

# iCovenant

HOW WE WALK TOGETHER

December 17, 2017

Dear LifeGroup Leader,

Thank you for all you do to make Crossroads a place where loving God, loving Others, and serving the World is the heartbeat of the church. The way you love and lead your group displays a shepherd's heart that makes our church a special place.

We are super excited about this Bible study. Crossroads' idea of covenantal membership is unique in church culture. Helping people understand what it means and how it impacts us is critical. We can't afford to be a covenantal people who ignore the covenant that binds us together. This curriculum is a bold attempt to reinforce the covenant commitment that unites us.

This study is designed as a guide for you to facilitate in your LifeGroup. Don't lecture! Ask questions that get people talking about the truth of God's Word. After they are talking, your job is to gently steer the conversation towards biblical truth. I wrote these studies as a guide for you. Feel free to customize the questions for your group. The main point is that each week you will discuss the particular portion of the covenant that is being considered. If your group responds better to different questions than the ones provided, then, by all means, use whatever questions and bible passages you can think of to drive home the point.

I am praying for you as you continue to faithfully shepherd your LifeGroup. Thank you for all you do. You are truly a blessing to me!

Soli Deo Gloria,

Rob Sumrall

## iCovenant

January 7, 2018

- UNITY
- We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

January 14, 2018

- WALK TOGETHER
- We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of the body of Christ, exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other, and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require.

January 21, 2018

- CORPORATE WORSHIP
- We won't forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others.

January 28, 2018

- FAMILY EQUIPPING
- We will endeavor to bring up our families in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends.

February 4, 2018

- SHARED EXPERIENCES
- We will rejoice in each others' happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each others' burdens and sorrows.

February 11, 2018

- DINSTINCTLY HOLY
- We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grace, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.

February 18, 2018

- FAITHFULLY ORDERED
- We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines.

February 25, 2018

- GENEROUS STEWARDSHIP
- We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and spread of the Gospel through all nations.

# UNITY

## Read the first part of Crossroads' Member Covenant.

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

## Read.

In his excellent book, *Membership Matters*, Chuck Lawless describes church members who are marginally involved. He writes, "Attendance does not lead to action. Church is more about *receiving* than giving, more about *coming* than going, and more about *being served* than serving."<sup>1</sup>

## Ask.

Why do you think members of a church covenanting together is important?

How does the idea of covenanting together create a sense of belonging?

How does covenanting together help us avoid the trap of having non-contributing members?

How does covenantal membership help us hold one another accountable?

How does a common covenant create unity in a church?

## Look at the Word.

1 Corinthians 1:10-11 - <sup>10</sup>I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. <sup>11</sup>For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.

- What were some of the things that divided the Corinthian church?
  - They were divided over the Lord's Supper, over church discipline, over the use of spiritual gifts, over which church leader was best, and so many other things.
- Has anyone here been part of a church that didn't have unity? What was it like?
- What types of things divide churches today?

Colossians 3:12-14 - <sup>12</sup>Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup>bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup>And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

- Verse 14 is a really important verse. It tells us that love pulls everything together in a believer's life and brings harmony and unity. John MacArthur says this about verse 14, "Love is the most important moral quality in the believer's life, for it is the very glue that produces unity in the church. Believers will never enjoy mutual fellowship through compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, or patience; they will not bear with each other or forgive each other unless they love one another. In fact, the way to sum up the

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<sup>1</sup>Chuck Lawless, *Membership Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 18.

commands of 3:12-13 is to say, 'Love one another'..... Love is the beauty of the believer, dispelling the ugly sins of the flesh that destroy unity."<sup>2</sup>

- Practically speaking, how does love play into us "working together and praying for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"?

John 17:23 - <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

- This verse comes from the high priestly prayer of Jesus. He is actually praying for us (v. 20).
- What kind of unity is Jesus praying for?
- What does it tell you about the importance of unity that it was one of Jesus' primary prayer concerns before he went to the cross?

