



**GATEWAY**  
CHURCH

# DISCIPLES

*of Jesus*

**BY JOSH HANSON**



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## Introduction

I remember the day. It was early January 2023. I was meeting with some pastors in Orlando when Laura Moore, our Executive Director, sent me an article that included a list of stressors for pastors. She asked, "Which stressors on this list would you say you relate to the most? And is there anything else you would add?" Laura had copied Matt Heft, one of our elders, on her email, so I couldn't ignore her. I spent a couple days reflecting on her questions before I sent my reply.

I wrote, "I don't know that I'm good at being the vision guy for Gateway Church. Things like 'Should we start another campus?' or 'Should we think about starting Saturday night services again?' are decisions I never know what to do with, when to bring them up, or how we'd even know if we have answers. I've never understood how pastors develop a 3-5 year vision plan. It all seems like throwing spaghetti against the wall to me."

This email thread would send me and the elders on a ten-month journey. Matt and I met over lunch, and he began to describe what he sees as my vision for Gateway Church. I took a few other elders to lunch and asked them some questions about what they see as my vision. Additionally, since she started it all in the first place, I asked Laura to write down what she saw as my vision.

Through all these conversations, a vision began taking shape for me. I wrote down some ideas, discussed them with the elders, presented them to the staff and some volunteers, and eventually did an entire preaching series on the topic. Most of the content of this booklet comes directly from that series.

This graphic depicts what had become clear to me:



These four columns represent the key components that drive a local church's life, ministry, and direction. The key components of a church:

Component 1: The Pastor

Component 2: Key Leaders

Component 3: Discipleship Process

Component 4: Disciple

So, component one is the pastor. This is me, Pastor Josh, for better or worse. The Bible says much about a pastor's qualifications, characteristics, and calling. The characteristics of a pastor are found in 1 Timothy 3. There's the call to shepherd the flock found in 1 Peter 5. There's the mandate to preach the Word, which you can see in 2 Timothy 4. And Acts 6 indicates a pastor is to be focused on prayer and the Word.

The second component is key leaders. Here at Gateway Church, our key leaders include our elders, deacons, staff, and Life Group leaders. To learn more about our leadership model, request a copy of the Church Leadership booklet at your campus Resource Center. These key leaders help the pastor move the church in a specific direction.

This leads to the third component of a church: our discipleship process.

Here at Gateway Church, this is our process of Worship, Connect, Serve, and Go. It's how we help you grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Worship is when we gather together to worship our God in ways that's Gospel-centered, done with excellence, and is contextual. We connect in Life Groups, discussing how the Bible applies to our lives and caring for one another. We serve each other and the people in our church family and go out into the world by equipping, partnering with, and sending members to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Are there other ministries we do? Of course! However, Worship, Connect, Serve, and Go are our primary ways of making disciples here at Gateway Church. If you'd like to learn more about our discipleship process, grab a copy of the *How Do I Grow?* booklet from your campus Resource Center.

For years these three components have summed up our ministry as a church. I, the pastor, invest in the key leaders who oversee and support our discipleship process. However, this booklet focuses on our vision as a church and is where the fourth and final component comes in.

In the past, we've focused so much on what we want to do to grow in our faith — our discipleship process — that we failed to clearly communicate who we want to become as disciples of Jesus Christ here at Gateway Church. Our vision — our spiritual goal for every follower of Jesus here at Gateway Church — is we'd be disciples...

1. Who are Word and Spirit Christians.
2. Who are generous.
3. Who are family.
4. Who are disciples who make disciples.
5. And who are Kingdom-minded.

The rest of this booklet will focus on these characteristics. Know that the order of the characteristics is not significant. When you make a list, something ends up being first, and something else ends up being last. That's how lists work. So, let's begin by looking at what it means to be Word and Spirit Christians.

## Chapter 1

# Word and Spirit Christians

We often think we need to learn something new when, more often than not, we need to be reminded of something we've forgotten. We see this throughout the history of the people of God, and we're just as prone to forgetting as were the people we read about in the Old and New Testaments.

So, if you're a Christian, this may be a reminder—hopefully a good reminder—like when you run into an old friend and spend time catching up.

### Under the Authority of the Word

Let's begin with what it means for us to be Christians who live under the authority of the Word of God, the Bible. At Gateway Church, we believe the Bible is God's Word to us. The apostle Paul writes:

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16–17, ESV)*

We believe the words in the Bible are God-inspired, without error, authoritative, clear, and teach us everything necessary to live a life of faithfulness and godliness. When God's Word comes to an impasse with anything — including our thoughts or theology or what our "momma always told us" —God's Word wins. Every single time.

My words, your words, news headlines, and social media posts by the influencers and politicians of our day all fade away. Only the Word of God will stand forever (Isaiah 40:8). As disciples of Jesus, our lives are to submit to the Word of the One who is eternal. For the Word of the eternal One is the Word that holds ultimate authority over all things, including us.

Given that God's Word is authoritative and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, it's essential for us to remember how it guides godly living.

