Iron Oak Membership ↗

More than a Sunday

Eldered By: Dallas, TX

Imagine a church where...

Every member is whole-heartedly pursuing full devotion to Christ... You find people whose lives demand belief in the existence and power of God... Every person can move forward in a relationship with Jesus... Hurting people can easily connect with life-changing community... Everyone has access to teaching that transforms... Members are discovering, developing, and deploying their gifts and resources for the Lord... Imagine a community of believers: So authentic that it has favor with all the people... So selfless that it creates a sense of awe... So empowered that creativity and excellence are seen everywhere... So obvious about the work of a sovereign God that others are drawn to a relationship with their Savior — a place where day-by-day the Lord adds to their number those who are being saved.

Imagine this being your church.

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Our Mission

To call all people to be fully devoted followers of Christ.

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“And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

Acts 2:42–47

Our Calling

As a church our purpose is to call all people to be fully devoted followers of Christ. Calling implies both introduction to and encouragement in a life of full devotion to Christ. We exist to reach the uncommitted, unchurched, de-churched, dead churched, and unmoved and to encourage, equip, serve, and sustain those already devoted.

Unchurched

those who have never been exposed to biblical community

De-Churched

those who have previously been in a church environment but have left it.

Dead-Churched

those involved in a church that is not pursuing biblical Christianity

Unmoved

those nominally involved with Christ or His purposes

Core Values

Biblically Based

- God's Word is our guide, authority, and conscience in everything. We stand firm where it stands firm and remain flexible where it is flexible. We believe it is the inerrant, inspired Word of God profitable for equipping the man for every good work.
- 2 Timothy 3:16–17; Psalm 19:7–9

Christ-Centered

- Jesus is Lord and head of the church, and it is for Him that we exist. Full devotion to Him is normal for the believer.
- Colossians 1:18; 1 John 5:3

Grounded in Grace

- We acknowledge our complete dependence on the goodness and grace of God in everything. We ourselves have benefited from the kind intention of His will; therefore, we eagerly extend it to others.

Passionate about Prayer

- We do not believe that prayer is merely preparation for the work. We believe prayer is continually an essential part of the work. We believe prayer is foundational for a relationship with the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ by His Holy Spirit.

Authentic in our Walk

- Authenticity, integrity, openness and sincerity will define us. “The goal of our instruction is love, from a good conscience, a pure heart and a sincere faith.”

- 1 Timothy 1:5

Committed to the Uncommitted

- We believe that lost people matter to God; therefore, they matter to us. Jesus came to seek and save the lost and has left us here in part to do the same. Our individual lives and corporate efforts will reflect this conviction.

Relevant and Innovative

- The Bible does not tell us to use only certain styles of music, or to present our message only through words. The Bible does make it clear, however, that we are to find ways to effectively bring the message “into all the world” in order to make disciples. We believe this will require careful scrutiny of everything we do - new practices and old - and a willingness to change when necessary, within biblical parameters, in order that we, “by all possible means might save some.”

- We value openness to change and flexibility, believing that such a climate is conducive to personal, relational and spiritual growth. We will be structured to allow for change, freshness and innovation. We strive to keep tradition in perspective. We constantly ask whether every tradition or practice is optimally serving the biblical purpose for which it was originally designed. If it is, we keep it. If it is not, and if the Scriptures give us leeway on how to accomplish that purpose, then we aggressively work to find a better way.

Committed to Community

- Belonging to our community requires a visible commitment to being intentionally involved with others in accountable and encouraging relationships. We believe life-change happens best in the context of relationships. In clusters of caring people, participants share and encourage each other toward spiritual growth. Here people can experience both the benefits of a larger church and yet enjoy the kind of relationships that only develop in small, safe settings.

- Membership in our body requires a tangible commitment to our purposes and our vision as outlined in our membership class. Everyone is welcome to attend our church and participate in our times of celebration and encouragement. It is our intention, however, to call all believers in our midst into membership.
- We desire our fellowship to be a caring family that values community, informality, spontaneity, freedom of expression, humor, fun, commitment and loyalty. In our pursuit of holiness, we will acknowledge our imperfection and provide an environment in which people are free to risk, fail and find grace and encouragement in time of need.

