

WESTSIDE
CHURCH OF GOD
GOSPEL. COMMUNITY. MISSION.

Connection Class 101

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Who We Are.

Here are West Side we function around three core identity statements that make us who we are. In this part of the connection class we will look at these three identity statements up close and see how they function and how you are a vital part of what takes place here at West Side.

GOSPEL. What is the Gospel? Simply put the gospel is : *Jesus in my place*. We know that the world isn't as it should be and everyone agrees that there is a problem. We as Christians agree that the problem is **sin**. Adam and Eve our first parents made a choice to rebel against God in the garden of Eden (*Gen 3*) because of that choice we are all sinners (*Romans 3:23, Psalm 51:5*). God being the loving father that he is had a plan right from the beginning that he was going to send his Son, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh to redeem all of humanity. (*Gen 3:15, John 3:16*). Jesus Christ lived the life *no one* could live, died the death that *everyone* deserved, was resurrected and beat death so that *anyone* who should believe upon him should be saved. (*2 Corinth 5:21, Galatians 4:4-6*) Simply put the gospel is the good news that God is saving and redeeming humanity through his son Jesus Christ.

*“The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.” -
Tim Keller*

COMMUNITY. We like to say that your salvation is *personal* but it's not *private*. God saves you personally but he saves you to be apart of his family, we call this the church. When you read the book of Acts you see the New Testament church functioning like a family. (*Acts 2:42-47*). When you read letters like 1-3 John you see that it is impossible to live out the christian life in isolation. A simple

definition of community is : *a biblical community is diversity of people that are a unity of people brought together by the love of Jesus Christ.*

When you read passages like John 17:20-26 you get the core marks of what a biblical community is :

- 1) Biblical community is a reflection of God. (v21 & 24)
- 2) Biblical community is a witness to the world. (v21-23)
- 3) Biblical community is participating in God's love. (v23 & 26)

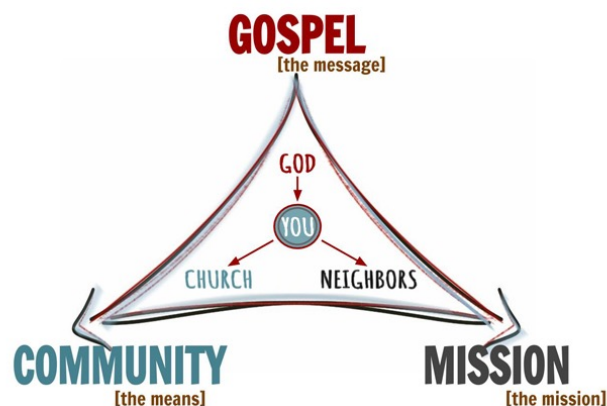
“There is no use saying you have community or love for each other if it does not get down into the tough stuff of life. It must, or we are producing ugliness in the name of truth. I am convinced that in the twentieth century people all over the world will not listen if we have the right doctrine, the right polity, but are not exhibiting love.” - Francis Schaeffer

MISSION. You aren't just saved *from* something you are saved *for* something. There is a mission. We have to be careful here, there isn't a mission *for* the church, the mission *is* the church. Make sense? Think about it ,Jesus gave us the command in Matthew 28:16-20 : make disciples.

We aren't interested in making “converts” we are interested in making disciples. What is a disciple? We will talk more about that in later session but simply put a disciple is someone who **Worships** Jesus, **Walks** with Jesus and **Works** for Jesus. That's our mission.

“Church was designed to deliver what we were created to long for. Church must again be about a Vertical encounter that interrupts and alters everything” - James MacDonald

So when you sum it all up it looks like this :



So in light of all of this what is the mission and vision here at West Side?

Our Vision : Our vision is to see people transformed by the gospel, experience life in community, and live their lives out for the glory of God and the good of their neighbors.

Our Mission : To Engage people with the **gospel**, to Encourage one another in **community** and to Equip disciples for **mission**.

Additional scriptures:

Gospel -2 *Corinthians 5:17-21; Ephesians 1v23; 1 Peter 2v9-11; Colossians 1v21-23*

Community- *1 John 4:16-19; Colossians 3:14; John 13:34-35; Ephesians 2:22*

Mission- *Matthew 28:16-20; Romans 12:1-2; Romans 10:13-15; 1 Corinthians 5:17-21*

What We Believe.

What you do isn't as important as *why* you do it. The "why" always comes from the "what" meaning, the reason you *behave* a certain way is because you *believe* a certain way. In this session we are going to go over some major areas of belief for us as a church such as: *Who is God? What is a Christian?* and *What is the Church?*

Who is God?

