



W A T E R M A R K  
C O M M U N I T Y C H U R C H

**MEMBERSHIP CLASS PACKET - PART 1**

# MEMBERSHIP CLASS

## PART 1

CLASS NOTES

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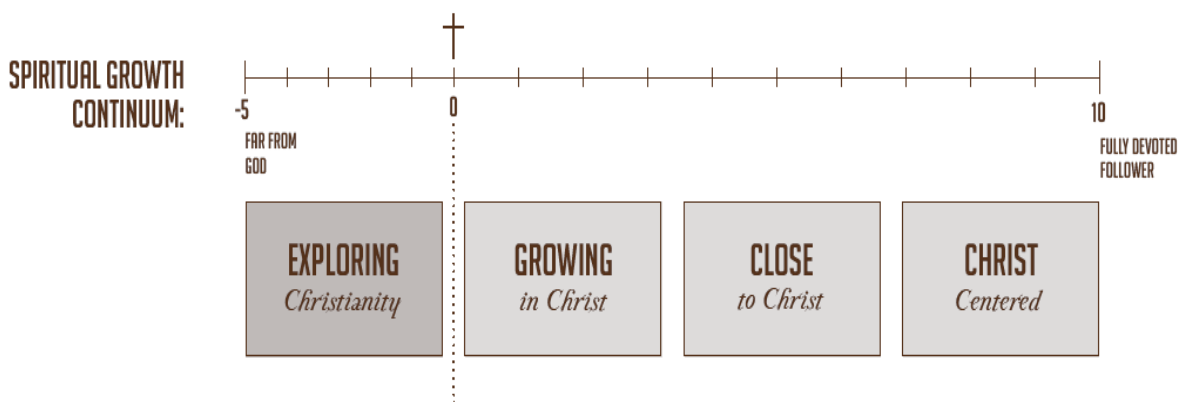
## CLASS NOTES

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*Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. (Matthew 22:37-40)*

# Our Mission...

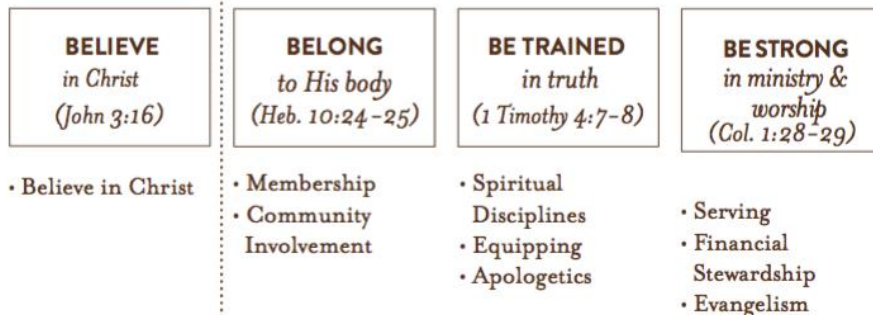
*Helping People become fully devoted followers of Christ*



## OUR STRATEGY

*"The 4 B's"*

**CORE EXPECTATIONS:**



## CLASS NOTES

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# THE BOARD OF ELDERS

## Description of the office

Our church is Elder led. The Board of Elders governs, corrects, cares for (shepherds) and oversees the spiritual interests of this church. An Elder must be a member of this church and lead a life that meets the qualifications of Scripture and embodies the “Calling, Convictions and Commitments” of Watermark Community Church. The Board of Elders shall be comprised of not less than three (3) nor more than ten (10) men. The number of Elders must be limited by the number of qualified men that the Lord raises up and the ability of the Board of Elders to maintain intimate, deep and growing relationships between its members. It is imperative that the Board of Elders model accountability, care and every other aspect of authentic biblical community. Great care should be taken as to the effects of the number of Elders on the Board of Elders’ intimacy and the integrity of relationships among the members of the Board of Elders.

## Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Board of Elders include:

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

## Calling Elders

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

A prospective of Elder will be examined as prescribed below to determine:

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

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## ELDERS

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**Brian Buchek**  
Elder



**Beau Fournet**  
Elder



**David Leventhal**  
Elder



**Dean Macfarlan**  
Elder



**Todd Wagner**  
Senior Pastor, Elder

## CLASS NOTES

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## TIME TALENT AND TREASURE

### *Understanding and Developing your SHAPE (Optional)*

The SHAPE (Spiritual Gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, experiences) form is a tool Watermark uses to connect individuals with ministries and service opportunities that align with their unique passions and gifts.