How can a young person maintain a pure life? By guarding it according to your instructions!

*With all my heart I seek you. Do not allow me to stray from your commands! In my heart I store up your words, so I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:9–11, NET)*

So, to live under the authority of God's Word is to submit to it. To live with it as your guide. To allow it to instruct you on how to live. (Psalm 119:33)

You might say, "I hear what you're saying, but I've tried reading God's Word, and I just didn't get it." God's Word also teaches us to ask God for understanding, and the goal of our understanding is to put his Word into practice.

*Give me understanding and I will obey your instructions; I will put them into practice with all my heart. (Psalm 119:34, NLT)*

Those who put God's Word into practice are given a promise that God's Word will provide comfort and encouragement when we are sorrowful. (Psalm 119:28)

There's not much comfort to be found in this world when it comes to sorrowful situations like a cancer diagnosis, the death of a loved one, or when your spouse says they're leaving. When I found out I had a heart abnormality, the only place where I found comfort was in God's Word. It wasn't in the words of the medical professionals. Even when their words were as good as they could possibly be, I still had a heart abnormality, which is pretty disturbing! But God's Word provided what no other words could: comfort.

And when we submit ourselves to God's authoritative Word, we discover that we not only find comfort and encouragement but also renewal and joy in our lives.

*I long to obey your commandments! Renew my life with your goodness. (Psalm 119:40, NLT)*

*Make me walk along the path of your commands, for that is where my happiness is found. (Psalm 119:35, NLT)*

*Your laws are my treasure; they are my heart's delight. (Psalm 119:111, NLT)*

So, what does this mean for us as disciples here at Gateway Church?

First, for God's Word to be what we submit our lives to we must be men and women of the Bible. We won't know if we're actually submitting our lives to God's Word if we don't know it. So, we must read, study, memorize, and meditate on the Bible so we can submit to it and apply it to our lives.

Additionally, as disciples of Jesus, our goal is for God's Word to be the final authority of what we believe and how we live. This includes what you believe about abortion, racism, marriage, sex, and gender, to name a few. It also includes what you do, like supporting a pregnancy center, being a foster parent, and waiting to live together until you're married.

Ultimately, God's Word stands over us with authority, or we stand over it. Either God's Word speaks to an issue, and we submit ourselves to it, or we stand over God's Word and force it to bend to our views. One way is the way of a disciple of Jesus. The other is the way of those who don't follow Jesus.

## **Empowered by the Spirit**

The third person of the Trinity is often neglected among Christians. We're comfortable with God the Father and God the Son, but God the Spirit, as author Frances Chan has said, is the forgotten God. In addition, for much of recent church history, Christians have allowed the gifts of the Spirit to be a point of division.

I'm sure it grieves the Spirit of God when he and his gifts are used to divide the church. I'm sure it saddens the Holy Spirit when he sees so many followers of Jesus frightened of his empowering presence in their lives. I'm sure it wounds him to see how many Christians go about living in their own strength and power when we've been promised supernatural help from on high.

Did you know there are at least fifty different ways the Holy Spirit's power is seen working in and through the people of God in the Bible? Fifty different examples of what it means to be empowered by the Spirit. Here are just a few.

## **Healing**

In the Bible, we read of the Holy Spirit empowering people so that others are healed. This was true of Jesus and his disciples. For example in Luke we read...

*When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this*

*was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free. (Luke 4:16–18, NLT)*

Jesus performed many healings during his time on earth. Blind eyes were opened. Deaf ears heard. The paralyzed stood up and walked. The dead rose from the grave. And, as Jesus told us, he didn't perform these healings out of his deity—he didn't heal because he was God—he healed because the Spirit of God was upon him. Jesus never ceased to be God, yet he lived as a man. He didn't use his God-ness as a spiritual trump card to defeat our enemies of Satan, sin, death, and Hell. And he didn't use his God-ness to perform miracles. Instead, he showed us what it means to live under the authority of the Word of God ("I only do what myFather tells me") and what it means to live by the power of the Spirit of God ("the Spirit of the Lord is upon me").

And as Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth:

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another*

*faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. (1 Corinthians 12:4–11, ESV)*

When you read the book of Acts and see healings performed at the hands of Peter, John, Paul, and others, know you're reading of the power of the Spirit of God at work. And just like in the ministry of Jesus, we see the same Spirit at work through people like you and me. Blind eyes are opened. Deaf ears hear. The paralyzed stand up and walk. And the dead are raised to life.

Though Christians debate about whether or not the gift of healing is for today, I've yet to meet a Christian who thinks that praying for those who are sick is off-limits. So, let's be people who live by the power of the Spirit. Who trust in the Spirit's power to heal those who are sick among us. It's his choice and his timing, not ours. But let's not be a people who ignore the healing power of the Spirit who lives in and works through his people.

