

This Is Your Church

EXALTING CHRIST PUBLISHING

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THE CHURCH

The church of Jesus Christ is the most significant group to which a person can belong. All other organizations or groups will pass away but the church is in the eternal plan of God (Ephesians 3:10). At Community Bible Church it is our desire to have a church that functions according to God's plan and purpose. This series of lessons is for the purpose of looking at the biblical ideal for the church that the leadership of Community Bible Church endeavors to pattern all of its priorities and practices after.

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OUR DISTINCTIVES

A CHRIST EXALTING CHURCH

We seek to exalt Christ in His greatness and majesty. Man's preoccupation with himself is the root of sin, and all his miseries, and has no place in the church. Christ's exaltation, and not man's personal success, is the primary focus of Scripture and must be ours as well. This, in turn, leads to man's fulfillment and satisfaction. We are a Christ exalting church.

A SCRIPTURE HONORING CHURCH

We are committed to the inspiration, inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture. The Scriptures in conjunction with the Holy Spirit and the care of the church body are sufficient for growth and every spiritual and emotional problem. The integration of the concepts and techniques of secular psychology is unnecessary and in the end unfruitful. We are a Scripture honoring church.

A PREACHING AND TEACHING CHURCH

We are committed to preaching and teaching the Bible. It brings the authority of God and the proven principles of scripture to bear in the believer's life. The command to preach the Word in the light of Christ's appearing is kept foremost in our ministry. We seek also to teach the great doctrines of Scripture, such as the Doctrines of Grace, God, Christ, sin, and others. We are a preaching and teaching church.

A DISCIPLEMAKING CHURCH

Christ's mandate to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20) is the focal point of all we do. A discipleship emphasis and thrust is regularly given to encourage and enlist believers to pursue discipling in their lives. We are a discipling church.

A MARRIAGE AND FAMILY BUILDING CHURCH

We are committed to the biblical pattern for marriage and the family. The scriptural standards for the husband, wife and child rearing are given regular emphasis and priority. We believe the key to the church is the family, the key to the family is the marriage and the key to the marriage is the husband and father. We are a marriage and family building church.

A MINISTERING CHURCH

Every believer a minister, is our goal. The equipping of the saints for ministry and the operation of every believers gift is our priority. We are committed to the mutuality of ministry in the body. We are a ministering church.

A WORSHIPING CHURCH

We seek to make our services a vital and real experience in the worship and praise of God. We seek first to express back to God what we know of Him through His word. Then we seek to experience the presence and reality of God in our midst as we respond, compelled by the Holy Spirit, with the affections of the heart in adoration to our great saving God. We are a worshiping church.

AN OUTREACH MINDED CHURCH

We are committed to penetrating our community for Christ. Our mind-set is one that constantly seeks to reach our community and beyond. We also take seriously the divine purpose to spread the glory of Christ to all peoples by saving men from every tribe, nation, people and tongue. We are an outreach, world-mission minded church.

A LOVING CHURCH

The mark of Christ's disciples is love. We are committed to pursuing and emphasizing the need for concrete demonstrations of genuine Christ-like love and acceptance. We seek to be an accepting church family. We seek to be a loving church.

Lesson One

THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH: THE BODY OF CHRIST

The concept of “Church” is usually associated with a building or an organization (denomination) or even a ceremony. Church is somewhere that you go to watch something, much like going to a theater to watch a play. But what is the church biblically, and what is it meant to be? We will find that none of the above ideas are correct. The first way the scriptures refer to the church is what is called The Universal Church.

I. THE CHURCH IS GOD’S PEOPLE IN THIS AGE

A. The Word “Church”

The word “Church” translates the Greek word ecclesia, which meant (originally) any called out group of people who assemble for a meeting. Even the mob in Ephesus was called ecclesia, but it certainly was not a church (Acts. 19:32).

B. God’s People

Used of believers in Jesus Christ, it became a technical term for God’s people whether meeting or not (Acts 8:1, 3; Ephesians 1:22-23).

Note: In this sense there is only one church. The Universal Church is real believers from the day of Pentecost until the rapture of the church, no matter where their location or religious association.

II. THE CHURCH IS CHRIST’S BODY

A. Christ’s Corporate Body

Christ’s life is in the church. When Jesus Christ was on the earth His physical body was a temple of God. God lived in the human body and His name was Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:9). Today the Holy Spirit of God lives in believers, and the life of Jesus lives in us, and we are called His body (Ephesians 1:22 -23).

B. Christ's Body and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Every believer has been made a member of Christ's body by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). This baptism happens the moment someone believes in Christ. It began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4; 11:16) when the church was born. Since that time all believers are baptized by the Holy Spirit the moment they are saved.

C. The Church and Israel

The church and Israel will constitute one people of God in the future. The church began at Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ (Ephesians 1:22 - 23). National physical Israel will be restored spiritually and saved Jews will be incorporated into the church. There is one new man and one flock, (Ephesians 2:14-16; John 10:16). Christ will return as their Messiah and set up the Millennial Kingdom over the earth centered in Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:10; Isaiah 2:1-4).

Lesson Two

THE LOCAL CHURCH: GOD'S AGENCY IN THE WORLD

The second way the scriptures refer to the church is as a local church. This is a group of believers who are meeting regularly at a certain location. For example, there was the church at Corinth, or Ephesus, which at that time met in homes as in the case of Aquila and Priscilla (Romans 16:3-5).

The Local Church May Be Defined As:

"A group of believers gathering at a specific time around a common Lord and under recognized leadership for the proclamation of the Word of God, for fellowship, edification, worship, observance of biblical ordinances and discharging of specific functions and duties to each other and the world."
George Peters

I. WHAT MAKES A CHURCH A CHURCH?

Belonging to a local church is God's will for every believer. The local church meets certain needs and carried out specific functions that are important to every believer. Not all believers meeting together constitute a local church. For example, a home bible study or a campus prayer group are not what the New Testament identifies as a church. The following passages show what elements together constitute a local church. They will also show the importance of the church for every believer.

1. Acts 2:42
2. Hebrews 13:7, 17
3. 1 Peter 4: 10-11
4. Acts 13: 1-3
5. Ephesians 4: 11-12
6. 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Matthew 18: 15-18

II. WHY IS THE LOCAL CHURCH SO IMPORTANT

The local church is God's agency in the world. Nothing else is able to carry out the full orb of ministry as set forth in scripture. The importance and necessity of the local church is seen in both the breadth and depth of its ministry.

A. The Breadth of Ministry

Unlike para church ministries which are able only to focus on a certain age group or target group, the local church touches the full scope of ministry.