### Apply.

What are things we can do to protect the unity of Crossroads?

What are things we could do to destroy the unity of Crossroads?

Do you pray regularly for the unity of the church?

Do you think Crossroads has a clear and unifying vision?

### Pray.

End your time together by praying specifically for the unity of our church. Pray for:

- Members to resolve conflicts according to biblical standards.
- Agreement on vision and theology.
- Love and grace to grow between Crossroaders.
- Leadership to continue to be united.
- Members who will gladly and cheerfully covenant together.

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<sup>2</sup>John MacArthur, *Colossians and Philemon* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1992), 157.

# WALK TOGETHER

## Read the first part of Crossroads' Member Covenant.

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of the body of Christ, exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other, and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require.

## Read.

Americans have a weak and anemic view of the local church. George Barna's research reveals the strangled view of the local church held in our society:

While nearly half of the adult population attends religious services during a typical week . . . fewer than one out of every five adults firmly believes that a congregational church is a critical element in their spiritual growth and just as few strongly contend that participation in some type of community of faith is required for them to achieve their full potential.

Only 17% of adults said that "a person's faith is meant to be developed mainly by involvement in a local church." Even the most devoted church-going groups – such as evangelicals and born again Christians – generally dismissed that notion: only one-third of all evangelicals and one out of five non-evangelical born again adults endorsed the concept. Only one of every four adults who possesses a biblical worldview (25%) agreed with the centrality of a local church in a person's spiritual growth.

Just as few adults (28%) firmly embraced the idea that spiritual maturity requires involvement in a community of faith.<sup>3</sup>

## Ask.

Why do you think the local church is unimportant to people today?

- What fault does the church play in that thinking?
- How does covenantal membership help correct that thinking?

## Think.

Part of the reason we think so little about the church is that we think of it from a consumer mentality. "What does the church have to offer *me*?" This type of thinking creates an environment where people flit and flutter from one congregation to the next and never stop to think that being a church is about belonging to one another (walking together).

Jonathan Leeman writes a lot about the nature of the church. He asks questions that sometimes never cross our minds about what a church is. For example, he asks what the difference is between a church and a local Bible study. His answer helps us better understand the importance of submitting to one another a walking together in biblical community.

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<sup>3</sup>George Barna, "American's Have Commitment Issues, New Survey Shows," from the "Barna Update" by The Barna Group, April 18, 2006.

The Bible study becomes a church when everyone submits to an institutional structure that impacts their identity and governs their relationships with one another and with outsiders.

As a Bible study group, individuals are voluntarily gathered together around a common interest. There is no requirement for attendance; no requirements for the behavior of members when together or apart; no accountability; no shared identity and ownership that comes with a shared name. . . .

As a church, the stakes are raised. Individuals must begin taking responsibility for one another because now they are branded with a common “family” name – the name of the Father and the Son and the Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

### Ask.

What responsibilities do Crossroaders have to one another?  
How do we know those responsibilities? (Covenant/the Bible)

What do you think it means to “exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other”?

### Look at the Word.

Leader, you won’t have time to look at all of these “one another” passages, but pick out some that you think will be particularly helpful to your group and have someone read the passage. With each passage, we want to ask, “What does this practically look like for us?”

- Love one another – John 13:34, 15:12
- Outdo one another in showing honor (Romans 12:10)
- Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)
- Comfort and agree with one another (2 Corinthians 13:11)
- Serve one another (John 13:1-20; Galatians 5:13)
- Bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- Forgive one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21)
- Be honest with one another (Colossians 3:9)
- Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Gently, patiently tolerate one another (Ephesians 4:2)
- Confess to one another (James 5:16)
- Pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10)
- Regard one another as more important than yourself (Philippians 2:3)<sup>5</sup>

### Apply.

- Who in your Crossroads family have you given permission to “faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require”?

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<sup>4</sup>Jonathan Leeman, *Don’t Fire Your Church Members* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 35.