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three persons--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--coeternal in being, co-eternal in nature, co-equal in power and glory, having the same attributes and perfections (*Deuteronomy 6:4, 1 Corinthians 13:14*). He is the Creator of the universe (*Genesis 1:1, Psalm 102:25*). He has always existed, never having a beginning, never ending (*Revelation 21:6*), and never changing (*Psalm 102:27, Malachi 3:6*). He is holy (*Isaiah 6:3*), merciful and forgiving (*Daniel 9:9*), compassionate (*Exodus 34:6*), just (*Psalm 67:4*), and will judge the world in righteousness (*Psalm 9:8*).

Big Idea: One God, three distinct persons.

Who is Jesus?

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God who became man without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, in order that he might reveal God and redeem humanity (*John 1:1-2; 14, Luke 1:35*). We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through his death on the cross as a representative, vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice and that our justification is made sure by his literal, physical resurrection from the dead (*Romans 3:24, 1 Peter 2:24, Ephesians 1:7, 1 Peter 1:3-5*). We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God, where, as our high priest, he fulfills the ministry

of representative, intercessor, and advocate (*Acts 1:9-10, Hebrews 7:25, 9:24, Romans 8:34, 1 John 2:1-2*).

Big Idea : Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. The second person of the Trinity.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ during this age. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He draws the unredeemed to repentance and faith, and at salvation imparts new spiritual life to the believer, bringing that person into union with Christ and the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit sanctifies, seals, fills, guides, instructs, comforts, equips, empowers, permanently indwells, and bestows spiritual gifts to the believer for Christ-like living and service (*John 16:8; 13:15; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 1:22; 4:11-12; Romans 8:9-17; 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 12:4-5, 11-13, 19; Galatians 5:25; Hebrews 2:1-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12*).

Big Idea :The Holy Spirit is how we live the Christian life. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity.

What is Salvation?

We believe that salvation is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was shed on the cross at Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins (*Ephesians 2:8-10; John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19*).

Big Idea: Salvation is an unearned gift from an un-obligated giver.

What is a Christian?

A Christian is someone who has been born again by God (*John 3:3; John 3:7; 1 Peter 1:23*) and has put faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8 tells us that it is “...by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of

God.” A true Christian is a person who has put faith and trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ, including His death on the cross as payment for sins and His resurrection on the third day. John 1:12 tells us, “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” The mark of a true Christian is love for others and obedience to God’s Word (*1 John 2:4, 10*). A true Christian is indeed a child of God, a part of God’s true family, and one who has been given new life in Jesus Christ.

Big Idea : A Christian is someone who not only believes in the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ but it someone who has been transformed by it.

What is the Church?

We believe that upon placing one’s faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, the believer is made part of the Body of Christ, the one universal Church, of which Jesus Christ is the Head. The Scriptures command believers to gather locally in order to devote themselves to worship, prayer, teaching of the Word, fellowship, the ordinances of baptism and communion, service to the local body through the development and use of talents and spiritual gifts, and outreach to the world to make disciples (*Ephesians 1:22-23; Acts 2:42-46; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Matthew 28:18-20*). Wherever God’s people meet regularly in obedience to this command, there is the local expression of the Church under the watchful care of a plurality of elders. A church’s members are to work together in love and unity, intent on the ultimate purpose of glorifying Christ (*Ephesians 4:16*).

Big Idea : The Church is a covenant community of believers purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. The Church is a family.

What is Baptism?

Baptism and communion are the two sacraments required in the church. We believe that Christian baptism by immersion in water is a public identification with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism is commanded of all believers and is for believers only (*Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38, 41; Acts 18:8*). Scripture shows that a person was baptized after personally receiving forgiveness of

sin through accepting Jesus Christ. The waters of baptism are a symbol of our death, burial, and resurrection to newness of life that happens when we become new creations in Christ (*Colossians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:1-4*).

Big Idea : Baptism is a physical analogy of a spiritual reality.

What is Communion?

Communion is the remembering of Christ's death, and participation—through the bread and the juice—of the Savior's broken body and shed blood. Communion is to be a time of confession of our sin and should be preceded by careful self-examination according to (*Acts 4:13; Romans 6:3-6; 1 Corinthians 11:20-29*.)

Big Idea : Communion is where heaven and earth collide.

***Additional Comments and Resources**

We aren't reinventing the wheel here at West Side. We are guided by and hold to the orthodox truths and confessions that have guided the church for thousands of years. In saying that, we would agree and hold to: **The Apostles Creed** and the **Nicene Creed**.

Recommended Reading:

The Gospel

- “Living the Cross-Centered Life” by C.J. Mahaney
- “The Prodigal God” by Timothy Keller
- “What is the Gospel?” by Greg Gilbert

Jesus

- “Seeing and Savoring Jesus” by John Piper

The Church

- “Biblical Eldership” by Alexander Strauch

Apologetics

- “The Reason for God” by Timothy Keller
- “Mere Christianity” by C.S. Lewis

Where You Come In.