## SHARING YOUR STORY OF FAITH

### *The Diagnostic Questions*

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

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

### *The Story of Faith Outline*

- **Life before you trusted Christ** - Can you tell us what your life was like before you began a relationship with Christ? Feel free to share with us any struggles, fears, or doubts you held.
- **How You Came to Trust in Christ** - How did you come to have a relationship with Christ? What brought you to the place where you wanted a relationship with Christ? Can you share when that happened?
- **Life After You Trusted in Christ** - Since then, can you tell us about your life and what your relationship with Christ is like? We would love to know how it has changed you, your life, any struggles, fears, or doubts, and your outlook on life today.

### *Sharing Your Story of Faith for Membership Purposes*

As a part of the membership process, Watermark requires that you share your story of faith in person with a member of our Believe Team, as well as submit a written version online.

- **Share Your Story with Your Believe Team Host:** After we are finished today, you will meet the Believe Team Host who will hear your story of faith. Together, you will schedule a time to meet with your host and share your story. Think through your availability over the next two weeks to make the scheduling process easier!
- **Submit Your Story Online:** Complete your written story of faith before your scheduled time to share with your Believe Team Host.

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## CLASS NOTES





W A T E R M A R K

C O M M U N I T Y C H U R C H

**MEMBERSHIP CLASS PACKET - PART 2**

# MEMBERSHIP CLASS

## PART 2

CLASS NOTES

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## CLASS NOTES

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# WATERMARK DOCTRINE STATEMENT

## **SECTION 1: THE BIBLE**

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

## **SECTION 2: THE TRINITY**

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

## **SECTION 3: JESUS CHRIST**

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

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

## **SECTION 4: THE HOLY SPIRIT**

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

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

## **SECTION 5: ANGELS, FALLEN AND UNFALLEN**

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

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

## **SECTION 6: MAN**

We believe man was created innocent and in the image and likeness of God, but that man sinned,

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

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

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

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

## **SECTION 7: SALVATION**

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

## **SECTION 8: SANCTIFICATION**

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

## **SECTION 9: THE CHURCH**

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

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

## **SECTION 10: THE ORDINANCES OF BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER**

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

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

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

## **SECTION 11: THE END TIMES**

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

## **SECTION 12: THE ETERNAL STATE**

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

# WHAT SCRIPTURE SAYS ABOUT

# BELONGING TO THE BODY

## TRUTH THAT SCRIPTURE REVEALS TO US:

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

## SCRIPTURE SAYS THE BODY OF CHRIST IS...

### *Part of who you are:*

It is a part of what identifies individuals as genuine followers of Christ. (Eph. 2:19; Rom. 12:5)

### *God's provision for you:*

It provides you a spiritual family that can support, encourage and care for you in your walk with Christ. (Gal. 6:1-2; Heb. 10:24-25; 1 Cor. 12:26-27)

It provides you the community and accountability necessary to grow and live out in obedience God's design for His people. (2 Thes. 3:14-15; Eph. 5:21)

### *Part of His protection:*

It places you under the spiritual protection of Godly leaders. (Heb. 13:17; Acts 20:28-29; 1 Peter 5:5)

### *A Place for Ministry:*

It gives you a place to discover and use the gifts that the Lord has entrusted you with for ministry. (1 Cor. 12:4-27)

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

- the Beliefs & Governance of this church;
- intentional community with members of this local body; and
- the use of whatever gift(s) you have received to serve others, in order that you may do your part in faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

As a result, we acknowledge two types of membership at this church:

1. **Positional Membership**—which includes all true believers in Jesus Christ; and
2. **Participatory Membership**—which includes true believers in Jesus Christ who have committed themselves to this local body as outlined above (hereinafter "Members"). This is what you are signing up for!

**Ephesians 2:19**  
"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household"



## CLASS NOTES

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# MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

Having trusted in Christ alone as my Lord and Savior, and being in agreement with the Calling, Commitments, Convictions, Core Values, Beliefs and Governance of Watermark Community Church, I now am called to unite with the Watermark family. In doing so, I commit myself to the Lord and to the other members of the family to protect our unity, share in, serve and support the ministry of my church family through pursuing:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## CLASS NOTES

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# COMMUNITY at WATERMARK

## WHY COMMUNITY?

In a world of loneliness, pain, and daily challenges, life can be extremely hard. The good news is we were never meant to carry life's burdens or even celebrate its joys alone. God gave us community. You don't have to do life alone. In fact, if you think you are surviving just fine without community, you could be thriving beyond belief with it. We are created for community, called to it and changed by it.