1. From young children to the aged (Titus 2:2-8)
2. Widows and young mothers (1 Timothy 5:9-16)
3. The work of God locally and world wide
4. Individuals and families

B. The Depth of Ministry

1. The ministry of the full extent of spiritual gifts
2. The examples of all ages and maturity

III. WHAT DOES MEMBERSHIP MEAN? MUTUAL COMMITMENT

In the New Testament there seems to have been only two requirements for membership; belief and baptism.

What does it mean to belong to this church? At Community Bible Church membership is an opportunity for those who want to be identified with the ministries and mission of this church. It is the making of a mutual commitment to join others in being involved with the direction and growth of this part of God's world-wide church. The following are areas of mutual commitment and responsibility.

A. Worship - Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7; 96:8-9

THE COMMITMENT OF THE
CHURCH FAMILY TO THE
MEMBER

To provide frequent opportunities for the congregation to worship the Lord together

THE COMMITMENT OF THE
MEMBER TO THE CHURCH
FAMILY

To participate in congregational worship regularly and come prepared to worship the Lord (Hebrews 10:25).

B. Spiritual Growth - 2 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 2:2

THE COMMITMENT OF THE
CHURCH FAMILY TO THE
MEMBER

To create and maintain a positive climate for spiritual growth that includes instruction, encouragement and challenge; and to offer a variety of ministries to promote the believers' spiritual growth.

THE COMMITMENT OF THE
MEMBER TO THE CHURCH
FAMILY

To assume responsibility for his or her own spiritual growth through personal and corporate bible study and prayer and active participation in various opportunities for growth provided by the church. Every member is expected to be a part of some kind of discipleship group, e.g. Sunday School, Growth Group, Women's Bible Studies, etc.

C. Stewardship - Proverbs 3:9; Matthew 6:19-21; 1 Corinthians 4:2

THE COMMITMENT OF THE
CHURCH FAMILY TO THE
MEMBER

To carefully manage the financial resources entrusted to the church through His people.

THE COMMITMENT OF THE
MEMBER TO THE CHURCH
FAMILY

To contribute financially to the Lord through His church in a consistent and generous manner. (1 Corinthians 16:1-4; Galatians 6:6)

D. Involvement in Service - Ephesians 4:11-12; Mark 10:45

THE COMMITMENT OF THE
CHURCH FAMILY TO THE
MEMBER

To equip the believer for service to the Lord by providing training, support and supervised, practical experience in various ministries.

THE COMMITMENT OF THE
MEMBER TO THE CHURCH
FAMILY

To support the variety of ministries of the church through prayer and active involvement in one or more areas of service. (1 Peter 4:10)

E. Spreading The Good News - Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8

THE COMMITMENT OF THE
CHURCH FAMILY TO THE
MEMBER

To actively contribute to fulfilling the Great Commission by sharing the gospel in our area and by assisting in the spread of the gospel around the world

THE COMMITMENT OF THE
MEMBER TO THE CHURCH
FAMILY

To share his or her faith in Christ personally and to become aware of how to participate in the spreading of the gospel around the world.

IV. THE PURPOSE/PRIORITIES OF THE CHURCH

At Community Bible Church we believe that everything we do must be oriented around the purpose of the church revealed in scripture. To enjoy God's blessing, the church must exist and function according to the principles of the Word of God.

A. To Equip the Saints for Ministry

God gave the church apostles and prophets, evangelists and pastor/teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11). The purpose of the church is to teach and equip every believer for ministry. From children's ministries to the worship service, this purpose is kept in view. Every believer has been called as a minister to fulfill some specific ministry. The church's purpose is to make this a reality. Every believer a minister, is our goal.

B. To Evangelize the World

The result of equipping and edifying the church will be evangelism of the world. We are to be a light in the world (Philippians 2:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus Christ has commissioned us to make disciples of all nations. Local evangelism must be going on as believers mix in the world and through outreach. It must also be going on in a wider circle through missions.

C. To Extol and Worship God

The church's final and high calling is to worship God. Jesus says the Father seeks those who worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:24). Peter says we are to *"proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"* (1 Peter 2:10). Worship is grounded in truth as we respond to the truth concerning God and His great love for us. It is expressed from the inner man in praise and gratitude and it is experienced as the Spirit of God makes the presence of God real as we *"continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name"* (Hebrews 13:15).

Community Bible Church is committed to these three tasks. The equipping of the saints for ministry, the evangelism of the world and the worship of God is our purpose and priority.

Lesson Three

SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE CHURCH

The local church is different from all other earthly organizations. The risen Christ is its head and He directs its functions and ministries (Ephesians 4:16). Christ's design for the local church is carried out through the spiritual gifts which He has given to each believer. In this lesson we will show the importance of ministering our spiritual gifts for the good of the body.

I. DEFINITION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A. Spiritual Gifts Come From the Holy Spirit

They are not merely talents or acquired skills as singing or piano playing. They are enablements given to the believer when he becomes a member of the body of Christ. They are the result of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives (1 Corinthians 12:4).

B. Definition

A spiritual gift is a supernatural ability given by the Holy Spirit at salvation that enables the believer to minister effectively in the body.

II. EXPLANATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A. Every Believer Has a Spiritual Gift

1 Corinthians 12:7 says, "*to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*" Every believer has been endowed by the Spirit with a special ability to minister to the body. See also Ephesians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 12:18; Romans 12: 3-4; 1 Peter 4: 9-11.

B. God Decides Which Gift We Will Have

Our function in the body was God's choice not ours (1 Corinthians 12:18). In His wisdom He knows how to place gifts in the body as they are needed. Each gift is determined by God and is necessary for the total function of the church. There are no unnecessary and insignificant parts (1 Corinthians 12:20-23).

C. Gifts are Given for Ministry to Others

The purpose of our spiritual gift is that we minister to the body of Christ by the capacity God has designed (1 Peter 4:9 - 10). They are not for our own edification and benefit. Some may minister through their spiritual gifts when the church meets; others when the church is scattered during the week. The important thing is that we remember that God has given each of us a spiritual gift to serve the body.

III. DISTINCTION IN SPIRITUAL GIFTS

There are basically three positions churches take on the gifts of the Spirit. The first is that all the gifts are still operative, the second is that none are operative, and the third is that some are operative.

A. The Positions on Gifts

1. The charismatic view

All the apostolic gifts are still operating and functioning today.

2. The biblical view

Some of the gifts served a temporary and foundational purpose, others are permanent. The temporary gifts related to the initial foundational period of the church in connection with the unique apostolic ministry. The permanent gifts relate to the general function of the body.