Focused on Ministry and Service

- We believe that each believer has received a special gift and should employ it in serving others, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Spiritual giftedness and maturity determines where and how a believer serves.

What Does a Fully Devoted Follower of Christ Look Like?

- Converted
- Committed
- Competent
- Connected
- Contributing
- Creative

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. [25] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. [26] For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

Matthew 16:24–26

I. Converted

- If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth confesses, resulting in salvation.
- Romans 10:9–10

II. Committed

- **To God** - "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is to gain" (Philippians 1:21) "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment." (Matthew 22:37-38)
- **To His Word** - "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2)
- **To His Cause** - "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth." (Colossians 3:1-2)
- **To His People** - "So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep." (John 21:15-17)

III. Competent

- **In Doctrine** - "As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;" (Ephesians 4:14); "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ..." (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)
- **In Doing** - "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:1-3)
- The Purpose of Teaching is **TRANSFORMATION**, not just **INFORMATION**.

IV. Connected

- "And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling 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); "Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people." (Acts 2:46)
- We are a church **OF** small groups, not a church **WITH** small groups.
- Our goal: **EVERYONE** is cared for; no one cares for more than **5**.
- The **BIGGER** we get, the **SMALLER** we have to get.

V. Contributing

- "And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness." (Romans 12:6-8).

- Christ followers recognize the church is composed of interdependent members, each uniquely fitted by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the body and furthering the ministry of the church. They, therefore, seek to discover, develop, and deploy those God-given gifts; and they seek a place of service within the church, with the support and affirmation of the body.

- We are committed to doing ministry THROUGH people, not TO people.

- Christ followers realize that they have been bought with the price of Christ's blood, and that everything they are and have belongs to Him. In light of this, they desire to be responsible caretakers of the material resources that God has entrusted to them. They recognize that the Scriptures encourage them to give generously, proportionally, regularly, cheerfully, anonymously, and liberally. They increasingly submit their resources to His Lordship and display a spirit of generosity and cheerfulness in supporting the work of the church.

- "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

VI. Creative

- We should be innovative in our life as followers of Christ. Each of us has unique passions, insights, sensitivities and experiences. The Lord has you involved in His church because He wants you to serve others for Him in a way that only you can. There is no end to the ministry opportunities before us as a body. The Lord expects us to be creative in our suggestions, service and sacrifice. New ministry paths can be opened only as the Lord raises up gifted, mature and passioned leaders. What does the Lord want you to begin to pursue by faith today?

- Do not **WAIT** for us, **WORK** with us.

Our Strategy

We know the purpose of Iron Oak Community Church is to glorify God by calling all people to be fully devoted followers of Christ. Now the question is “How exactly are we going to accomplish that purpose?”

01

Believe in Christ

1. Initiate a friendship with someone far from God.
2. Share your story of grace.
3. Invite them to join you at a worship service.

02

Belong to His Body

4. Connect them to the Iron Oak body.
5. Intentionally introduce and involve them in Biblical community.

03

Be Trained in the Truth

6. Watch them as they increasingly devote themselves to follow Christ (6C’s on pp. 11–13).

04

Be Strong

7. Deploy them in effective and creative ministry to God’s people and a lost world.

Membership Covenant

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

Belonging to His Body

• by living life as a fully devoted follower of Christ.

• by attending faithfully.

• by dealing biblically with conflict and refusing to gossip.

• by following the leadership and submitting myself to the care and correction of leadership should the need arise.

• by praying for its health and impact.

• by warmly welcoming those who visit and committing myself to community with those who attend.

• by having a community group that will know you and help you as you seek to love God, love believers, and love unbelievers.

Helping Others Believe in Christ

• by developing relationships with the unchurched, de-churched, dead-churched, and unmoved.

• by sharing my story of grace with others.

• by praying for the salvation of non-believers with whom I have a relationship.

Membership Covenant

Being Trained in God's Truth

- by committing myself to read, understand, and apply the Bible.
- by affirming the inspiration, infallibility, and authority of God's Word.
- by availing myself to the tools and resources of the church which are designed to further my understanding of and deepen my commitment to applying God's Word.
- by preparing myself to give a "ready defense" for my faith based on God's Word.