Another way the Spirit empowers us is by helping us to live sexually pure lives. I'm grateful for the apps and filters we can put on our devices to hold each other accountable for living purely online. Still, these filters and apps are not a

replacement for the Spirit of God, who empowers us to live pure lives. The apostle Paul writes:

*God's will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin. Then each of you will control his own body and live in holiness and honor — not in lustful passion like the pagans who do not know God and his ways. Never harm or cheat a fellow believer in this matter by violating his wife, for the Lord avenges all such sins, as we have solemnly warned you before. God has called us to live holy lives, not impure lives. Therefore, anyone who refuses to live by these rules is not disobeying human teaching but is rejecting God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. (1 Thessalonians 4:3–8, NLT)*

Notice how Paul connects sexually pure living with the Holy Spirit, who lives in us. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to live sexually pure, God-honoring, holy lives.

Additionally, the Spirit:

- empowers us to worship Christ passionately (Philippians 3:3)
- empowers us to love each other (Colossians 1:7-8)
- empowers us to pray (Ephesians 6:18)
- empowers us to be bold for Jesus (Acts 4)

And there are at least forty-four more ways the Spirit empowers the people of God to live as disciples of Jesus. Be a student of God's Word and explore all of the ways the Spirit

of God, who lives in you if you believe in Jesus, wants to empower you as a disciple of Jesus.

**Word and Spirit (not or)**

We desire to be disciples of Jesus who are Word and Spirit Christians. Not Word or Spirit. Word and Spirit. Disciples who submit themselves to the authority of God's Word and are empowered by the Spirit.

Many times in church history, well-intentioned Christians have neglected either the Word or the Spirit. The Word and the Spirit are not foes; let's not put them at odds. To be a disciple of Jesus here at Gateway Church is to be a Word and Spirit Christian, and this is who we want to become.

## Chapter 2

# Generous

I especially love Gateway Church's generosity. Whether giving away 100% of our Christmas Eve offerings or ensuring a large portion of our church budget goes to missions, being generous with our resources is the kind of disciples we desire to be.

Talking about generosity means we will talk about money because money is an important part of our lives and part of being a disciple of Jesus. Let's look at a warning, a holy obligation, and a promise regarding money and being generous people.

### **A Warning**

In the gospel of Matthew, just three verses after teaching his disciples how to pray in what's known as the Lord's Prayer, Jesus said this:

*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*

*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. (Matthew 6:19–24, ESV)*

Jesus warns us of a dangerous self-deception that none of us are immune to regarding earthly treasures. It's found in verse 24:

*No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. (Matthew 6:24, ESV)*

That phrase "no one" is all-inclusive. No matter how special you think you are, not one of us is an exception to this statement. No one can serve two masters.

The Word translated as "master" is the word often translated as "lord" in the New Testament. It's the same word used in Scripture, for example, in the phrase "Jesus is Lord." And no one, Jesus says, can serve two lords. Either 17Jesus is your Lord, or he isn't. And he won't share this role in your life with anything or anyone else.

Someone who tries to live with two masters will end up hating one lord and loving the other. You'll devote yourself to one and not the other. You'll say Jesus is Lord but that other lord will demand your allegiance leading you to abandon Christ's authority as Lord of your life.

Jesus ends his lesson on lordship by saying, "You can't serve God and money." And that means money is one of those lords trying to oust Jesus from his role as Lord of your life. And rarely does a person take this warning seriously enough because money is an alluring and deceptive lord.

Then there's James, Jesus' younger brother, who wrote this:

*Now the believer of humble means should take pride in his high position. But the rich person's pride should be in his humiliation, because he will pass away like a wildflower in the meadow. For the sun rises with its heat and dries up the meadow; the petal of the flower falls off and its beauty is lost forever. So also the rich person in the midst of his pursuits will wither away. Happy is the one who endures testing, because when he has proven to be genuine, he will receive the crown of life that God promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each one is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires. Then when desire conceives, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is full grown, it gives birth to*

*death. Do not be led astray, my dear brothers and sisters. All generous giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or the slightest hint of change. By his sovereign plan he gave us birth through the message of truth, that we would be a kind of firstfruits of all he created. (James 1:9–18, NET)*

In talking about riches, I find it interesting how James brings up the root cause of temptation in our lives. Temptation comes from an alluring desire within us. That alluring desire, when it conceives, gives birth to sin. Sin, once it's matured, results in death. Then, as if to bring home his point about this specific kind of temptation, James turns our attention to our generous God, who gives every perfect gift, including the gift of our salvation.

His point is our generosity is to imitate our generous God. Thus, according to James, a way to test if you've fallen for the lure of riches is to evaluate how your wealth is being invested in the message of truth going forth so that others might hear, respond, and find new life.

Between the warnings of Jesus and James, we're left to face the truth of which lord we love and which one we hate. Both individually and as a congregation.