### 1. We were created for community

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

### 2. God has called us to community

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

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

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

### 4. What Does REAL Community look like?

- **Devote Daily** (John 15:5) - Lead yourself well; pursue Christ; connect with the Source of life; this is the most important thing you can do for your CG.
- **Pursue Relationally** (Romans 12:10) - Be committed to one another; don't bail when things are tough; know the details of their lives.
- **Counsel Biblically** (2 Timothy 3:16-17) - God's Word over experience or opinions. Collectively seek truth together; What does God's Word say about that?
- **Live Authentically** (James 5:16) - It's your responsibility to let your brother know where you are prone to wander, and when you have wandered.
- **Admonish Faithfully** (Colossians 3:16) - True friends speak truth to one another; Proverbs 27:5-6; Example for us - parenting.
- **Engage Missionally** (Matthew 28:19-20) - Break the huddle; We are God's plan A; Know your gifts and use them.

**COMMUNITY CONTINUED...**

### COUNT the COST

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

### CONSIDER the REWARD

- Wisdom for the War- Proverbs 11:14
- Strength for the Storm - Proverbs 17:17
- Provision for the Path - Proverbs 12:28
- Trust in God's Design - Psalm 133
- Celebration and Comfort - Romans 12:15
- Strength and Help - Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- Sharpened and a Sharpener - Proverbs 27:17

## Live out the “One Anothers”

*Church happens more in our living room than on Sunday morning.*

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

### HOW DO I GET STARTED?

- 1) **Organic Connection** - If you have a group of people who you'd like to do community with, contact them about forming a group together. You'll need to contact the community team at Watermark so we can assist and guide you in forming your own group.
- 2) **Existing Connection** - If you know of an existing group you want to join, contact the leader or the person you know in the group. Ask them if they would be open to adding a member(s) to their group; however, a community group is not obligated to add individuals unless they would like the opportunity. Find out when they meet and if there is anything you need to do to get on the same page as the group.
- 3) **New Connection** - Attend Community Formation. Community Formation (Married and Singles) or Foundation Group Kickoff (Couples married less than 3 year) to meet people who are interested in getting connected in community with others in their same stage of life.

## CLASS NOTES

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# WATERMARK'S

COMMITMENT TO **BIBLICAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

## THE PEACEMAKERS PLEDGE

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

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

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

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

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

By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an opportunity, not an accident. We will remember that success, in God's eyes, is not a matter of specific results but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers brings praise to our Lord and leads others to know His infinite love.

These principles are so simple that they can be used to resolve the most basic conflicts of daily life. But they are so powerful that they have been used to mediate and arbitrate bitter divorce and child custody actions, embezzlement situations, church divisions, multi-million dollar business disputes, malpractice lawsuits, and terrible sexual abuse cases. These principles are briefly discussed below. For a more detailed explanation, please see *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, by Ken Sande (Baker Books, 2nd)

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



# 1. WEIGHING IN ON CONFLICT

## See Conflict as an Opportunity

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

By God's grace, you can use conflict to:

- Glorify God (by trusting, obeying, and imitating Him)
- Serve other people (by helping to bear their burdens or by confronting them in love)
- Grow to be like Christ (by confessing sin and turning from attitudes that promote conflict)

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

## Glorify God

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

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

## THE FIGHT BEFORE THE FIGHT

### *Get the Log Out of Your Own Eye*

One of the most challenging principles of peacemaking is set forth in Matthew 7:5, where Jesus says, "You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." There are generally two kinds of logs you need to look for when dealing with conflict. First, you need to ask whether you have had a critical, negative, or overly sensitive attitude that has led to unnecessary conflict. One of the best ways to do this is to spend some time meditating on Philippians 4:2-9, which describes the kind of attitude Christians should have even when they are involved in a conflict.

The second kind of log you must deal with is actual sinful words and actions. Because you are often blind to your own sins, you may need an honest friend or advisor who will help you to take an objective look at yourself and face up to your contribution to a conflict.

When you identify ways that you have wronged another person, it is important to admit your wrongs honestly and thoroughly. One way to do this is to use the Seven A's of Confession:

- Address everyone involved (Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:8-9)
- Avoid if, but, and maybe (don't make excuses; Luke 15:11-24)
- Admit specifically (both attitudes and actions)
- Apologize (express sorrow for the way you affected someone)
- Accept the consequences (Luke 19:1-9)
- Alter your behavior (commit to changing harmful habits; Eph. 4:22-32)
- Ask for forgiveness

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

Any time you become excessively preoccupied with something, even a good thing, and seek to find happiness, security or fulfillment in it rather than in God, you are guilty of idolatry. Idolatry inevitably leads to conflict with God (“You shall have no other gods before me”). It also causes conflict with other people. As James writes, when we want something but don’t get it, we kill and covet, quarrel and fight (James 4:1-4).

There are three basic steps you can take to overcome the idolatry that fuels conflict. First, you should ask God to help you see where you have been guilty of wrong worship, that is, where you are focusing your love, attention, and energy on something other than God. Second, you should specifically identify and renounce each of the desires contributing to the conflict. Third, you should deliberately pursue right worship, that is, to x your heart and mind on God and to seek joy, fulfillment, and satisfaction in Him alone.