3. Permanent gifts

The permanent gifts are spiritual gifts which began in the early church and still go on today. They do not cease. We could call them long term gifts. They are given to members of the body today, you have one of these gifts.

a. SERVICE: Romans 12:7 - The gift of practical assistance. The Spirit-gifted ability to serve in the area of physical tasks.

b. TEACHING: Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28 - The Spirit-gifted ability to study, communicate and explain the Word of God in understandable and edifying ways.

- c. EXHORTATION: Romans 12:8 - The Spirit-gifted ability to motivate, encourage and counsel others in spiritual growth and ministry.
- d. GIVING: Romans 12:8 - The Spirit-gifted ability to give extraordinary financial and material assistance to God's work and people.
- e. LEADING: (ORGANIZATION) Romans 12:8 - The Spirit-gifted ability to organize and plan out church programs and ministries.
- f. MERCY: Romans 12:8 - The Spirit-gifted ability to display extraordinary compassion to the sick, lowly and overlooked.
- g. HELPS: 1 Corinthians 12:28 - The gift of personal assistance. The Spirit-gifted ability to give aid to others who need a hand in a way that encourages and strengthens.
- h. ADMINISTRATIONS: 1 Corinthians 12:28 - The Spirit-gifted ability to mobilize, direct and carry out ministries and church projects.
- i. PASTOR/TEACHER: Ephesians 4:11 - The Spirit-gifted ability to lead, care for and mature the people of God by teaching and example.
- j. EVANGELIST: Ephesians 4:11 - The Spirit-gifted ability to share the gospel with the non-believer and lead them to Christ and to equip believers in effective evangelism.

B. Temporary Gifts

1. Apostles and Prophets

We believe that certain gifts were temporary, given to confirm the authenticity of the apostles' unique ministry as the revealers and legislators of the New Covenant. These were miraculous in nature and were needed not only to confirm the apostolic ministry but also the New Testament as the final and complete Word of God (Hebrews 2:3 - 4). Some gifts gave revelation; such as apostles, prophets, knowledge and wisdom. Others confirmed the revelation;

such as tongues, healing, miracles, interpretation of tongues and discerning spirits. With the completion of the revelation in the New Testament these gifts ceased (Hebrews 2:4; 1 Corinthians 13:10).

2. Miracles and the miraculous sign gifts

God has worked in the past with signs and wonders, but it was always associated with the beginning of a new era of revelation, such as Moses, Elijah and Elisha. The apostolic ministry which was responsible for the revelation that became the New Testament followed that same pattern. (2 Corinthians 12:12).

There is a difference between miracles and the miraculous gifts. We believe that we should pray for and expect the miraculous. God still works miracles. The ability to accomplish it, however, does not reside in any individual as it did with the apostolic ministry (2 Corinthians 12:12).

Lesson Four

LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

The New Testament assigns the leadership and earthly rule of the local church to men who are called elders. In this lesson, we are going to look at the biblical pattern and principles for the recognition and function of elders in the local church. The role of deacons and their relationship to elders will also be explained.

I. DESCRIPTION OF AN ELDER

Elders are men raised up and qualified by God who are recognized and appointed to have the spiritual care and oversight of the local church. The term "Elder" (1 Timothy 5:17) indicates their credibility and maturity in spiritual experience. They are also called overseers and bishops (1 Timothy 3:1) which indicates their work in exercising the oversight of the church. The term "Pastor" (shepherd) is also applied to them. This indicates their care, guidance and love for the flock. The terms refer to the same man and are interchangeable (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7; 1 Peter 5:2).

II. QUALIFICATIONS OF AN ELDER

A. They Meet God's Standard for Leadership

Elders are not selected because they have manifested success in leadership capacities in the academic or business world. Elders are chosen because they have attained the maturity and spiritual qualifications explicitly given to us by God in the scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-6; Titus 1:6-9).

B. They are Men of Integrity and Credibility

1. An elder is mature in his faith, has consistently displayed wisdom in decision making and problem solving, is an example in all areas to other believers and he has the respect and confidence of the members of the church and the community.
2. An elder's testimony has no area where he may be faulted (1 Timothy 3:2a). His moral and personal character is of a high standard (1 Timothy 3:2b, 4). His relationship to his wife and the management of his home and children are maintained with dignity (1 Timothy 3:2, 4, 5). He is also not new in the faith, but has a knowledge of sound doctrine and is able to communicate it well (1 Timothy 3:2b, 6; Titus 1:9).

III. THE FUNCTIONS OF AN ELDER

The highest earthly authority in the New Testament Church has been assigned by God to elders.

A. Elders are to Rule the Church

God has given the responsibility of ruling the flock (1 Timothy 5: 17). They have been given charge over the direction and decisions of the church body (1 Timothy 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:12). As overseer, he also acts as guardian and protector of the flock (Acts 20:28-31). His responsibility also includes being an admonisher/discipliner making sure that the practice of scripture is initiated and implemented (Matthew 18:15-17).

B. Elders are to Care for the Church

Elders are to see themselves as stewards and servants. As a steward, (1 Corinthians 4:1) he is to wisely and faithfully dispense God's Word and minister to God's people. As a servant, (1 Corinthians 3:5) he is to give himself in selfless ministry to the flock. He is in a position of servanthood, not dictatorship and is not to lord it over the flock (1 Peter 5:3). He is to lead by example not be self will. He is to feed, tend, guide and lead with a serving, caring heart and with joy (1 Peter 5:2; Hebrews 13:17).