Being Strong in a Life of Ministry and Worship

- by serving others in ministry.
- by giving graciously as God has graciously given to me.
- by annually filling out my 4B form.

Name:_____ Email:_____

Signature:_____ Date: _____

Our Beliefs

The doctrinal statement below reflects what all members of Iron Oak believe. Our leadership and teaching ministries reflect the full doctrinal statement.

The Bible

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

The Trinity

We believe in one God eternally existing in three equal persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each has the same nature and attributes, but is distinct in office and activity (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

Jesus Christ

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful man. We believe He accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice. We believe our redemption and salvation are guaranteed by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead (John 1:1, 14, 18; Luke 1:35; Romans 3:24-26; 4:25).

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ is now in heaven, exalted to the right hand of God where, as High Priest to His people, He fulfills the ministry of intercession and advocacy (Hebrews 1:3; 3:1; 7:23-25; 1 John 2:1-2).

Man

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

We believe God created mankind in His image, forming each person in the womb from conception (Psalm 139:13-16; Isaiah 44:2; 49:5; Jeremiah 1:4-5) until the point of death when they breathe their last (Genesis 25:8; Luke 23:46); and assigning gender to his people, male (man) and female (woman), as he created them sexually and biologically different, with different roles and responsibilities, but with equal personal dignity and value (Genesis 1:26-28; Ephesians 5:22–33; 1 Timothy 2:8–15).

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

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

Salvation

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

The Second Coming

We believe in the future, visible, and bodily return of Jesus Christ to the earth, commonly called the Second Coming, to rule the nations and establish His kingdom on earth (Philippians 3:20; Matthew 24:15-31; Zechariah 14:4-11; Revelation 19:11-21).

Full Doctrinal Statement

Section 1: The Scriptures

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

Section 2: The Godhead

We believe in one God eternally existing in three equal persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each has the same nature and attributes, but is distinct in office and activity (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

Section 3: The Person and Work of Christ

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful man. We believe He accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice. We believe our redemption and salvation are guaranteed by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead (John 1:1, 14, 18; Luke 1:35; Romans 3:24-26; 4:25).

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ is now in heaven, exalted to the right hand of God where, as High Priest to His people, He fulfills the ministry of intercession and advocacy (Hebrews 1:3; 3:1; 7:23-25; I John 2:1-2).

Section 4: The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

We believe God the Holy Spirit is a person who restrains evil in the world and convicts men of sin. He also regenerates those who receive Christ as Savior, baptizes them into the Church, the Body of Christ, indwells them permanently, seals them unto the day of redemption, bestows spiritual gifts on each one, and fills those yielded to Him (John 16:7-11; John 3:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11,13; John 14:16-17; Ephesians 4:30; 5:18).

We believe God answers prayer for the sick and is able to heal in accordance with His will (I John 5:14-15; James 5:15-16). Some gifts of the Holy Spirit, however, such as speaking in tongues and the gift of miraculous healing, were given to certain individuals as authenticating signs to the early church and not as perpetuating gifts or final evidence of God's presence in a believer's life (1 Corinthians 14:22-24; Hebrews 2:4).

Section 5: Angels, Fallen and Unfallen

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

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

Section 6: Creation

We believe God created all things in heaven and earth and that they exist by His power (Genesis 1:1; Colossians 1:16-17).

We believe man was created innocent and in the image and likeness of God but that he sinned, bringing both physical and spiritual death to himself and his posterity. We believe man has inherited a sinful nature, is alienated from God and is in need of salvation (Genesis 1:27; 2:17; 3:19; Ephesians 2:1-3).

Section 7: Salvation

We believe salvation is a sovereign gift of God and is received by man through personal faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for sin. We believe man is justified by grace through faith apart from works (Acts 13:38-39; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 1:4-5 & 2:8-10). We believe all true believers elect of God, once saved, are kept secure in Christ forever (Romans 8:1, 29-30, 38-39; John 10:27-30).