### **A Holy Obligation**

Now, onto what I call our holy obligation. Everything we have is God's. Everything you have is his. Everything I

have is his. That means every dollar you have is on loan from him, and you must be a good steward of it. You're just managing his riches. This is what Jesus teaches us in one of his parables when he said:

*Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last — dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip. The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master's money. After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, "Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more." The master was full of praise. "Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!" The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, "Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more."*

*The master said, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!" Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, "Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn't plant and gathering crops you didn't cultivate. I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back." But the master replied, "You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn't plant and gathered crops I didn't cultivate, why didn't you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it." Then he ordered, "Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 25:14-30, NLT)*

None of us are the master in this parable. We're the servants. And either we're a servant who invests our master's money in a way that benefits him or we're unfaithful. Did you notice what the unfaithful servant did with his master's money? He returned every single penny he was responsible for. He didn't cheat his master or spend his master's money

on himself. He gave him back every single silver coin he was entrusted. And for that, he was called unfaithful!

This is scary to me because for many disciples of Jesus, simply giving him back what's his would be an improvement to their generosity. Far too many Christians view God's riches as their own to spend however they wish. And what for many would be an improvement, Jesus calls unfaithful and useless because his money wasn't invested in a way that was for his benefit.

Here's why this is all very relevant and practical for us. The question isn't, "Jesus, how much money am I supposed to give?" The real question is, "How much of your money, Jesus, do you want me to spend on me?"

When we realize we're not the owner of our finances but stewards of someone else's finances, the question we ask changes. And this is why I believe we have a holy obligation to steward the resources God has entrusted us by using them for his Kingdom work both individually and as a church. Whether it's our dollars, our buildings, our staff, and everything in between. God is the giver of every good gift, and he wants us to invest his resources in the work he's doing in the world. Never forget that the master was pleased with the first two servants who invested his resources faithfully. God will be pleased with us when we faithfully steward and invest his riches.

## **Promises To a Generous People**

This leads us to some wonderful promises given to those who are generous. Those who are faithful will be

entrusted with even more. What an amazing opportunity! We build trust with God so that he increases our responsibility with even more of his resources. And this isn't some health, wealth, and prosperity teaching because this is an increase, not for personal gain, but for greater investment in God's work. As Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth:

*Remember this —a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. As the Scriptures say, "They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever." For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God. So two good things will result from this ministry of giving — the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God. As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your*

*generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you. Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!*  
(2 Corinthians 9:6–15, NLT)

Many Christians are quick to focus on Paul's words, "You must each decide in your heart how much to give," and think this gives them permission to either not give or to give sparingly. But we can't ignore that these words, in the context, offer a discussion on giving generously! So it's not a stretch to interpret Paul's words as "You must each decide in your heart how generously you're going to give." After all, he uses the words generous, generously, and generosity six times in these verses. Not giving isn't an option, and not giving generously isn't either.

The promise here is that for those who give generously, God will generously provide all they need. He'll enrich you in every way so you can be even more generous. All of this will prove to others that you believe in and are obedient to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul is saying our generosity is one way the unbelieving world knows we actually believe what we say we believe.

Some final promises to those who are generous are found in Paul's words to the pastor of a church in Ephesus. Paul tells Timothy:

*Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life. (1 Timothy 6:17–19, NLT)*

What expectations and what promises! Be rich in good works. Be generous to those in need. Be ready to share with others, and in doing so, you will be storing up treasure in Heaven.

Are you storing up treasures here on Earth or in Heaven? Are the resources God's generously gifted you used to support his message of truth? Is your trust in money, which is unreliable, or is your trust in God? And would your bank account agree?

I'm not saying this because I want your money or because Gateway Church needs your money. I'm sharing this because I love you too much to not warn you about the danger of love and allegiance to money as the lord of your life. There's only room for one lord in your life, and being generous is one way we spiritually fight for Jesus to be our one and only Lord.

Theologian Leon Morris has said, "Worship that costs us nothing is worth precisely what it costs." What cost are we

willing to pay so that others, both near and far, might worship Jesus Christ? Our desire for others to worship Jesus will be displayed in how generous we are. And being disciples who are generous is our vision for the kind of disciples we're all becoming here at Gateway Church.

## Chapter 3

# Family

At the beginning of this chapter, I want to acknowledge that we all have different experiences when it comes to being a part of a family. None of us have grown up in a perfect family. Your family may have been slightly less imperfect than others, but none of us have experienced a perfect family. These imperfections can easily be imposed on a church family.

Maybe your family never dealt with disagreements. The unspoken family rule was "don't disagree with mom or dad." Thus any disagreement in your church family, however minor it may be, feels like a betrayal. Maybe your family prides itself on being critical. Complaining can be a tough habit to not bring into your church family relationships. And though it's the easiest form of conversation, complaining is not the godliest form of conversation. Maybe you've experienced abuse by a family member, making it difficult for you to trust others. You've learned to survive by putting walls up between you and others. Those walls, no matter how safe they may make you feel, will be obstacles for you in being part of this church family. There's no way they can't be. These are just a few examples of what we all bring into this

big family called Gateway Church. Much less, our church backgrounds and experiences, good or bad, are just as diverse as our family experiences.

### **Family Characteristics**

Let's see what God's Word has to say about the kind of family we're aiming to be.