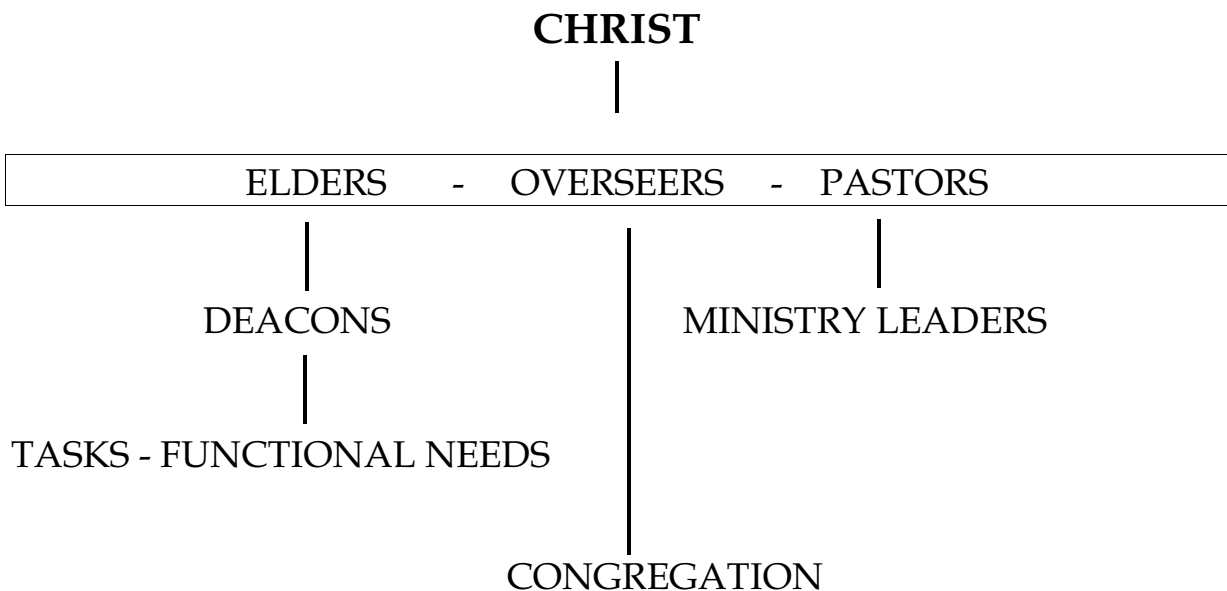
C. The Relation of Deacons to Elders

1. Deacons function as assistants to the elders. They relieve elders of duties and tasks that would take them away from the ministry of prayer and the Word (Acts 6:1-4). They do not share oversight of the congregation with elders, but have authority delegated to them by elders to oversee specific tasks and functions in the church. They are godly men who aid the Elders in serving the flock by taking care of many physical, material and functional needs in the church.
2. Deacons are spiritually qualified men. They must have godly reputations, be filled with the Spirit and be filled with wisdom (Acts 6:3). They are men with high character with their families, who are already actively serving and helping in the church (1 Timothy 3: 8-13).

D. The Relation of the Congregation to Elders

1. The congregation is to submit to the elders (Hebrews 13:17). When godly elders minister diligently, effectively and consistently, they deserve the congregation's love, respect and obedience (1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 5:17). The congregation will not fight them, but will follow in unity and harmony.
2. The congregation gives its affirmation in the selection of leadership positions as elders and deacons and in major decisions affecting the direction of the entire church. The congregation is asked for its affirmation and response during a period of two or three weeks after a congregational meeting.

Leadership Structure of Community Bible Church



Lesson Five

DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH

Church discipline is the act of the local church in which the church officially disassociates itself from an unrepentant believer. This is done in order to protect Christ's name and to restore the believer to fellowship. Discipline is crucial to the health of the local church and its testimony in the world. Jesus Christ taught on the subject of discipline in Matthew 18 and Paul elaborates on the subject in the New Testament Epistles he wrote.

I. PRIORITY MUST BE GIVEN TO CHURCH DISCIPLINE; THE SCRIPTURE COMMANDS IT

Discipline in the church is not optional but mandatory. It is absolutely essential if we are going to be obedient to the Scriptures.

A. Matthew 18:15-20, Teaches that a Sinning Brother is to be:

1. Confronted concerning his sin.
2. Reproved if he continues to live in sin.
3. Excluded from the church if he utterly refuses to repent.

B. Acts 5:1-11, Illustrates:

1. The seriousness of sin within the church.
2. The sensitivity of the Holy Spirit to sin.
3. The sudden consequences of judgement upon sin.

C. 1 Corinthians 5: 1-13, Teaches us the Total Process of Church Discipline

1. The need for discipline (1 - 2a).
2. The method of discipline (2b - 5).
3. The reason for discipline (6 - 7).
4. The sphere of discipline (9 - 13).

- D. 1 Thessalonians 5:14 Commands us to Warn the Disobedient and Disorderly**
- E. 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, Teaches us to:**
 - 1. Warn undisciplined brothers.
 - 2. Mark them out.
 - 3. Withdraw from them.
- F. 1 Timothy 5:20 Commands us to Rebuke Persistent Sin Publicly.**
- G. Titus 1:13 States, "Severely Rebuke Those Who Teach Untruth."**
- H. In Titus 3:10 We are Commanded to Withdraw From One Who Causes Division but Only after Adequate Warning.**
- I. In Revelation 2 and 3 Christ is Calling for His Church to Repent and Solemnly Warn them of Impending Discipline if they Refuse.**

From the above stated scriptures, it is quite evident that God intends for His Church to take corrective measures if a member persists in the practice of sin.

II. PROBLEMS THAT REQUIRE CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Whenever a believer persists in a known lifestyle of sin, then the church is to initiate the process of discipline. This is not something that is done every time a believer falls into sin. Discipline relates to habitual sinning Christians who refuse to repent and be restored. Paul mentions specific sins that need to be dealt with in the following passages:

In 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

- 1. Fornication
- 2. Covetousness
- 3. Idolatry
- 4. Railing
- 5. Drunkenness
- 6. Extortion

In Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10

- 7. Heresy, division

In 2 Thessalonians 3:6-8, 14

- 8. Disorderly, insubordinate lifestyle

We need to remember that discipline is carried out, not because the Christian is sinning, but because the Christian is refusing to repent and is ruining the testimony of the church.

III. PURPOSE OF DISCIPLINE

A. To Honor Christ

We honor Christ when we as a church are obedient to His Word. Christ has commanded the church to discipline unrepentant Christians. If the church is known for a tolerant attitude toward sin then Christ's name is reproached. Loving discipline maintains the honor of Christ's name.

B. To Restore the Sinning Christian

1. Matthew 18:15 states that the first consideration in discipline is that of "winning" or restoring our brother. Discipline shows "Tough Love" and concern for the sinning believers. It has the good of the sinning believer in view.
2. 1 Corinthians 5:5 teaches that even exclusion from the body and deliverance over to Satan is designed to preserve the Spirit.
3. Galatians 6:1 urges the whole church to be actively engaged in the process of restoring.

Note: Any form of discipline, whether it be warning or the ultimate act of exclusion from membership, should always be understood as a part of the total process of restoration. The goal of discipline is not exclusion but restoration.

C. To Maintain Purity

1 Corinthians 5:6 - 8, sin adversely affects the entire church. Sin's presence tends to permeate the whole body. Therefore open rebellion cannot be tolerated with the body. A church without purity is a church without power. If sin is leavening or adversely affecting the body, action must be taken.

D. To Discourage Others from Sinning

1 Timothy 5:20 calls for a public rebuke of the elder who refuses to repent in order that others may fear the consequences of sin.

IV. THE PROCEDURE OF DISCIPLINE

At Community Bible Church every effort is made to see that discipline is carried out in such a way that the church's love is clearly evident. It is not a vindictive act.