Section 8: Sanctification

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

Section 9: The Church

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

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

Section 10: The Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

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

We believe by water baptism a believer is publicly identified with his Savior and that infants of believing parents may be dedicated to the Lord but should not be baptized until they can personally articulate their faith and the purpose of baptism.

We believe the Lord's Supper is a memorial of Christ's death, the elements being symbols of His body and blood. We believe every Christian has a right to partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper but that participation must always be preceded by solemn self-examination.

Section 11: End Times

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

Section 12: The Eternal State

We believe the souls of believers in Jesus Christ do, at death, immediately pass into His presence, and there remain in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the body at His coming for the Church, when soul and body reunited shall be associated with Him forever in glory. We believe the souls of unbelievers remain after death in constant misery in Hades until the final judgment of the Great White Throne at the close of the millennium when soul and body reunited shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, not to be annihilated, but to be punished with everlasting separation from the presence of the Lord, whereas all true believers will inhabit the new heavens and new earth where they will enjoy intimacy and glory with the Lord forever.(Luke 16:19-26; 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 20:11-15; 21:1–22:21).

The Peacemaker's Pledge

A Commitment to Biblical Conflict Resolution

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

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

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

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

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

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

Applying the Principles of Biblical Conflict Resolution

01 See Conflict as an Opportunity

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

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

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

02 Glorify God

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

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

03 Get the Log out of Your Own Eye

One of the most challenging principles of peacemaking is set forth in Matthew 7:5, where Jesus says, "You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

There are generally two kinds of "logs" you need to look for when dealing with conflict. First, you need to ask whether you have had a critical, negative, or overly sensitive attitude that has led to unnecessary conflict. One of the best ways to do this is to spend some time meditating on Philippians 4:2-9, which describes the kind of attitude Christians should have even when they are involved in a conflict.

The second kind of log you must deal with is actual sinful words and actions. Because you are often blind to your own sins, you may need an honest friend or advisor who will help you to take an objective look at yourself and face up to your contribution to a conflict. When you identify ways that you have wronged another person, it is important to admit your wrongs honestly and thoroughly. One way to do this is to use the "Seven A's of Confession:"

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

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

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

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

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

04 Go and Show Your Brother His Fault

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

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

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

- Pray for humility and wisdom
- Plan your words carefully (think of how you would want to be confronted)
- Anticipate likely reactions and plan appropriate responses (rehearsals can be very helpful)
- Choose the right time and place (talk in person whenever possible)
- Assume the best about the other person until you have facts to prove otherwise (Proverbs 11:27)
- Listen carefully (Proverbs 18:13)
- Speak only to build others up (Ephesians 4:29)
- Ask for feedback from the other person
- Recognize your limits (only God can change people; see Romans 12:18; 2 Timothy 2:24-26)

If an initial confrontation does not resolve a conflict, do not give up. Review what was said and done, and look for ways to make a better approach during a follow up conversation. It may also be wise to ask a spiritually mature friend for advice on how to approach the other person more effectively. Then try again with even stronger prayer support.

If repeated, careful attempts at a private discussion are not fruitful, and if the matter is still too serious to overlook, you should ask one or two other people to meet with you and your opponent and help you to resolve your differences through mediation, arbitration, or church discipline (see Matthew 18:16-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8)

05 Go and Be Reconciled

One of the most unique features of biblical peacemaking is the pursuit of genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. Even though Christians have experienced the greatest forgiveness in the world, we often fail to show that forgiveness to others. To cover up our disobedience we often use the shallow statement, "I forgive her — I just don't want to have anything to do with her again." Just think, however, how you would feel if God said to you, 'I forgive you; I just don't want to have anything to do with you again'?

Praise God that He never says this! Instead, He forgives you totally and opens the way for genuine reconciliation. He calls you to forgive others in exactly the same way: "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:12-14; see also 1 Corinthians 13:5; Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 43:25). One way to imitate God's forgiveness is to make four specific promises when you forgive someone:

- I will not think about this incident.
- I will not bring this incident up and use it against you.
- I will not talk to others about this incident.
- I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

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

06 Negotiate in a Biblical Manner

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

As a general rule, you should try to negotiate substantive issues in a cooperative manner rather than a competitive manner. In other words, instead of aggressively pursuing your own interests and letting others look out for themselves, you should deliberately look for solutions that are beneficial to everyone involved.

