer can be a great place to share your story. People are interested in your story and may identify with it. No matter what your past has been, your story is valuable!

Appendix D

Membership Covenant

Membership Covenant

Maturity—To endeavor to be a maturing disciple of Christ, continually pursuing spiritual growth— (Colossians 2:6-7).

Ministry—To discover and utilize personal spiritual gifts in order to influence and serve others within the church, the community, and the world— (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Care—To take responsibility for personally meeting the needs of others within the church, the community, and the world— (2 Corinthians 1:4-5).

Integrity—To pursue a holy and pure life, representing Christ in a worthy manner— (1 Peter 1:15).

Family—To faithfully pursue God’s design for singlehood, marriage, and/or parenting as revealed in the Scriptures and explained in Fellowship Bible Church of Northwest Arkansas’ Doctrinal Statement— (Matthew 19:4-6; Exodus 20:12, 14; 1 Corinthians 7:25-38).

Participation—To trust and support the mission, vision, strategies, and philosophy of Fellowship Bible Church of Northwest Arkansas through active and consistent involvement— (Philippians 1:3-5).

Follow—To submit to the authority of the Elders’ leadership of Fellowship Bible Church of Northwest Arkansas— (Hebrews 13:17).

Support—To support, through worshipful giving, the financial obligations and commitments of the church by practicing generosity and Biblical stewardship— (2 Corinthians 8:7).

Communion

(Also called the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist) is an important part of worship that all Christians are taught to do by Jesus, Himself. It causes us to remember our Lord's death on a cross, His resurrection, and to look forward to His glorious return in the future.

The First Communion

Jesus established and explained Communion for His disciples (and for us) at the Last Supper:

Matthew 26:26-28 ESV

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you,²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

Preparation for Communion

The Apostle Paul explained the importance of preparing our hearts for the Lord's Supper with God and others. Observing Communion "in a worthy manner" means to remember what Jesus has done for our salvation. Each of us should be honest with the Lord about our sin and our need for forgiveness. If a particular sin or division with another comes to mind, address it and bring before God. Read the following passage then pause to pray before continuing.

1 Corinthians 11:27-28 ESV

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

The Bread

Jesus' body was slain for the forgiveness of sins, and a piece of bread represents this for His followers. Read the passages below. Allow time for reflection, then pass the bread saying, "This is Christ's body, broken for you."

Isaiah 53:5-6 ESV

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. ⁶ 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.

1 John 1:9 ESV

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The Cup

Jesus' blood is represented by wine or juice to remind us of the forgiveness of sins. Ephesians 1:7 explains this well. Read the passage, pause for reflection, and say "This is Christ's blood spilled for you" as you drink together.

Ephesians 1:7 NIV

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace...

Christian Communion

A reminder of what Christ did for us and a celebration of what we receive through His sacrifice. Close in prayer by thanking the Lord for the work on The Cross and for making a way for sinners to fellowship with our Heavenly Father.