A. The Purpose is to Restore

Our aim is to win the person. The process is initiated with an attitude of meekness (Galatians 6:1), realizing that we are all susceptible to sin. All the while it is remembered that we are dealing with a dear brother (2 Thessalonians 3:14). The goal in the whole thing is to see the person restored to fellowship with God and the church.

B. The Process is Set by Christ

In Matthew 18: 15-18, Jesus sets down the process to be followed in implementing discipline. It begins with individual confrontation by a person who has been directly affected by the sin (vs. 15). If the person does not repent, the next step is for the same person to attempt it again, this time with one or two other people, usually an elder (vs. 16). If there is still no change, the case is brought to the attention of the church (vs. 17). Finally, if the sinning believer is still unrepentant then the church is to disassociate from the person until God deals with their heart (vs. 17b; 1 Corinthians 5: 9-11, 13). Through the entire process Jesus Christ promises His presence and agreement with the church's action (vs. 18-20).

Note: To disassociate means to not have any planned get together or fellowship or extended times of mixing and visiting; not even to the extent of eating a meal with them (1 Corinthians 5:11). It does not mean you cannot greet them in a public place, telling them that they are loved and missed and that you are praying for them.

Lesson Six

GIVING IN THE CHURCH

How we use our money and in particular how we give in the local church is a matter God considers of great importance. Money and giving are major issues in the scriptures.

“There are over 700 direct references to money in the Bible and hundreds more indirect references. Nearly two-thirds of all the parables Christ left us deal with the use of money. God equates our use of wealth with our commitment to Him.”

Larry Burkett

I. THE PRIORITY OF GIVING

A. Giving Reveals Our True Value and Priorities (Matthew 6:19-24)

Jesus said, *“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,”* (Matthew 6:21). What we do with our money reveals what we value and consider of importance. If we really believe in something and believe it is important we support it with our money.

B. Giving will Determine Our Influence in Other Areas (Luke 16:9 - 13)

According to Jesus, being faithful with money is being faithful with a little thing (Luke 16:10). If we have not learned to give and use our money faithfully, then we will not be trusted with true riches. That is, God will not give us influence with people, leadership responsibility and things of that nature (Luke 16:10 - 11). Our possessions are not ours, they are God's. That is why we are judged either faithful or unfaithful in the use of them.

C. Giving Generously is Investing with God (Proverbs 3:9-10; 2 Corinthians 9:6, 8, 10-11)

If we give generously to the church and other needs God will see to it that we always have enough. We will have become a trusted channel for Him to minister to others (Luke 6:38). As Paul says, God will see to it that we *“always having all sufficiency in all things may abound to every good work,”* (2 Corinthians 9:8). On the other hand, if we do not learn to give it will result in our lack (Proverbs 11:24-26).

1. *“The generous man will be prosperous and he who waters will himself be watered” (Proverbs 11:25).*
2. *“He who is generous to the poor man lends to the Lord and He will repay him for his good deed” (Proverbs 19:17).*
3. *“He who gives to the poor shall never want” (Proverbs 28:27).*
4. *“You shall be enriched in everything for all liberality” (2 Corinthians 9:11).*

D. Giving Should Be in Response to Need

1. *“Whoever has the worlds goods and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him does the love of God abide in Him? Let us not love with word or tongue but in deed and truth” (1 John 3:17-18).*
2. *“Let our people learn to engage in good deeds meeting the pressing need that they may not be unfruitful” (Titus 3:14).*

II. THE PRINCIPLES OF GIVING

At Community Bible Church we do not believe that tithing is the biblical pattern for giving. It was required in the Old Testament where it was a form of taxation for Israel (Lev. 27:30-33; Deut. 12:6-7; 14:28). The tithe supported the government, the priesthood and temple and the welfare systems. Often it leads people to give under obligation which is to give for the wrong reason. It also limits believers leading them to believe that if they have given a tenth, they have done all. The following are biblical principles for giving God’s way.

A. Give Willingly

First of all, we are to give willingly. We give because we believe in the work of God. We truly believe that we ultimately own nothing and so we give. God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:8). The churches of Macedonia are our pattern (2 Corinthians 8:1 - 3).

B. Give Generously and Sacrificially

We really have not given until we have sacrificed. The Macedonians gave out of their poverty (2 Corinthians 8:2). Jesus is given as an example of true sacrificial giving. He gave Himself (2 Corinthians 9:7). Jesus Himself emphasized that the essence of giving is sacrifice (Mark 12:41).

C. Give Proportionately (2 Corinthians 9:7)

We give according to what we have. You may give more in amount than someone else while actually giving less in proportion to what you have. It is the proportion that God considers. From those who have more, God expects more (Luke 6:38). The responsibility for giving has no relationship to how much a person has or has not (Mark 12:41-44).

D. Give Purposefully and Systematically (2 Corinthians 9:8)

Giving is not to be a last minute thing! It is a matter of personal decision made beforehand. It is thought out and planned. Once it is planned we stick to it, even if it requires trusting God to meet our needs. This also involves being systematic and faithful (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). We give regularly, not hit and miss. We have made a commitment to God and we keep it.

Note: Sometimes it is asked how much we should give, if the 10% tithe is a not the guideline. The amount of giving is between the individual and God. The point is that giving is done purposefully out of love and gratitude, not law (2 Corinthians 8:8). The important thing is that you make a decision and stick to it. With a thankful heart you willingly, sacrificially and regularly give to the church. It should also be remembered that your giving to the local church is your first priority. Any other needs within the church family or outside the church are to be above and beyond your normal giving.

Conclusions:

1. Giving is a planned activity of every believer
2. Giving is a weekly (regular) activity of every believer
3. Giving is proportioned, therefore, you must determine a set proportion to give so that as God increases your wealth, you systematically increase your giving.
4. Giving is to support those who minister the Word and meet needs.
5. Giving is rewarded by God Himself

Lesson Seven

ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH BAPTISM AND COMMUNION

There are two ordinances that Christ left for His church to practice. Every believer is commanded to be baptized and to take the Lord's supper. Christ Himself put great significance on these ordinances. He commanded His disciples to do them. They in turn conveyed Christ's command to others. The book of Acts shows how they continually obeyed and carried out His command.