*Never speak harshly to an older man, but appeal to him respectfully as you would to your own father. Talk to younger men as you would to your own brothers. Treat older women as you would your mother, and treat younger women with all purity as you would your own sisters. (1 Timothy 5:1–2, NLT)*

Again, I want to caution against imposing our personal family experience on Paul's words to Timothy. Some of our fathers were godly men, others were not. Regardless, in this faith family, we should all strive to treat men who are older than us with gentleness and respect. We're to treat men younger than us as brothers. We're to be patient with them. We're to instruct them. We're to help them mature in Christ. This means the older men among us need to view themselves as spiritual fathers to the younger men in the congregation. Younger men are to desire spiritual mentors to help them grow as godly men, husbands, and fathers. Older men, what an opportunity you have to leave a spiritual legacy in the next generation's lives. This is your role in our faith family.

We're also told to treat women who are older than us like we'd treat our mother. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul says this about Timothy's mother and grandmother.

*I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you. (2 Timothy 1:5, NLT)*

This is who Timothy would be thinking of when he read Paul's words about treating older women like a mother. He would think of Eunice, who passed on her faith in Christ to him. Similarly, the older women among us have the opportunity and responsibility to mentor and disciple the younger women in our faith family. To help them grow as godly women, wives, and mothers. So, women, let me encourage you to make the most of this opportunity to invest in the next generation of godly women.

We're to treat women who are younger than us as sisters, with complete purity. In an age of church abuse and sex scandals, where there's seemingly no end to sexual immorality, the church is called to be a family where women are protected and treated with purity.

In Paul's letter to the Christians living in Rome he writes:

*Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. (Romans 12:15, ESV)*

A great example of this family characteristic is illustrated in a book the staff and elders read a few years ago, which we also discussed on the church podcast. The book is titled *The Compelling Community*. An excerpt from the book gives us an example of Romans 12:15 in a local church. The author writes, "If my wife and I are unable to get pregnant, we should rejoice when our fellow church member gets pregnant. If I just got a new job, I should weep with my fellow church member who lost his... I've seen...[church] members show up for the wedding of another member they don't actually know that well. You can imagine the conversation with other guests at the reception: 'So how do you know Maurice and Tonya?' 'We're members at the same church.' 'OK, but how do you know them?' 'I guess I don't that much —but since we go to church together, I wanted to support them by attending their wedding.' 'Really? Even though you don't know them?'" (pg 56)

Think of how counter-culturally confusing and compelling us being a godly family will be for those in your life who don't yet believe in Jesus. When someone else gets a promotion, and you don't, it's counter-cultural to rejoice. But this is the way of following Jesus. When someone's getting married in your church family, you celebrate with them even if you don't know them that well, simply because they're part of your church family. And when people are grieving because of a doctor's report, or a wayward child, or the death of someone they love, they'll be surrounded by us because we're family. They won't have loneliness added to their sorrow.

Being disciples who are family also changes our gatherings when we worship. The person who shows up late or runs out early will feel like an outsider because family members stick around to talk and hang out. Our Life Groups will feel like getting together with family and not a box we check on our calendar. And whether or not we're in a Life Group will indicate if we're part of this faith family or not. We'll try hard to make you feel welcome, but if you're not engaged in our discipleship process, know that you'll never quite feel like you're part of our family.

### **Family Expectations**

All are welcome to be part of our family, but just like in all families, there are some expectations of our Gateway Church family members.

First, it begins with church membership. Family members of Gateway Church are members of Gateway Church. Guests are always welcome, but membership is required to be part of this family. Membership formalizes this relationship between the church and you. We enter into a covenant together, which means we agree to commit to our roles in this family together.

We expect our church family members to be engaged in our discipleship process and to grow towards becoming the kind of disciples described in this booklet. We don't have these expectations of non-members, even if you're a believer in Jesus. Why would we have family expectations of people who haven't formally committed to being part of our local church family through membership?

We live in a world that seems to have "commitment-phobia." In the words of one pastor, "Commitment-phobia is the fear that in promising to do something good we'll miss out on getting something even better." So why, in a world that often frowns on commitment, would we ask you to make a formal commitment to our church?

It begins by having a proper understanding of the church. In the New Testament, a local church is an assembly of people committed to following Jesus together. Additionally, the Bible describes the local church as the bride of Christ, God's temple, and the body of Christ.

So, to be a Christian who isn't a member of a local church is to be a non-attached member of the body of Christ. You're a hand not attached to the rest of the body, and that's weird. You're a stone of the temple, but instead of being connected to the rest of the stones, you're off on your own, a stone lying on the ground all by itself. Are you really part of the temple if you're not joined to the rest of the stones who are part of the temple? Are you part of this faith family if you have yet to make the same commitment as the rest of us?

And at this point, I know what some folks will think: "But Josh, I'm part of the universal church, so there's no need for me to be part of a local church." Did you know the Bible says far more about the local church and its importance in our lives than the universal church? I don't want to downplay the beauty that is God's universal church, but in our independent culture that has commitment-phobia we

should all recognize how vital the local church is in the New Testament.