<sup>5</sup>For a really cool infographic on the “one another” passages, see this website:

<https://overviewbible.com/one-another-infographic/>

- What are some of the reasons we are hesitant to open ourselves up to others? Are any of these reasons rooted in the Gospel or in the Scriptures? Where do these reservations come from?
- How can we help each other live out this portion of our covenant better?

**Pray.**

End your time together by praying specifically for walking alongside of our brothers and sisters.

Pray for:

- Affectionate care and watchfulness over each other.
- Faithfully admonishment of one another as occasion may require.
- Accountability



# CORPORATE WORSHIP

## Read the first part of Crossroads' Member Covenant.

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

We won't forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others.

## Read.

You had to admire his commitment.

He made the decision to attend. He would not miss it. The weather was terrible that day – steady rain, temperature in the forties. He still got out in the weather.

Because of the bad weather, he did not quite make it on time. It was difficult to get to his seat as well. But he persevered. His seat was not comfortable, but he neither left nor complained. His presence vividly demonstrated his love and commitment.

He was joyous the entire time. He enjoyed the presence of fellow believers. His attitude, his attendance, and his enthusiasm all reflected his deep and abiding commitment.

He was at a college football game on a Saturday afternoon.

By the way, he did not attend church worship services the next day. He was tired from the ball game. And there was a 40 percent chance of rain.<sup>6</sup>

## Ask.

Describe the importance of corporate worship *to you* using one word. (Try to get everyone to answer this question.)

## Look at the Word.

Hebrews 10:24-25 - <sup>24</sup> And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, <sup>25</sup> not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Thom Schreiner is one of the greatest Bible scholars of the modern era. His insight on those Christians who simply refuse to meet together is a scalding rebuke.

Community encouragement and love and good works can scarcely occur if believers cease to meet with one another. The fear of discrimination and persecution explains, at least in part, why some believers were inclined to abandon their meetings. Refusing to meet with other believers in this context signifies apostasy, the renunciation of the Christian faith. If believers renounce meeting with other Christians, especially because they fear discrimination and mistreatment, they are in effect turning against Christ. Apparently, some were following this course of action, for they had made it a habit of not attending. For the author of Hebrews, this isn't a light matter. Forsaking such meetings signaled great danger,

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<sup>6</sup>Thom Rainer, *I Will!* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2015), 25.

for if they did not return to the assembly of fellow believers, they would face final judgment and destruction.<sup>7</sup>

**Ask.**

When we read Hebrews 10:24-25, what is the connection between verse 24 and verse 25? How is corporate worship a source of “encouragement” (v 25)?

**Say.**

We have several key aspects of corporate worship at Crossroads - giving, prayer, singing, preaching, and even greeting one another. One key point is to realize that we do not have many things and *then* Bible study. Everything we do centers on Scripture, because the Bible is where we learn about Jesus. We don't just give – we give in accordance with Scripture. We pray the Word, preach the Word, sing the Word, and greet each other like the Word instructs us! Two parts of our corporate worship service take up the most time and are extremely significant – singing and preaching.

Keith and Kristyn Getty, authors of one of Crossroads' favorite songs, “In Christ Alone,” write, “Repeatedly throughout Scripture, we are commanded to be a singing people. There are more than four hundred references to singing in the Bible and at least fifty direct commands. We are not to disregard the command because we don't like the music or the personnel or are not in the mood.”<sup>8</sup>

**Ask.**

Why is singing together so important?  
Why is it critical that we sing theologically rich songs?  
What message does it send to our families, guests, and fellow Crossroaders when we don't participate in the singing?

**Say.**

In 1592, Puritan pastor William Perkins wrote, “The Word of God alone is to be preached, in its perfection and inner consistency. Scripture is the exclusive subject of preaching, the only field in which the preacher is to labour. . . . The Word of God is God's wisdom revealing from heaven the truth which is according to godliness.”<sup>9</sup>

**Ask.**

What is the cost if we don't hear the Word of God preached faithfully and consistently?  
How does our private prayer life for the pastor impact our corporate worship times?