As the Apostle Paul put it, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4; see Matthew 22:39; 1 Corinthians 13:5; Matthew 7:12).
A biblical approach to negotiation may be summarized in five basic steps, which we refer to as the PAUSE Principle:

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

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

07 Be Prepared for Unreasonable People

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

First, remember that God does not measure success in terms of results but in terms of faithful obedience. He knows that you cannot force other people to act in a certain way. Therefore He will not hold you responsible for their actions or for the ultimate outcome of a conflict.
All God expects of you is to obey His revealed will as faithfully as possible (see Romans 12:18). If you do that, no matter how the conflict turns out, you can walk away with a clear conscience before God, knowing that His appraisal is, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

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

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

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

At the very least, these steps will protect you from being consumed by the acid of your own bitterness and resentment if others continue to oppose you. And in some cases, God may eventually use such actions to bring another person to repentance (see 1 Samuel 24:1-22). Even if other people persist in doing wrong, you can continue to trust that God is in control and will deal with them in His time (see Psalms 10 and 37). This kind of patience in the face of suffering is commended by God (see 1 Peter 2:19) and ultimately results in our good and His glory.

08 Get Help from Above

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

Peace with God does not come automatically, because all of us have sinned and alienated ourselves from Him (see Isaiah. 59:1–2). Instead of living the perfect lives needed to enjoy fellowship with Him, each of us has a record stained with sin (see Matthew 5:48; Romans 3:23). As a result, we deserve to be eternally separated from God (Romans 6:23a). That is the bad news.

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

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

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

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

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

If you have prayed this prayer, it is essential that you find fellowship with other Christians in a church where the Bible is faithfully taught and applied. This fellowship will help you to learn more about God, grow in your faith, and obey what he commands, even when you are involved in a difficult conflict.

09 Get Help from the Church

As God helps you to practice his peacemaking principles, you will be able to resolve most of the normal conflicts of daily life on your own. Sometimes, however, you will encounter situations that you do not know how to handle. In such situations, it is appropriate to turn to a spiritually mature person within the church who can give you advice on how you might be able to apply these principles more effectively.

In most cases, such "coaching" will enable you to go back to the other person in the conflict and work out your differences in private.

When individual advice does not enable you to resolve a dispute, you should ask one or two mutually respected friends to meet with you and your opponent to help you settle your difference through mediation or arbitration (see Matthew 18:16-17; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8).

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:1–3

4B Form

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you fail to meet the test.

2 Corinthians 13:5

Where applicable, please respond to each of the following questions by selecting one of the five options: never, rarely, occasionally, often, or consistently.

Background

First Name

Last Name

Primary Phone

Email

Marital Status
[ ] Single [ ] Married [ ] Divorced

Age Group
[ ] 0-18 [ ] 19-24 [ ] 25-34 [ ] 35-44 [ ] 45-54 [ ] Over 55

Are you a member of Iron Oak?
[ ] Yes [ ] No

I am gifted in the following area(s) and would be interested in contributing my experience and/or gifts in a way that would bless the Iron Oak body. (Optional)

Have you been actively serving in an Iron Oak ministry over the last 12 months?
[ ] Yes [ ] No

Please indicate any other areas in which you serve (if applicable)

Have you actively served outside of Iron Oak within the last 12 months?

Where did you serve?

How often did you serve?

Believe

If you were to die today, on a scale of 1-10, how sure are you that you would go to heaven?

If God were to ask you, "Why should I allow you into heaven?" What would you say?

I reaffirm my belief in the following essentials of the Christian faith:

- The Trinity
- Authority and inerrancy of Scripture
- Spirit

I recognize God's sovereign control over my circumstances in life and therefore feel less of a need to control people or events.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I intentionally engage in conversations with non-believers for the purpose of sharing the gospel.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

My heart breaks for people I know who do not have a relationship with Jesus and I pray for them regularly.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I invite people who are far from God to Iron Oak as a means of introducing them to Jesus.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

Belong

I am in an Iron Oak Community Group that meets together consistently for the purpose of spiritual transformation.