Nine of Paul's letters were written to local churches. His other four letters were written to leaders of local churches. It's believed Hebrews was written to several local churches in Rome. Peter's two letters were written to local churches. John's three letters were as well. And the book of Revelation was written to seven local churches. That's twenty books of the New Testament, all being written to local churches. So, if you're not formally committed to a local church through membership, it's going to be hard for you to put into practice the majority of what you read in the New Testament, because it was written to people in the context of a local church!

### **Benefits of Being Part of the Family**

In addition to some of the benefits we've already discovered, as a member of Gateway Church, you're assigned an elder who will care for you. Your elder will give you an example of how to follow Jesus. (Hebrews 13:7) They'll show you what it means to be a disciple who's a Word and Spirit Christian, who's generous, and who's Kingdom-minded as they disciple and lead you as a member of this faith family.

Other benefits include serving opportunities reserved for family members. Being a member doesn't automatically mean you will serve in these roles but, if you're not a member, you don't even have the opportunity. This includes serving as an elder, a deacon, or as a Life Group leader.

These are key roles in our church family, so being a member of our family is required.

Finally, one last benefit of church membership is baptism and child dedications. In the Book of Acts, the apostle Peter stands up and preaches the first sermon about Jesus's resurrection to a large crowd:

*Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God." (Acts 2:37–39, NLT)*

Those who believe are to be baptized because baptism is a sign of what Christ has done on behalf of all who turn to him in faith. Baptism is a promise to believers and their children.

Some may question, "Well, why would we connect baptism and child dedications to church membership? They believed and they were baptized. There's nothing here about membership in a local church." In verse 41, just two verses later, we read:

*Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day – about 3,000 in all. (Acts 2:41, NLT)*

Do you know what we just saw? The first church membership rolls being recorded. In the Old Testament, we see all kinds of examples of what we'd call church membership rolls. All of those lists of names we love to read. And in Acts, we see that those who believed were baptized. But they weren't left to be independent Christians. They weren't Christians who were members of the "universal church" only. They were added to the church that very same day.

Which church? The church in Jerusalem. A local church that grew from around a hundred members to over three thousand members in one day! And if the Word of God, which we're committed to submitting ourselves to as our authority, shows us a link between baptism and local church membership, we want to make sure we keep them linked here at Gateway Church.

## **Conclusion**

Gateway Church exists to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ. Specifically, we're making disciples who are part of a faith family, who understand what it means to be part of this family, that there are characteristics and expectations of our family members, as well as benefits of being part of this family. In a world that's plagued with loneliness, we have the opportunity to display something

that's compelling, intriguing, and alluring: what it means to be a godly family.

## Chapter 4

### Disciples Who Make Disciples

Our mission statement is about making disciples of Jesus and our vision is that every believer in Jesus Christ would be a disciple who makes disciples. Making disciples isn't "Gateway Church" the organization's responsibility. The responsibility to make disciples of Jesus is the responsibility of every disciple of Jesus, which includes you if you believe in Jesus for your hope and salvation.

#### **The Mission of the Church Is the Mission of Every Christian**

Our church mission statement is influenced by the Great Commission, which is found in a few places in the New Testament. In Matthew's gospel we read:

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you*

*always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18–20, ESV)*

In Mark's gospel we read:

*And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. (Mark 16:15, ESV)*

And in the book of Acts we read:

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8, ESV)*

Here we find the reason why we exist both individually as Christians and as a church: We exist to go and make disciples, to proclaim the gospel, to be witnesses who tell others the news of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection and the eternal hope that's found only in this Good News.

So that's the influence of this specific characteristic of our vision for disciples of Jesus at Gateway Church: that we'd be disciples who make disciples.

We all have a responsibility to pass on the baton of faith to the next generation. We are all responsible for raising the next generation of Christians, pastors, missionaries, and church leaders. All of us are responsible

for leaving the Christian faith stronger and in better hands as our time on earth ends. The mission of the church is the mission of every Christian. "Gateway Church exists to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ" means that you, as a member of Gateway Church, exist to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ. That's why our vision is for every follower of Jesus here at Gateway Church to be a disciple who makes disciples.

### **Each Member of the Church Has a Role and Responsibility**

This may be obvious, but there are a variety of roles and responsibilities in the church. We must each recognize our individual role so that together, we can help Gateway Church accomplish its mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Listen to how Paul stresses the importance of every individual member of a local church. He compares the local church, which he calls the body of Christ, to a human body when he writes:

*The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand,"*

*that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. How strange a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you." In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it. (1 Corinthians 12:12–27, NLT)*

Paul is saying that just like our human bodies have many different parts, the local church has many different parts. And the "parts" that make up a local church are its

individual Christians — meaning you! Paul says the church needs each of us doing our role and fulfilling our responsibilities. And when we do, we'll experience a harmony among us that results in a deepening of our care and honor and joy for and because of each other. Paul writes something similar to the church in Ephesus when he writes:

*Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. (Ephesians 4:11–16, NLT)*

No member and no role is more or less important than the others; we just have different responsibilities because of our roles. The elders are called to spiritually protect and shepherd. The staff are called to equip and train. The deacons are our lead servants. And the vast majority of us, especially our members, are called to do the work of ministry of the church.