**Apply.**

What are things we can do *before* Sunday mornings to get our hearts ready for corporate worship? Are you more of a worshipper or a judge on Sunday mornings (“I give the guitarists a 7.5, but the drums only get a 5. And the preacher was pretty long-winded. He gets a 3.7.”)? How can you crush the judgmental spirit?

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<sup>7</sup>Thomas Schreiner, *Commentary on Hebrews* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 321.

<sup>8</sup>Keith and Kristyn Getty, *Sing!* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2017), 14.

<sup>9</sup>William Perkins, *The Art of Prophecy* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2011), 9.

How should we respond when one of our group members is neglecting the meeting together of the body?

Is there somebody you miss seeing in church? Have you contacted them to check on them?

**Pray.**

Lift up the people who lead us in worship on Sundays – musicians, sound technicians, singers, prayers, and preachers.

Ask God to teach us how to come with a heart prepared for worship before we even hit the parking lot!

# FAMILY EQUIPPING

## Read the first part of Crossroads' Member Covenant.

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

We will endeavor to bring up our families in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends.

## Read.

Voddie Baucham is a pastor and speaker who delivers a clear message on the importance of discipling within our homes.

I believe we are looking for answers in all the wrong places. Our children are not falling away because the church is doing a poor job – although that is undoubtedly a factor. Our children are falling away because we are asking the church to do what God designed the family to accomplish. Discipleship and multi-generational faithfulness begins and ends at home. At best, the church is to play a supporting role as it “equips the saints for the work of ministry” (Ephesians 4:12).<sup>10</sup>

## Ask.

What do you think of Baucham's quote?

Read the focal point of the covenant again. What do you think this means?

## Look at the Word.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 - <sup>4</sup>Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup>You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup>And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup>You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. <sup>8</sup>You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup>You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

## Discuss.

We find two emphases in this passage: 1) God expects us to love him (v. 5-6) and 2) God expects us to pass on our love for Him to our families (v. 7-9). Let's discuss these in turn.

## Ask.

Why is it important that our personal love for God precede instructing our children?

Does anyone in this group have a testimony of growing up in a Gospel-saturated home? Describe it for us? How did your parents love for Jesus display itself?

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<sup>10</sup>Voddie Baucham, *Family-Driven Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 7.

### Teach.

The command to teach is in a verb tense in the original Hebrew that intensifies the command. It is like typing “teach” in all caps and bold face. One commentator says this:

The image is that of the engraver of a monument who takes hammer and chisel in hand and with painstaking care etches a text into the face of a solid slab of granite. The sheer labor of such a task is daunting indeed, but once done the message is there to stay. Thus it is that the generations of Israelites to come must receive and transmit the words of the Lord’s everlasting covenant revelation.<sup>11</sup>

### Ask.

What are some things you have done in your family that have helped your child grow in their faith? How can we do a better job of faithfully teaching our kids about God and his standards for living? What are some ways Crossroads attempts to equip families for in-home discipleship? Which one of those tools have you tried? How did it go?

### Teach.

The phrases “you shall teach” and “you shall talk” are 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular forms. In other words, it means “you, sir, shall teach” and “you, sir, shall talk.” These are not “you all” phrases. The fact that it is singular means that God isn’t talking to some abstract person, but to dads – to leaders in the home.

### Ask.

Why is it critical that dads are involved in the spiritual nourishment of their children? What can be the negative impact of a dad not being involved spiritually?

### Say.

This part of our covenant has an evangelistic flair to it – “and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends.” We are to seek the salvation of others, beginning in our families and spreading outward to our friends and our community and, ultimately, to the four corners of the world.

### Ask.

Why is it important that we covenant together to reach out to others? What is the impact if segments of Crossroaders are not engaged in outreach?