I. BAPTISM

A. The Precept Commanded By Christ

1. *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you."* Matthew 28:19-20
2. *"Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were."* John 4:1-2

B. The Practice Carried Out By the Disciples

1. *Peter said to them, "Repent and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ."* Acts 2:38-41
2. *"When they believed Phillip preaching the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized men and women alike."* Acts 8:12
3. *"Phillip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian Eunuch and the Eunuch replied, "What prevents me from being baptized?"* Acts 8:34-38
4. Cornelius and his family accept Christ. Peter responds, *"Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did can he?"* Acts 10:47
5. Lydia: The Lord opened her heart to Paul's message and she responded in belief and she and her household were baptized. Acts 16:15

6. Philippian Jailer: *“What must I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.... immediately after, he was baptized he and all his household.”* Acts 16:31-33
7. Crispus: the leader of the synagogue. *“He believed in the Lord with all his household and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.”* Acts 18:8

C. The Persons Who are Baptized

Baptism is for believers only. When baptism is mentioned it is in reference to those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ. Acts 2:41 says, the ones who *“received His Word”* were baptized. Acts 8:12 says, *“when they believed.”* Acts 18:8 says, *“many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized.”* Jesus commanded that the disciples were the ones to be baptized (Matthew 28:18-20).

Baptism does not include infants. There is not one verse in the bible that teaches infant baptism, nor is there any example of a baby being baptized. Believers only are baptized, and infants are not able to believe.

Believers are to be baptized as soon as possible (Acts 2:41). There is no requirement to first prove yourself or a need for instructive classes, although these may not be wrong in themselves. We simply are commanded to take the step of obedience in following Christ and be baptized.

D. The Purpose of Baptism

What is the purpose of baptism and why is it so important to be baptized?

1. Baptism pictures what the Spirit of God has done for each believer the moment he/she believes the gospel. The Spirit of God baptizes us into Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-13) and we become identified with His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3-6). Therefore, water baptism is a picture of what happened to us in the spiritual realm.
2. Baptism is a public confession and testimony. When we are baptized we are stating that we are now identified with Christ not only in the spiritual realm, but in our daily life. It is a public association with Jesus Christ. Baptism does not associate you with a church or a denomination, but with Jesus Christ.

3. Baptism is an act of obedience to the command of Christ. He wants every believer to make a public confession of faith. It is extremely important to Christ that we say to our friends and relatives that we are now followers of Jesus Christ. To be baptized is to obey; to not be baptized, is to disobey.
4. Final Note on Baptism: First, baptism does not save. We are saved by grace through faith, not through baptism (Ephesians 2:8-9). Baptism is because of salvation, not the cause of it. Second, we believe that baptism is by immersion. The word baptize means to dip into or immerse into. If you have not been baptized as a believer, you need to be. If you have not done so, obey Jesus Christ as soon as possible as a public testimony of your faith.

II. COMMUNION

Communion was also commanded by Christ and conveyed and carried out by His disciples. Christ's church is to regularly celebrate communion. This is not to be done by small groups, but the entire church is to receive communion together. The Lord's table or communion was instituted by Christ on the night He was betrayed. Communion displaced Passover for believers. On the night Christ was betrayed, He took bread and broke it saying; *"Take and eat for this is my Body. When He had taken the cup and given thanks He gave it to them saying; "drink from it all of you; for this is my blood of this covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of Me"* (Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:15-20).

A. The Meaning of Communion

The communion service or Lord's table, as it is also called, concerns the taking of two elements: the bread and the cup.

1. The wrong concept

Some churches believe that when the bread and cup are taken they are changed into the actual body and blood of Christ. This is derived from the statements of Jesus in Matthew 26:26-27 where He said; "Take eat, this is my body," , and *"this is my blood of the new covenant,"* and also, John 6:54 where Jesus said; *"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life."* However, it is not literally Jesus' flesh and blood. In Matthew 26:26, it can not be Jesus' body for Jesus is standing right there. In John 6, Jesus has identified eating His flesh as believing in Him. He will give His body in sacrifice for the world (John 6:47-48, 51).

2. The biblical concept

The bread and cup are symbols of what Jesus' body and blood have accomplished for us. The bread represents His body given for us (Luke 22:19). By giving up His body He has created a new body of which we are all members (1 Corinthians 10:17). The cup represents the new covenant which He has established by shedding His blood (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25). Because He gave His blood we are under a grace covenant in which the Holy Spirit dwells within us and we have been renewed. The communion is to be a time of remembrance (1 Corinthians 11:24-25). It proclaims by these symbols what Jesus Christ's death has done for us (1 Corinthians 11:26). It reminds us of all Christ did for us.

B. Participation in the Supper

1. Since the communion represents our place in the body of Christ and our relation under the new covenant accomplished through Christ's death, it is meant for believers. Young children should partake only if their parents have instructed them and they are certain they are saved.
2. The communion is a joyous yet reverent occasion. We are to examine ourselves, making sure we are right with God and with each other (1 Corinthians 11:27-28). If we take communion while knowingly at odds with a believer we are taking it unworthily since we are making light of the very thing it represents: our oneness created by Christ's death. God will judge believers who fail to judge themselves and make adjustments (1 Corinthians 11:29-31). God expects us to take the supper regularly and meaningfully. Prepare your heart and come join the body at our next communion, or Lord's table.

Constitution and By-Laws

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COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

The final authority for the practices and policies of Community Bible Church is the Bible. Specifically, the New Testament Epistles, which were written to instruct the Church as to its conduct under the headship of Christ. The Bible is the unique and sacred document, against which we evaluate all we do and decide. The following By-laws shall never take its place.

Since the Holy Scriptures are ultimately binding on this church as providing a unique and absolute authority for the conduct of its affairs, the following By-laws are to be open for review so that they may be amended, (1) when any of them is seen to conflict with God's Word in any way, (2) when it appears that any of them are hindering the fulfillment of the stated principles of this, Christ's church.

ARTICLE ONE:

Name

The name of the corporation, a church incorporated under the state of California, shall be Community Bible Church of Vallejo California.

ARTICLE TWO:

Basis of Fellowship and Main Purpose

Section one: The basis of fellowship of the members of Community Bible Church is the inerrancy of the Bible, the Word of God, and the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Section two: The associations of Community Bible Church are voluntary in keeping with its independent, autonomous nature. As a Bible believing fellowship, it does not seek association with any of apostate Christianity, nor is it cooperative with the ecumenical movement.

Section three: The purposes of Community Bible Church are as follows:

First - its chief objective is to glorify God. We seek to conduct our lives and services in a way that we may ascribe to Him and reflect back to Him, as He enables, the characteristics of what He is, especially His truth, Holiness and Love.

Second - our purpose us to edify one another; to build one another up toward Christ-like maturity. This involves equipping the saints for fruitful ministry (Ephesians 4:11, 16) through teaching and discipleship. It is all to be done in the context if a caring, sharing ministry in a loving fellowship of believers.