Everyone, including you, matters because everyone is critical to accomplishing our mission. Since our mission is to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ, being disciples who make disciples is all of our responsibility.

An implication of this is that we must first be disciples of Jesus ourselves. Second, we must be disciples who, though imperfect, are worthy of someone else's imitation, because that's ultimately what making disciples is about. As one author has said, "The making of a disciple means the creating of a duplicate." (Juan Carlos Ortiz)

I can imagine the pressure you feel from a statement like that, yet in 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul says, "*And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.*" That sounds like a seriously high and holy responsibility, right? But that's what making disciples is: a seriously high and holy calling. It's not an impossible calling, and it's not something to be afraid of. But we're all called to it as we recognize the sacredness of our mission.

### **Where Will You Make Disciples?**

What if you're unsure where to begin to make disciples of Jesus?

First, let's start close to home with your family, since this is the primary place for many of us to make disciples. In another booklet I've written, *How Do I Grow?*, there's a whole section on ways to grow spiritually together as a family.

Some of the suggestions I make in the booklet for families include:

- Read the Bible together as a family.
- Pray together as a family.
- Pray with your spouse at some point other than before a meal.
- Read good Christians books together.
- Be intentional about having faith conversations with your kids.

### **Other Opportunities**

Some other discipleship opportunities for all of us who are disciples of Jesus include:

- Serve in our Next Generation ministries. This includes nursery through high school students. Obviously, things look different when you're working with two-year-olds than with seniors in high school, but there are kids of all ages who are eager to be discipled by you.
- Serve with our college ministry partners. We have college ministry partners working at the University of Findlay and BGSU, and there are a variety of ways

that you can come alongside their ministries to be a disciple who makes disciples.

- Be a Life Group leader. Our Life Group staff is always looking for new leaders to step up. If you're currently in a group, and have been in for some time, maybe now's the time for you to step out and lead a group of your own.

## **Conclusion**

A church of disciples who make disciples. That's our vision for our church, and that's our vision for you as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Jesus' last words gave us our purpose, our call, and the reason why we exist when he said, "Go and make disciples." He said this just after reminding us that "all authority in heaven and on earth" had been given to him. And just before he promised that he "is with us always." Since Jesus is with us, and he has all authority in heaven and on earth, let's rise up to the calling he's given to us to be disciples who make disciples.

## Chapter 5

### Kingdom-minded

This final characteristic has undergone some revisions. Originally, we wrote "empowering and equipping the Big C church," but we realized that was a mouthful and not very memorable. The focus of this characteristic is that we all desire the gospel of Jesus Christ to not only change our community, our state, or our country but be news that changes the world. For that is what God intends his news to do.

Being Kingdom-minded is related to our previous characteristic — being disciples who make disciples. We strive together to be a church that raises up the next generation of Christians, pastors, missionaries, and church leaders, but now, not just for our own local church benefit, but for the benefit of Christ's church beyond our walls. We're to make disciples of all nations. Not just here in Findlay, not even just in our country, but of all nations. Jesus tells us:

*...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8, ESV)*

## Pray

One way we can be Kingdom-minded disciples is to pray. One day, the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. This is what Jesus said to them:

*Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. (Matthew 6:9–13, NLT)*

Notice the part where Jesus teaches us to pray for God's Kingdom to come soon and for his will to be done here on earth as it is done in heaven. In heaven, there is no rebellion against God's will. There is no sin. This is the hope and beauty of what the Christian faith teaches about eternity. No more war, no more rebellion, no more adultery, no more murder, no more racism, no more hate, for all of these things, and much more, are not God's will. Jesus, in teaching us how to pray, tells us that we're to be people who pray for God's Kingdom to come here on earth, just as it is in heaven. This means we pray against the powers of darkness, sin, rebellion, and death that are in each of us, personally and in the world.

So when we pray, we're to pray for how we're personally affected by and responsible for God's will not being done here on earth. We're to pray against the spiritual

forces of darkness—Satan and his demons and their opposition to God's will being done here on earth as it is in heaven.

## **Trust**

Next, to be Kingdom-minded disciples of Jesus we need to trust in Jesus' promise that he is building his Church and the gates of Hell will not prevail. Right after being asked by Jesus, "Who do you say that I am?"

*Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being. Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven."*  
(Matthew 16:16–19, NLT)

Jesus says, "I will build my church," and he's given us the keys of his Kingdom so that we accomplish the purpose and mission he's given to his Church.

Over a quarter of Jesus' parables, his short moral stories meant to teach a timeless truth, are about the Kingdom of God (sometimes called the Kingdom of Heaven).