### Read.

In *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, Thom Rainer notes that dying churches turn the Great Commission into the Great Omission. He writes, “Members of the dying church weren’t willing to go into the community to reach and minister to people. They weren’t willing to invite their unchurched friends and relatives. They weren’t willing to expend the funds necessary for a vibrant outreach. They just wanted it to happen. Without prayer. Without sacrifice. Without hard work. . .

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<sup>11</sup>Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary, vol. 4, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 162.

. Members of the dying churches really didn't want growth unless that growth met their preferences and allowed them to remain comfortable."<sup>12</sup>

What about this dying church moves you?

**Inspire.**

Leader, take a moment to “rant” on the need for us to reach out to the world around us with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let the group see a heart in you for outreach. If you don't truly have a heart for outreach, spend time in prayer this week asking God to mold and shape your heart with a passion for his glory and a passion for the lost. Inspire others to embrace the vision – love God. love Others. serve the World.

**Pray.**

Spent time at the close of this session praying for families and the lost. Pray for homes to be incubators for faith. Pray for us all to be bolder for the Gospel as we reach out to the lost.

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<sup>12</sup>Thom Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2014), 44.

# SHARED EXPERIENCES

## Read the first part of Crossroads' Member Covenant.

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

We will rejoice in each others' happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each others' burdens and sorrows.

## Say.

We live in a digital age where relationships are being redefined. Our proclivity to withdraw, living out life digitally through social media, is increasing the need for the church to live out the commitment that is our focus in today's session.

## Ask.


How has the digital age changed the way people connect?  
Are there ways where the digital age has improved our interpersonal connections?

## Read.

Tony Reinke, chief editor for DesiringGod.com authored a tremendous book on how technology is changing us: *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You*. He has an entire chapter on how technology is creating loneliness in our culture even though we connect with more people than ever before through social media. He writes, "In the big picture, technology offers us many benefits, but with one major pitfall: isolation. Isolation is both the promise and the price of technological advance."<sup>13</sup>

It is critical that we be people who rejoice with each other and grieve with each other. This life-on-life experience is the Gospel in action.

## Look at the Word.

Romans 12:15-16 - <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.  Never be wise in your own sight.

## Ask.

Is it possible to bring about rejoicing with another? Weeping? If so, how?

Is there a correlation between an existing relationship (one that has been developed over time with love and care) and our ability to share emotional experiences with others?

Can you think of any examples in Jesus' ministry where he shared an emotional experience with others?

- There are several examples of Jesus sharing emotional exchanges with others, but perhaps the most poignant is found in John 11:35, the shortest verse in the Bible: "Jesus wept."
- The great pastor of yesteryear, Donald Grey Barnhouse, wrote: "Nor was it difficult for the Lord Jesus to turn from a scene of joy to one of sorrow and to mingle His tears with those who mourned."

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<sup>13</sup> Tony Reinke, *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 121.

One of the noblest statements of the Bible is its shortest verse, 'Jesus wept' (John 11:35). He was filled with compassion when He saw the poor as sheep without a shepherd."<sup>14</sup>

- Tim Keller notes how hard sharing the emotions of others is: "Christians are called to a discipline (a very hard one) in which we stop and seek to understand the inner world of another person. That can be done by connecting it with our own joys and sorrows. It is hard and unpleasant to remember our own experiences of grief, and it is work just as hard (though different) to enter into the joy of someone who is not you."<sup>15</sup>

### Ask.

What are some of the reasons why we stay guarded with others? (answers may include past hurts, betrayed confidences, fear of gossip, pride, self-centeredness)

Leader, as things come up in the answer to the previous question, don't hesitate to chase down some of the answers, especially ones that are particularly damaging or that you know a clear biblical response. Why is the example of Jesus weeping over the death of Lazarus important to us?