Third - our purpose is to involve ourselves in local and worldwide evangelism in fulfillment of Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8. This will be accomplished locally by the sharing of the good news and by the impact of changed lives. On a worldwide scale, it will be accomplished by the support and sending of missionaries.

ARTICLE THREE: Membership

Section One: Becoming a member. Membership in Community Bible Church will be open to anyone (1) eighteen years of age or older, who (2) professes personal faith in Jesus Christ for his/her eternal salvation, who (3) signified this by water baptism after conversion, and who (4) shows evidence of having a new life in Christ. He/she must also (5) complete the church membership class or an equivalent, approved by the Elders and (6) must be in agreement with the doctrinal position of the church as described in Article Eight. The prospective member also must not belong to or join any fraternal organization whose beliefs are in conflict with the doctrinal statement of the church.

Those who do not totally agree with the doctrinal statement, may pursue membership by submitting a brief written explanation of their specific disagreement. The elders will then meet with the prospective member to determine (1) the significance of the disagreement, (2) the attitude in which it is held, and (3) the potential effect on the welfare of the fellowship. The elders will then do one of the following: (1) recommend for membership (2) establish a three to six month consultation period to clarify the issue before a decision is made, or (3) not recommend for membership because of significant doctrinal disagreement.

A candidate for membership shall be received for membership after unanimous recommendation by the elders that the prospective member meets the qualifications and the recommended candidate receives affirmative consensus by the congregation.

Section Two: Responsibilities of members. It is expected if anyone who applies for membership to adhere to scriptural principles regarding the local church. Thus, each member must be involved in giving feedback to the church concerning personal needs and in sharing insights in areas where God's will must be known for the church. In general, each member will be responsible to do the "work of the ministry," to help preserve the unity, to participate regularly in its life and services, to contribute regularly to meeting its expenses, to maintain its testimony in the community with

godly behavior, and to pray for, esteem and submit to its leaders (1 Peter 4:10; Ephesians 4:3; Hebrews 10:24-25; Galatians 6:6-10; 1 Peter 2:12; Ephesians 6:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:17).

Section Three: Inactive Status. A member may be placed on inactive membership to avoid removal if he/she is a member in good standing and makes a written or personal request to the elders. Inactive status is applicable to those who will be absent for a limited period of time for the purpose of schooling, missionary work, military service or any other reason acceptable to the elders. A returning, inactive member may be reinstated to active membership by approval of the elders and by notification of the church membership.

Section Four: Termination of Membership: Removal from membership will be by (1) death, (2) withdrawal at the request of the member because of uniting with another church, (3) absenteeism, (4) discipline.

Those members who have been absent from the services of the church for three months will be automatically dropped from membership, after reasonable attempt has been made by the elders to make contact and in addition ascertain the reasons for the absence and effect restoration. Infrequent attendance at services for reasons other than illness and vacations, etc., shall prompt an informal inquiry by the elders as to the sincerity of the members commitment to the health and welfare of the church. Where such infrequent attendance is determined to be the result of spiritual neglect and indifference, loving restoration will be attempted by the elders. Where such an attempt is not successful, termination of membership may be effected by the unanimous agreement of the elders. A member may also be removed for disciplinary reasons. Any member who is not walking in harmony with God's people or God's Word (Galatians 6:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:6), or any member who is in violation of scriptural principles with regard to his/her conduct, testimony (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13) or behavior (Titus 3:10-11; Romans 16:17) of such a nature that it is having a harmful effect on the congregation shall be subject to the church's authority in loving discipline. All cases requiring discipline will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures laid down in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew and the fifth chapter of 1 Corinthians. A person who has been removed by discipline may be readmitted to membership after true repentance has been demonstrated, by changed attitudes and changed behavior, over a period of a year. He/she will be reinstated to membership by the approval of the elders.

ARTICLE FOUR:

Leadership and Church Officers

Section One: Elders and their number. The church will have as many elders as deemed necessary by the elders to adequately minister to and represent the needs of the church.

Their qualifications. *First*, a man selected for the office of elder must be in full support of this constitution and in complete agreement with the church's doctrinal statement. *Second*, his godliness and maturity must be clearly demonstrated. The qualifications of an elder are listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. There are twenty specific marks of character that are to be consistently demonstrated before man is to be considered for the position of elder. *Third*, his ability to shepherd and teach, his love and devotion to God's people and his desire and ability to lead God's people should be obvious to the congregation by his work of ministry prior to formal recognition and calling. *Fourth*, he must wholeheartedly subscribe to the specific information concerning principles and policies in the elders manual.

Their recognition. Our goal as a church is the recognition of men who the Holy Spirit has made overseers. When the biblical evidence is considered, it is clear that elders are ultimately raised up by the Holy Spirit, not by man (Acts 20:28). The process of the public recognition of elders should in reality be an acknowledgment of the work the Holy Spirit has already accomplished. The recognition process includes the following.

1. **Elders recognize the need for leadership.** The elders recognize the need for leadership and present that need to the church. Elders have the responsibility to oversee the flock. As such, they play the central and leading role in the process of raising up new elders.

2. **The congregation is taught the responsibilities of elders and its role in the process.** The congregation is taught what constitutes qualified leaders. The presence of godly character (1 Timothy 3:1-7), the work of shepherding and the flocks confidence in the man must be clearly perceived. They are also, taught their responsibility and role in the selection process. Ultimately, it is they who gave consensus and confirmation of whom the Holy Spirit has raised up as elders.

3. **The process is saturated with prayer.** There must be active involvement in prayer. Since a God-given confirmation of those the Holy Spirit has raised up is essential, the entire process must be done in the context of prayer. The congregation is to be informed of their need to "pray these men out". This is to help preserve a spirit of unity in the body. In addition, special days of church-wide prayer should be called to "pray forth" elders.

This stresses the critical importance of the selection. The elders themselves must commit themselves to prayer, recognizing the decision is critical to the welfare of the flock.

4. The elders invite qualified nominees to serve the flock as overseers.

The invitation will be given to those whom they judge have met the specific qualifications for the office. After much discussion, prayer and consideration, and only after coming to unanimous agreement, the elders will extend the invitation and proceed toward the goal of public recognition (1 Timothy 5:22).