For example, Jesus says:

*Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' 'An enemy did this,' he replied. The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'" He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches." He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough." (Matthew 13:24–33, NIV)*

In the first parable, we learn that though an enemy is trying to sow discord and division in God's creation, the good sower, who represents God, will protect, cultivate, and bring in a great and bountiful harvest, which points to the harvest of people who come to faith in Jesus. The parable of the mustard seeds shows us that, though the Christian faith started off small, it has been guaranteed to grow beyond what anyone can imagine. Like a tiny bit of yeast mixed in with sixty pounds of flour, the Kingdom of God may not have started off that big, but it's guaranteed to grow exponentially. These promises from God are what we're to rely on, what we're to trust in, what we're to believe to be true for us, his disciples today, just as it was true for the disciples we read of in the Bible. This promise should give us great confidence to go to the ends of the earth proclaiming the Good News and being the vessels through which God brings his heavenly will down to earth.

One day, in eternity, all who are his disciples will experience God's perfect will—no more sin, no more sorrow, no more death, decay, or darkness. But until that day, God's Kingdom is expanding. As disciples of Jesus, we're to participate in his work here on earth as we rely on his promises and power to bring his will to fruition.

## **Participate**

*If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God and by openly*

*declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced." Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!" But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah the prophet said, "Lord, who has believed our message?" So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ. (Romans 10:9–17, NLT)*

Being Kingdom-minded disciples of Jesus means we are both the senders and those who are sent to bring the Good News to all people. That's why you hear us say, "You are sent" each week. We gather to worship our Savior, Jesus Christ, then we're sent out as his Kingdom-minded disciples who proclaim his Good News to all people.

Here are some practical steps if you're interested in growing as a Kingdom-minded disciple of Jesus.

- Be intentional about getting to know one of our Go partners. Sign up for their prayer updates, and

commit to praying diligently for them. Parents, help your family be a champion for one of our Go partners. Be Kingdom-minded as a family.

- We've partnered with City Mission in Findlay for years. This organization is focused on empowering change through sheltering the homeless, feeding the hungry, and inspiring hope. They can always use help preparing and serving meals. Go to their website, [findlaymission.org](http://findlaymission.org), to learn more about this local ministry partner.
- The Women's Resource Center is an excellent ministry for you to be involved with as a Kingdom-minded disciple of Jesus. You'll see faces you recognize there — on staff, on the board, volunteering — as many in your Gateway Church family invest in this local ministry partner.
- Join our conversational English classes with Bible School students in Bangladesh every Saturday morning on Zoom from March through October. Then go on our mission trip to Bangladesh in November to celebrate their graduation. I've personally been to Bangladesh and celebrated with some of our Bible School graduates, and it was a great time seeing God's Kingdom here on earth in some of the most remote villages you'll ever see. You won't come back the same once you've seen God's Kingdom at work in this country.

If you're interested in any of these opportunities — be sure to reach out to Go department staff.

## Conclusion

Let's conclude by taking one last look at this graphic of the components of a church.



Pastor — check. Key leaders — check. Discipleship process — check. And the goal of our discipleship process:

Disciples who are:

- Word and Spirit Christians.
- Who are generous.
- Who are family.
- Who are disciples who make disciples.
- And who are Kingdom-minded.

Check.

The elders and I are excited for this chapter in our story as a church. We believe that all of us—disciples of Jesus—uniting around this vision will result in God's will being done here on earth as it is in heaven.

## Resources

Here are some recommended resources for each of the characteristics of a disciple of Jesus.

### Word and Spirit Christians

- *Why Trust the Bible?* by Greg Gilbert
- *Reading the Bible Supernaturally: Seeing and Savoring the Glory of God in Scripture* by John Piper
- *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- *Understanding the Spiritual Gifts* by Sam Storms
- *Surprised by the Power of the Holy Spirit* by Jack Deere
- *Surprised by the Voice of God* by Jack Deere
- *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit* by Francis Chan

### Generous

- *Christians in an Age of Wealth* by Craig Blomberg
- *The Challenge of the Disciplined Life: Christian Reflections on Money, Sex, and Power* by Richard Foster
- *Living in the Light: Money, Sex, and Power* by John Piper

- *Money, Possessions, and Eternity* by Randy Alcorn

## Family

- *Adopted into God's Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor* by Trevor Burke
- *What is a Healthy Church Member?* by Thabiti Anyabwile
- *I Am a Church Member: Discovering the Attitude that Makes the Difference* by Thom Rainer

## Disciples Who Make Disciples

- *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus* by Mark Dever
- *Church Elders: How to Shepherd God's People Like Jesus* by Jeramie Rinne
- *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* by Jonathan Dodson
- *Deep Discipleship: How the Church can make Whole Disciples of Jesus* by J. T. English

## Kingdom-minded

- *Missions: How the Local Church Goes Global* by Andy Johnson
- *Let the Nations be Glad* by John Piper
- *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* by Christopher Wright





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9555 County Road 9 Findlay, Ohio 45840  
(419) 423-5947 | [www.gatewayepc.org](http://www.gatewayepc.org)