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

## 2. GETTING IN THE RING

*Go and show your brother his fault*

### **DON’T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF-**

#### *Overlook Minor Offenses*

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

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

### **DON’T SPREAD THE BIG STUFF-**

#### **Talk in Private**

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

- Pray for humility and wisdom (1 Peter 5:5)
- Plan your words carefully—think of how you would want to be confronted (Prov. 15:1-2; 16:23)
- Anticipate likely reactions and plan appropriate responses—rehearsals can be very helpful (Prov. 20:18)
- Choose the right time and place—talk in person whenever possible (Prov. 16:21; 27:12)
- Assume the best about the other person until you have facts to prove otherwise (Prov. 18:17)
  - Listen carefully (Prov. 18:13)

- Speak only to build others up (Eph. 4:29)
- Ask for feedback from the other person (Prov. 18:2)
- Trust God (Psalm 37:3)

## **DON'T STOP IF YOU'VE BEEN STIFFED**

### *Take Others Along (Matt. 18:17)*

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

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

### *Don't Stop if it Gets Sticky*

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

### *Go and Be Reconciled*

One of the unique features of biblical peacemaking is the pursuit of genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. Even though followers of Christ have experienced the greatest forgiveness in the world, we often fail to show that forgiveness to others. To cover up our disobedience we often use the shallow statement, “I forgive her – I just don't want to have anything to do with her again.” Just think, however, how you would feel if God said to you, “I forgive you; I just don't want to have anything to do with you again?” Praise God that He never says this! Instead, He forgives you totally and opens the way for genuine reconciliation. He calls you to forgive others in exactly the same way: “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Col. 3:12-14; see also 1 Cor. 13:5; Psa. 103:12; Isa. 43:25). One way to imitate God's forgiveness is to purpose to live with these actions and attitudes when you forgive someone:

- I will not dwell on this incident.
- I will not revisit this incident or use it against you.
- I will not talk to others about this incident.
- I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

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

## *Negotiate in a Biblical Manner*

Even when you manage to resolve personal offenses through confession and forgiveness, you may still need to deal with substantive issues, which may involve money, property, or the exercise of certain rights. These issues should not be swept under the carpet or automatically passed to a higher authority. Instead, they should be negotiated in a biblically faithful manner.

As a general rule, you should try to negotiate substantive issues in a cooperative manner rather than a competitive manner. In other words, instead of aggressively pursuing your own interests and letting others look out for themselves, you should deliberately look for solutions that are beneficial to everyone involved. As the Apostle Paul put it, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil. 2:3-4; see Matt. 22:39; 1 Cor. 13:5; Matt. 7:12).

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

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

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

## **3. GOING THE DISTANCE**

### *Be Prepared for Unreasonable People*

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

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

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

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

A follower of Christ should never close the Bible. When you try to resolve a conflict but do not see the results you desire, you should seek God even more earnestly through prayer, the study of His Word, and the counsel of His church. As you do so, it is essential to keep your focus on Christ and all that He has already done for you (see Col. 3:1-4). It is also helpful to follow five principles for overcoming evil, which are described in Romans 12:14-21:

- Control your tongue (“Bless those who curse you” see also Eph. 4:29)
- Seek godly advisors (identify with others and do not become isolated)
- Keep doing what is right (1 Pet. 2:12, 15; 3:15b-16)
- Recognize your limits (instead of retaliating, stay within proper biblical channels)
- Use the ultimate weapon: deliberate, focused love (John 3:16; Luke 6:27-31)

At the very least, these steps will protect you from being consumed by the acid of your own bitterness and resentment if others continue to oppose you. And in some cases, God may eventually use such actions to bring another person to repentance (1 Sam. 24:1-22).

Even if other people persist in doing wrong, you can continue to trust that God is in control and will deal with them in His time (see Psalms 10 and 37). This kind of patience in the face of suffering is commended by God (1 Pet. 2:19) and ultimately results in our good and His glory.

### *Get Help from Above*

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

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

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

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

When you believe in Jesus and receive His perfect record of righteousness, you can really have true peace with God. As you receive this peace, God will give you an increasing ability to make peace with others by following the peacemaking principles He gives us in Scripture, many of which are described above (Phil. 4:7; Matt. 5:9).

If you have never confessed your sin to God and believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior, Lord, and King, you can do so right now by sincerely praying this prayer:

#### *Lord Jesus,*

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

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

It is the responsibility of the Board of Elders, as described in Acts 20:28, to “be on guard for themselves and all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” Shepherding includes both the care and correction of the sheep. As a consequence, the Board of Elders may separate a member of the flock from Membership for:

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

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## CLASS NOTES

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