### Think.

As mentors and parents, we are discipling a generation to aggressively take the Gospel to the world. Our tech habits may have an undermining impact on this goal. Francis Chan says, "I meet more and more kids that don't know how to talk to people, and who don't even want to look up from their screens. We are raising soldiers. We are raising missionaries. Our job is to get these kids to where they can get into the world and start conversations with people and bring the light of Jesus and the message of the gospel to them."<sup>16</sup> Eye-to-eye authenticity is the key to empathy, humility, and trust in our relationships, and these are skills we all need to be effect disciple-makers.

### Ask.

We have recently experienced loss in our church with the passing of an elder. How have you seen your church live out this covenantal commitment in the process?

What are the dangers if we don't covenant (and live the covenant) in regards to sharing each others' burdens and sorrows?

### Pray.

Pray for God to grow deeper relationships in the church that enable us to rejoice and weep together. Pray for authentic biblical community to be the norm!

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<sup>14</sup>Donald G. Barnhouse, *Romans Chapters 5:12-16:27* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 87.

<sup>15</sup>Tim Keller, *Romans 8-16 For You* (The Good Book Co, 2015), 122.

<sup>16</sup>Reinke, *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You*, 126.



# DISTINCTLY HOLY

## Read the first part of Crossroads' Member Covenant.

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.

## Introduce.

Living a “new and holy life” is a daunting challenge indeed. Especially when we consider that God is referred to as holy. In fact, he is thrice holy (Isaiah 6). R.C. Sproul writes, “Only once in sacred Scripture is an attribute of God elevated to the third degree. Only once is a characteristic of God mentioned three times in succession. The Bible says that God is holy, holy, holy. Not that He is merely holy, or even holy, holy. He is holy, holy, holy! The bible never says that God is love, love, love, or mercy, mercy, mercy, or wrath, wrath, wrath, or justice, justice, justice. It does say that he is holy, holy, holy, the whole earth is full of his glory.”<sup>17</sup>

The challenge, then, is for us to be like God. Problem – we aren't. We aren't good at this. In fact, without God's work in us, we never will be like Him. But, praise God, he is working in us to make us new creations (2 Cor. 5:17).

## Illustrate.

Pastor Kevin DeYoung gives a great analogy about how we look at holiness. He asks, “Is it possible you look at personal holiness like I look at camping? It's fine for other people. You sort of respect those who make their lives harder than they have to be. But it's really not your thing.”<sup>18</sup>

## Ask.

What happens in a church when its members do not take holiness seriously?

Is our church affected when other churches don't take holiness seriously? How so?

## Quote.

Bishop J.C. Ryle lived over 100 years ago. He has become one of my favorite authors. His writing, though old, seems to address the spirit of our age. Consider what he says about holiness in the life of a believer: “We must be holy, because *this is the one grand end and purpose* for which Christ came into the world. . . . Jesus is a complete Saviour. He does not merely take away the guilt of a believer's sin, he does more – he breaks its power (1 Pt. 1:2; Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 12:10).”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>R. C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993), 39.

<sup>18</sup>Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 10.

<sup>19</sup>J.C. Ryle, *Holiness: Its nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots* (Moscow, ID: Charles Nolan, 2011), 49 (emphasis added).

### Look at the Word.

Colossians 3:5-17 - <sup>5</sup> Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup> On account of these the wrath of God is coming. <sup>7</sup> In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. <sup>8</sup> But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. <sup>11</sup> Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. <sup>12</sup> Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

### Discuss.

Look closely at verses 5 through 11. What specifically are we called to put to death (to take off)? Are there any of these things that confuse you or need explaining? How would you summarize or categorize these things? Which of these is the hardest for you to put off?

Now look at verse 12 through 17. What specifically are we called to put on? Are there any of these things that confuse you or need explaining? How would you summarize or categorize these things? Which of these is the hardest for you to put on?

### Ask.

Our church covenant says we will seek "by Divine Aid" to live holy lives. What does this mean?

### Look at the Word.

Ephesians 1:13 - <sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,

Philippians 2:12-13 - <sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

### Ask.

How does God's involvement in your sanctification make you feel?

