

# WELCOME TO CORNERSTONE

## EXPLORING MEMBERSHIP

### CLASS 1

### **Welcome!**

Over the next several weeks our goal is for you to get to know us and for us to get to know you. By the time we're done, we hope you'll have the information you need to decide if Cornerstone is the church for you. We hope it is!

### **The Path Ahead**

Our membership class has five sessions designed to help you understand more about us:

1. Welcome to Cornerstone
2. What We Believe and Teach – a look at our Confession of Faith and three doctrinal distinctives of CFC
3. How We're Organized – elders, deacons, congregational expectations, church discipline
4. How We Do Life Together – Sunday mornings, home groups, ministry teams, one another in the NT
5. How We Do Mission Together – the Great Commission, evangelism, loving our neighbor, church planting, mercy ministry, global partnerships

## What is Cornerstone?

To start out, what *is* Cornerstone Fellowship Church? Well, it's in the name: Cornerstone Fellowship **Church**. We're...a "church." Not a Bible study or a mercy ministry or a school.

A church is a community of professing Christians governed by God's Word.

Let's look at each part of this definition.

### **A Church is...a Community**

When we call a "church" a "community" we mean it's a group of people committed to one another and living a distinctly Christian life together.

On the day of Pentecost the Spirit falls, the gospel is preached, and then "three thousand souls" are saved and baptized (Acts 2:41). But then something else happens. Luke, the author of Acts, tells us they "were added." "Added"...to *what*? They were "added" to the church in Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem church is described in terms meant to inspire and compel us:

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

That's a picture of what we mean by a "community" of God's people living out the Christian life together. We'll study this community aspect of our life together more in session four.

### **A Community of *Professing Christians***

A church is also to be composed of men and women who profess sincere faith in the gospel:

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Rom 10:9-10)

To say "Jesus is Lord" and believe God resurrected him is really to believe all the New Testament says about Jesus, God and a whole set of related matters.

You can't believe in the biblical Jesus unless you also believe in God the Father. You can't believe "God raised him from the dead" unless you believe Jesus was also crucified.

This isn't to say you understand everything about these issues, but only that you have a basic understanding of them.

To be a professing Christian you can affirm a statement like the Apostle's Creed:

I believe in God the Father Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
And born of the virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
Was crucified, died, and was buried;

He descended to the dead.<sup>1</sup>  
The third day he rose again from the dead.  
He ascended into heaven  
And is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.  
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
The holy universal<sup>2</sup> church,  
The communion of saints,  
The forgiveness of sins,  
The resurrection of the body,  
And the life everlasting.

Amen.

## **Profession includes Baptism**

In the NT after people become Christians they are baptized by immersion in water:

But **when they believed** Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, **they were baptized**, both men and women. (Acts 8:12)

Such a baptism is a sacrament (or ordinance) given so converts can demonstrate what has happened to them. Calling baptism a “sacrament” means it’s a **“visible sign of an invisible grace.”** The “visible sign” is going under the water, but this is meant to symbolize “invisible grace” the person has received. Calling it an “ordinance” means it’s something ordered/commanded by Jesus (Matt 28:18–20).

When a person is immersed in baptism, what “invisible grace” are we saying they’ve received? There are several parts to this:

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<sup>1</sup> “He descended into hell” is how some versions have it. But the meaning is that Christ died.

<sup>2</sup> “The holy catholic church” is how many versions have it, but the meaning of “catholic” is “universal,” i.e., the church throughout history and throughout the world.

1. “My sins are cleansed.”

“And now why do you wait? Rise and be ***baptized*** and ***wash away your sins***, calling on his name.” (Acts 22:16)

2. “I have died with, been buried with, and been raised with Christ.”

3 Do you not know that all of us who have been ***baptized*** into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were ***buried*** therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was ***raised*** from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might ***walk in newness of life***. (Rom 6:3–4)

3. “These things are true because I believe in Jesus.”

11 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 having been ***buried with him in baptism***, in which you were also raised with him ***through faith*** in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. (Col 2:11–12)

We practice baptism by ***immersion*** because of Jesus’ example (Matt 3:16), John’s example (John 3:23), and the example of the early church (Acts 8:38).

It’s also an appropriate sign of what baptism represents. Death, burial, and resurrection are vividly pictured in a person going down into the water, being submerged completely, and then coming up out of the water.