“We do not want, as the newspapers say, a church that will move with the world. We want a church that will move the world.”

- G.K. Chesterton

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.”

1 Corinthians 12:12

If the church is a family and has family members then just like any family, each family member pulls his or her weight for the betterment of the whole. In this session we are going to look at some areas of service here at West Side that you can serve in and be apart of.

Worship.

Worship is a big deal for us at West Side because we believe what you *worship* you *become*. When we gather as God’s people we want to lift high the name and fame of Jesus through song, sermon and sacraments. There are many areas that you can get involved in this area:

- Band Member.
- Sound Board
- Computer/Graphics
- Stage Design

Community Groups.

Community groups are not *apart* of West Side they are the *heart* of West Side. This area is crucial to your development as a follower of Jesus Christ and vital for you to be an active member here. We want our community groups to be

continually multiplying and to do that we need active members and active leaders. At the end of the connection class you will be placed into a Community group where you will serve with others, live life with others and by God's grace, grow with others.

Children's Ministry

If you have been around West Side for any sort of time you know that we have a lot of babies and children! We love that, children are a blessing from the Lord and God has given us much to be responsible for. There are two main areas of service here:

- Nursery
- Jr. Church

Hospitality Team

Are you gifted in throwing baby showers and hosting people? Are you good at making people feel loved and welcomed? Do you like food? Then this is the area for you. Everything from Family Dinners to Baby showers. This team helps coordinate and accomplish a lot here at West Side!

Maintenance Team

Are you a handy man? Can you swing a hammer and fix anything? Or do you just wanna serve? This is the team for you, these guys do everything from mow the lawn to remodel bathrooms!

Greeting Team

Never met a stranger before? Love talking to people? Then this is the team for you. Here at West Side we take pride in wanting to make people feel safe and welcome. Anytime there is an event that takes place, this team is there to meet, greet and seat everyone who comes through the doors.

There are many other areas to get involved in from an Outdoorsmen's club to jail and outreach ministry. The goal is this: *to serve in any way possible.*

What Is Required of You.

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

“With a country club membership you pay others to do the work for you. With church membership, everyone has a role or function. That is why some are hands, feet, ears, or eyes. We are all different, but we are necessary parts of the whole.” - Thom Rainer

Have you ever bought a car? Have you ever bought a home? Have you ever been to the doctor? Have you ever been married? What do all these things have in common? Paper work! Why? Because in our culture today entering into a covenant with someone and saying “I take responsibility”, is a big deal. So then how much more should it be for the Church of Jesus Christ! With this declaration of fellowship you are declaring that you take responsibility of being apart of the body here at West Side. Before we get to that, here are a few things this doesn't mean:

- **This doesn't “save you.”** Salvation comes by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. That's it. But how do you show that? *Step 1.* Baptism. *Step 2.* Entering into a church community.
- **This isn't a club.** This isn't a country club membership where you “pay a fee” and you're on the list. A club is based on *preferences* and is there to *serve you*. A church is based upon a *person* and is there for *you to serve it*.
- **This isn't to “trap you”.** Commitment is a scary thing and not very popular in our culture today. It is almost viewed as a negative thing, meaning if you make a commitment you are trapped and now people can require anything and

everything from you. We don't view it that way, we viewing entering into a church community as a blessing not a burden.

So what does this mean? What does it mean for you to enter into this fellowship of believers here at West Side?

- **It means you are committed.** Entering into a body of believers isn't something to be taken lightly. Jesus died and gave his life for the church (*Ephesians 5:25*) with that respect we enter into to this community with reverence and awe knowing we are specifically apart of something bigger than us.
- **It means you want to be held accountable.** All through scripture we see exhortations for believers to be held accountable to other believers. (*Hebrews 13:17, Ephesians 4:11, Acts 20:28, 1 Thess 5:12*) Membership does not save you but being held accountable under the authority of the local church and other believers is what sanctify's us.
- **It means you want to serve.** One can hardly read the New Testament and obey it in isolation. What does this mean? It means in order for us to obey the bible we need to be living in deep community with other believers. (*Galatians 6:2, Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 13*)

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household...”- Ephesians 2:19

“We must grasp once again, the idea of church membership as being the membership of the body of Christ and as the biggest honor which can come a man's way in this world.”

- Martyn Lloyd-Jones



DECLARATION OF FELLOWSHIP

I hereby declare that:

- ... *I am a baptized follower of Jesus Christ.*
- ... *I am in full agreement with the beliefs and core values of West Side.*
- ... *I will live my life with other believers and walk in community.*
- ... *I will live in accountability to the leadership at West Side.*
- ... *I will give my time, talents and treasure.*
- ... *I will not be divisive in anyway.*
- ... *I declare and consider West Side to be my home church.*

Name:

(Please print)

Signature: _____ Date: _____