### Say.

I want to share one final thought on holiness that will close us out tonight. “It is interesting to not that in many of the most notable instances where the fear of God is described for us in Scripture, it is described in a context of the realized presence of God.”<sup>20</sup> Jacob was blown away by God’s presence when he awoke after his holy wrestling match (Gen. 28:16). Moses was “afraid to look upon God” (Ex. 3:6). Isaiah was fearful of his holy vision (Is. 6:5).

How can we cultivate that realized presence of God in our lives?

- What role does biblical community play in this?
- What role do spiritual disciplines play?
- What role does corporate worship play?

### Pray.

Pray over any sin struggles in the room. Encourage group members to be transparent about how they struggle. Remind everyone of the importance of confidentiality.

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<sup>20</sup>Albert N. Martin, *The Forgotten Fear* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2015), 63.

# FAITHFULLY ORDERED

## Read the first part of Crossroads' Member Covenant.

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines.

## Introduce.

The section of our church covenant that we are covering includes several key ingredients: worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We have already discussed corporate worship, so most of our attention today will be on the proper ordering of the church in regards to ordinances, discipline, and doctrines.

## Read.

Several years ago, our elders read Jonathan Leeman's excellent, short book, *Church Discipline*. He defines church discipline this way: "Church discipline is the act of removing an individual from membership in the church and participation in the Lord's Table. It's not an act of forbidding an individual from attending the church's public gatherings. It is the church's public statement that it can no longer affirm the person's profession of faith by calling him or her a Christian."<sup>21</sup>

## Ask.

Crossroads actively engages in church discipline. Why is this important?

- What is the advantage of this being a part of our covenant?

How would you respond to a person who says that church discipline is unloving?

## Look at the Word.

Galatians 6:1 – <sup>1</sup> Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

Ephesians 5:11 - <sup>11</sup> Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

Titus 3:10-11 - <sup>10</sup> As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, <sup>11</sup> knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 - <sup>14</sup> If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. <sup>15</sup> Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

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<sup>21</sup>Jonathan Leeman, *Church Discipline* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 27-28.

1 Corinthians 5:1-3, 12-13 - <sup>1</sup> It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. <sup>2</sup> And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. <sup>3</sup> For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing.

<sup>12</sup> For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? <sup>13</sup> God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

### Ask.

In light of how many passages deal with church discipline (and we didn't look at all of them...), why do you think so few churches practice church discipline?

Why is tight biblical community even more important in a church committed to practicing church discipline?

### Say.

Historically, the church has been defined by a group of believers where there is the right preaching of the Word (doctrine), the right administration of the ordinances (baptism and communion), and church discipline.<sup>22</sup>

### Ask.

What is the importance of right preaching or doctrine in the church?

Why is it important that Crossroaders covenant together on this point?

What are the risks of a church that doesn't agree upon a statement of faith?

### Look at the Word.

1 Timothy 4:16 - Keep a close watch on yourself *and on the teaching*. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Titus 2:1 - But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

2 Timothy 4:1-4 - I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup> For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

### Ask.

What is the importance of baptism *for the church* (not for the individual)?

- Why is it important that we immerse?
- Why is it important that we baptize *after* a confession of faith in the candidate?

What is the importance of communion for the church?

- How does communion impact you spiritually?

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<sup>22</sup> John Frame, *Systematic Theology* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013), 1023.

- Are there things you can do to allow baptism and communion to have a more significant impact on your faith journey?

**Pray.**

Pray for Crossroads to be committed to sound doctrine, the right administration of the ordinances, and to biblical church discipline.

# GENEROUS STEWARDSHIP

## Read the first part of Crossroads' Member Covenant.

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

We will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

## Ask.

In your opinion, why don't people want the church to talk about money?  
Is the church faithful to its mission if it never talks about money? Why or why not?  
Are there wrong ways to talk about money in the church? What are they?