### **A Church is Governed by God’s Word**

“Governed by God’s Word” in simple terms means the Bible is what we believe, teach, and apply. It’s God’s definitive “rule of life” for us—and all God’s people.

The Bible is the 66 books contained in the Old and Testaments. What makes these books so special is they're "breathed out by God" (2 Tim 3:16) and therefore inspired, authoritative, inerrant, sufficient for all we need to live fruitful Christian lives, and necessary for us to gain the knowledge required to be saved.

For a church to be a true church it must be "governed by God's Word" in some areas very different from a family or individual Christian or parachurch organization or any ad-hoc gathering of Christians.

Here are five examples:

1. Church Government – *A church will find in the New Testament a guide for how it should be organized and led.*
2. The Sacraments – *A church will practice baptisms and the Lord's Supper (Matt 28:18–20; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 11:17–30).*
3. Sunday Worship – *A church will organize its weekly worship according to the Bible. It will seek to include certain elements commanded and modeled in the Old and New Testaments.*
4. Church Discipline – *A church will discipline its members according to passages like Matthew 18:15–17 and 1 Corinthians 5 and Titus 3:10.*
5. Discipleship – *A church will hold up a biblical standard of obedience and belief (Matt 28:18–20).*

## **But what makes Cornerstone Fellowship Church different?**

Our vision and values are part of our difference.

### *Our Vision*

To build a church filled with people growing in their love for God, for one another, and for their neighbor (Matt 22:34–40; John 13:34; Luke 10:25–37). These three loves summarize what the Bible calls us to.

Loving God involves obeying him, worshiping him, fearing him, knowing him, and yes, loving him and seeing him as more valuable and beautiful than anything on earth.

Loving one another summarizes the whole set of one anothers in the NT—love one another, serve one another, encourage one another, bearing one another’s burdens (John 13:34; Gal 5:13; 1 Thess 5:11; Gal 6:2).

And loving our neighbor comes from Jesus’ reply to the self-righteous lawyer in Luke 10. He said that loving our neighbor looks like a Good Samaritan who sees someone in need and shows compassion and has mercy on them. That could mean preaching the gospel to them, or it could mean helping them get on their feet financially.

Seeing people growing in these three loves is part of what drives us at Cornerstone.

### *Our Values*

Four values flow through just about everything we do: Being built on **sound doctrine**, being **Spirit-filled**, being committed to **relationships**, and pursuing **spiritual growth** (Eph 2:18–22; 4:7–16).

We believe Christians will thrive when these four pillars are established in their lives. And...we believe a church strong in these four areas will overflow in mission throughout our community and the world. You can't really put your finger on anything in the church that doesn't in some way connect to one or more of these values.

### **What does it mean to *join* Cornerstone?**

To be a member of Cornerstone you need to be an adult Christian (demonstrated by being baptized as a believer) sincerely committed to the life of this local church as much as you're able.

Membership is identifying with the Christians in this church as the ones you'll live the Christian life with. When the NT says, "love one another" (John 13:34) you'll know it's the Christians at Cornerstone you are to "love." It also means the Christians at Cornerstone will know you are one of those "others" they're called to love.

It means the elders of Cornerstone identify you as sheep under their care and concern (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4)—and likewise that you identify these elders as *your* elders and those "over you in the Lord" (Heb 13:17; 1 Thess 5:12).

### **What do we expect of members?**

We expect our members to live out their Christian commitment by actively participating in the life of this church. This includes things like:

- *Regular Sunday attendance (Heb 10:25; Act 2:46)*
- *Active participation in our small group life, a key way we live out the one anothers of the NT (Acts 2:46)*

- *Serving on one of our ministry teams or finding an effective way for you to live out a life of service, ideally according to your gifting (Gal 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10–11)*
- *Supporting the church financially (1 Cor 16:1–2)*
- *Submitting to the leadership of the elders (Heb 13:17)*

Schedules and seasons of life and circumstances can make these difficult at times. We understand that!

But it's also true that for membership to mean something it needs to be reflected in how you invest your life, your time, and yes, even your money. Otherwise it's not really *membership*, just spectating.

### **Interested in more on these issues?**

Here are some resources to check out:

1. See what Mark Dever has called "The 9 Marks of a Healthy Church" at <https://www.9marks.org/about/the-nine-marks/>.
2. *Believe and Be Baptized* (A book to prepare for baptism)

### **Our Next Class: What We Believe and Teach**