Are you the leader of your community group?

I provide and receive accountability around spiritual growth with those in my community.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I openly share with those in my group about my hurts, habits and hang-ups.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I feel known and cared for by those in my group.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I would consider our group effective in practicing accountability & acceptance of one another.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I would consider our group effective in encouraging and caring for one another.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

Be Trained

I recognize my dependence upon the Lord and turn to Him in prayer throughout the day.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I intentionally spend time reading and meditating on God's Word out of a desire to better know and follow Him throughout my day.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I apply Scripture to daily circumstances, situations and struggles in ways that transform my life.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I evaluate teachings, ideas, values and lifestyles to see if they are consistent with the Bible.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I can answer questions about life and faith by citing specific Bible verses from memory.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I help my community group process situations and decisions with Scripture rather than opinions.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I am able to confidently answer objections/questions concerning the Christian faith.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I can clearly articulate to others my story of grace, the significance of the cross and how they can place their trust in Jesus Christ.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

Be Strong

I see my time as entrusted to me for God's use and glory.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I can articulate my spiritual gifts, passions and natural strengths.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I am currently serving in an area I am passionate about and that utilizes my gifts.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I am purposefully discipling one or more people with the expectation that they too will disciple others.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I love and serve others by placing their needs before my own regardless of their background or what they can do for me.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I actively care for the poor and less fortunate out of a response to the Lord's grace in my life.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I handle my financial resources with the mindset that they are the Lord's and entrusted to me to provide for my family, the family of God, and to accomplish His kingdom work.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I give according to and beyond my ability while trusting God's provision for all my needs.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I live under biblical principles related to debt, budgeting, and the use of financial stewardship.

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

Has the Lord provided you with opportunities to financially partner with other Christian ministries?

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

Compared to this time last year, my intimacy with, and effectiveness for, Christ is:

As you evaluate your responses to the survey with your community group, here are some further questions:

People close to me would say I love and serve others, placing their needs before my own, regardless of their background or what they can do for me.
Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility, be moved to treat one another as more important than yourself. Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests, but about the interests of others as well. (Philippians 2:3–4)

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

People close to me would say I am compassionate and respond to the needs of others.
As He got out He saw the large crowd, and He had compassion on them and healed their sick. (Matthew 14:14)

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

People close to me would characterize me as content and joyful in all circumstances.
I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content in any circumstance. I have experienced times of need and times of abundance. In any circumstance. I have learned the secret of contentment, whether I go satisfied or hungry, have plenty or nothing. I am able to do all things through the one who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:11–13)

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

People close to me would say I am quick to listen, admit when I am wrong, recognize my weaknesses, and proactively seek forgiveness.
Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters! Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. (James 1:19)

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

My life and my relationships are characterized by purity.
But among you there must not be either sexual immorality, impurity of any kind, or greed, as these are not fitting for the saints. (Ephesians 5:3)

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

People close to me would say I resolve conflict in a direct and respectful way without anger, gossip, or slander.
If your brother sins, go and show him his fault when the two of you are alone. If he listens to you, you have regained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others with you, so that at the testimony of two or three witnesses every matter may be established. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. If he refuses to listen to the church, treat him like a Gentile or tax collector. I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will have been released in heaven. (Matthew 18:15–18)

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I prioritize my time in a way that shows that my relationship with my spouse is second only to my relationship with Christ.
Nevertheless, each one of you must also love his own wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (Ephesians 5:33)

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I consistently and effectively communicate with my spouse about both daily challenges and deeper issues (e.g., intimacy, finances, parenting)
Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility, be moved to treat one another as more important than yourself. Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests, but about the interests of others as well. (Philippians 2:3–4)

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

I love and respect my spouse well by addressing and resolving conflict in a safe, timely, and God-honoring way.
Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters! Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. (James 1:19)

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

How often do you pray with your spouse?

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently

People close to me would say I am actively training my children to know and follow Christ (e.g., by reading and studying the Bible, teachable moments, and modeling godly living).
Train a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not turn away from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

[ ] Never [ ] Rarely [ ] Occasionally [ ] Often [ ] Consistently