## Read.

I don't think people often regret generosity. In contrast, I have had numerous conversations with people who regret a lack of generosity. Bob Russell, retired long-time pastor at SouthEast Christian Church transparently shares how he regrets a lack of generosity in his own life.

The Bible instructs us to give in proportion to how we've been blessed and by that standard I'm probably way behind in what I should give. But in my mind I've been fairly generous with the church.

But sometimes, under the guise of being a good steward of the rest, I would be tightfisted when I would have been liberal. I wish I had been more generous with parachurch organizations, needy persons, and those who served me outside the church. I know now I could have enhanced my witness to waiters and waitresses, bellboys at hotels, cab drivers, golf club attendants, mail carriers, paper deliverers, garbage collectors, and others who served, if I had been more generous with tips. I also wish I had given more generously to church members who were raising funds for mission trips or service organizations.<sup>23</sup>

## Ask.

Who is the most generous person you know?  
What kind of witness do they have to you? To others?  
Is their witness tied to their giving or to other parts of their Christian walk?

## Read.

There is so much that we could say about giving to the local church and stewardship. For our purposes, we will consider the excellent teaching of Donald Whitney in his book, *Spiritual*

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<sup>23</sup>Bob Russell, *After 50 Years of Ministry* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2016), 95.

*Disciplines Within the Church.* He asks, “Will you give systematically, proportionately, and sacrificially to your church?”<sup>24</sup>

### Look at the Word.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 - Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. <sup>2</sup>On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.

### Teach.

The phrase “on the first day of every week” show us that New Testament giving is systematic. The first day of the week was the Lord’s Day, Sunday. It was the time when New Testament churches met to worship. We each should give in a systematic way to the support of the local church.

### Ask.

What are some ideas on how a person can give systematically?

What are the pitfalls if you do not give systematically?

### Teach.

Each believer was to give “as he may prosper” (v. 1). The idea is that the more you prosper, the more you give. Sadly, just the opposite is true in America. Surveys consistently show that the poorest American Christians give the highest percentage of their income to their church, while the wealthiest give the lowest. The average church member gives around 2 percent of their income to the church.<sup>25</sup>

The concept of the tithe (Malachi 3) is sometimes argued to be an Old Testament principle that no longer applies to New Testament followers of Christ. While people who argue this make some good points, I have often wondered, “How could a person under grace freely give less than he was required to give under the law?” Grace should make us *more generous* than the law ever made us!

### Read.

Don Whitney challenges us: “As a protection against the temptation to greedily keep more as you make more, and to make sure that you remember to give according to your prosperity, I would encourage you to have an ongoing, life-time goal of increasing the percentage of your income that you give to God.

What do you think about this challenge?

### Ask.

Why do you think the statistic cited above about poorer people being more generous is true?

Why is it important that we give proportionately?

### Teach.

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<sup>24</sup>Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines Within the Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1996), 131.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 132.



In verse 2, Paul tells the Corinthians that “each of you is to put something aside.” That meant that every member of the church, from the wealthiest to the poorest, was to give. What is expected of us is not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice

**Look at the Word.**

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 - <sup>1</sup>We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, <sup>2</sup> for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. <sup>3</sup> For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord,<sup>4</sup> begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— <sup>5</sup> and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

**Ask.**

What does the example of the Macedonians teach us?

Why is it important for financial support of the ministry to be included in our covenant?

What is the damage to the body if people do not faithfully support the ministry?

How can we spur one another on to faithfulness in this area?

**Pray.**

Ask the Lord to put a generous heart in the body of Crossroads. Pray that He would guide us as we look to the future, especially concerning the land on St. John Road.

# Crossroads Baptist Church

## Church Covenant

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

- We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of the body of Christ, exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other, and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require.
- We won't forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others.
- We will endeavor to bring up our families in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends.
- We will rejoice in each others' happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each others' burdens and sorrows.
- We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.
- We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines.
- We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.
- We will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 2018