5. The prospective elder will be interviewed, examined and trained.

The interview and examination of the candidate is in four key areas. *First*, a personal interview is made with the candidate and his wife. This is to answer any questions they have and to give them a clear picture of the responsibilities and duties that go with eldership. It is also done in consideration of the fact that an elder's wife will be called upon to make many special sacrifices that many wives are not able or willing to make. The support and encouragement of the wife is absolutely essential. *Second*, a written doctrinal examination is given to the prospective elder. An elder must be able to wholeheartedly support the doctrinal statement of the church. A clear, unified voice must be heard from the elders in all areas. *Third*, the prospective elder is given a copy of the church's elders manual and book that represents its philosophy of the church. He is required to meet for a number of weeks to go over the manual and discuss the book. *Fourth*, there is a meeting in which the elders, deacons and other recognized ministry leaders meet with the prospective elder for an opportunity for questions. The prospective elder is asked to respond to any and all questions regarding his doctrinal position, his philosophy of ministry and his qualifications to serve as an elder.

6. The congregation is informed of the candidate(s) for elder.

The next step is the public announcement of the candidates for elder. The congregation's role here is critical. They alone can evaluate, finally, if they will follow the prospective elder. The sheep will know the true shepherd's voice (John 10:14). The prospective elder is presented to the flock and the flock is asked to join prayerfully in consideration of this appointment and express its support or reservations. Over a period of several weeks, members are given opportunity to show cause as to why any prospective elder should not be set apart to eldership. Any reservations must be communicated in person, not by means of an anonymous note.

7. Confirmation is given by congregational consensus.

The next step is the consensus of the congregation. If the response of the congregation is positive with a consensus approaching total agreement, the elders will consider it a commitment from the Holy Spirit and proceed to ordination. If a consensus of at least eighty percent is not evident, the candidate will be removed from consideration.

8. The public ordination is granted to serve the flock. The last step is to follow the biblical pattern of ordination where the approved elder is set aside for ministry by the laying on of hands (Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 5:22; Acts 6:6, 13:3). This is an act of identification and blessing. This public act confirms the appointment and invests a man with authority to serve as elder.

Their term and the termination of office. The elders shall serve for an indefinite term. Termination of an elders' normal term of office may occur for three reasons. *First*, his office may be terminated when general church discipline is brought according to biblical principles. However, no accusation is to be taken seriously unless there are two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19). If, however, an elder is confronted in keeping with the principles of Matthew 18:15-18 and he continues in sin, he is to be rebuked by the other elders before the whole assembly, so that others may fear (1 Timothy 5:20). *Second*, an elders' office may also be terminated for failure to continue to display the qualifications required in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. When an elder ceases to meet those qualifications, he shall be asked by the elders to step aside for a time so that he may get his life in order in that area. Such a request from the other elders shall be made only when they are in unanimous agreement. *Third*, an elder may also desire to be relieved from office either temporarily or permanently if he feels unable to serve for any reason. The process of his possible reinstatement at a later time will be determined by the elders in relation to the attendant circumstances.

Their responsibilities. The oversight and responsibilities of elders can be categorized in five areas.

1. The purpose and general direction of the church. The elders have the responsibility to oversee, guard and preserve the general purpose, direction and development of the church body according to the Word of God. To accomplish this they have responsibility for the teaching of the scripture and training by word and by example.

2. The policies of the church. They have the responsibilities of being and causing others to be good stewards of God's resources, both of money and of time. This entails the following further responsibilities.

(1) Approving the annual budget and safeguarding the collection and distribution of funds through appropriate financial policies and controls.

(2) Establishing and causing to be developed and maintained the appropriate committees and policies to enhance stewardship and organization in the church.

3. **The personnel of the church.** Elders also have the responsibility to oversee the personnel and leadership development of the church. This includes the following.

(1) Approving the appointment of all officers and major ministry leaders. This includes elders, deacons and other key ministry positions.

(2) Approving the selection and hiring of pastoral, office and other church staff.

4. **The purity of the church.** Elders are also responsible for preserving the purity of the church. They maintain and cause to be maintained church discipline according to the principles and purpose of the Word of God.

5. **The personal oversight of specific ministries in the church.** It is also the responsibility of each elder to personally oversee one area of ministry in the church. He is to have direct involvement and oversight of that area and is responsible to do the following.

(1) Shepherd and teach ministry leaders in that area so that they may, in turn, shepherd and teach others.

(2) Enforce and cause to be enforced approved policies and procedures.

(3) Recommend to the board of elders appropriate ministry leaders, policy and/or procedural changes to enhance that area of ministry.

(4) Mediate interpersonal relationship problems.

(5) Represent that area of ministry needs before the elder board.

Equality and diversity among elders. Two things are recognized in the functioning of the elders as a governing council.

1. **Decisional equality.** The standing and authority of each elder is equal in the decision making process. The vote of each man is of equal weight and must be considered before proceeding.

2. **Functional diversity.** Distinct from decisional equality is functional diversity. This recognizes the presence of the differing gifts and abilities of each elder. The arrangement of their ministries and roles in the church and their function of the board reflect their individual gifts. The elders recognize these differing roles and demonstrate it by their mutual submission to one another. For example, although the pastor/teacher elder has the same standing and authority as the rest of the elders, he is recognized by them and the rest of the congregation as being the primary, God-ordained instrument of vision and direction for the church. The other functions of elders are also recognized accordingly.

Meetings of the board of elders. The elders shall meet each December for the purpose of selecting officers among the elders for the coming year (as required by state law). These officers will include a chairman and secretary/treasurer. The offices of chairman and secretary/treasurer shall not be held by the same person. The separation of duties between these officers shall be determined among the elders. Notice of regular and special meetings of the elders shall be given to each elder at least five (5) days in advance, so that all may arrange to attend. When an emergency meeting is required, the previous stipulation (or have given verbal assent until the waiver can be signed). Normally, meetings will be called by the chairman or by written request signed by one-third of the elders. All matters before the elders will be determined by the prayerful agreement of the elders present. A simple majority of the elders shall constitute a quorum.

The evaluation of elders. Related to an elders' term of office is the need for evaluation and accountability. Recognizing the importance of the office and the temptations and rigors that accompany it, the elders seek to hold each other accountable. The objective is to see that the office is fulfilled in a manner consistent with the New Testament standard. In addition to ongoing accountability, a yearly evaluation of each elder is made. The key areas of character, desire and effective ministry involvement are evaluated. This is to help determine if the elder should continue to serve.

Their rule and the relation of the congregation. *First*, elder rule recognizes that the shepherds are to lead the sheep, not the sheep the shepherds. The congregation, therefore, is to submit to elders (Hebrews 13:17). When godly elders minister diligently, effectively and consistently, they deserve the congregation's love, respect and obedience (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 5:17). The congregation will not fight them but follow them in unity and harmony. *Second*, in elder rule, the necessity of the unified support and following of the congregation is recognized. The elders' role is to discern Christ's direction for the flock. His sheep hear His voice and follow (John 10). If the elders are truly following Christ's direction it will be affirmed by the unified support of the congregation. Therefore, in the major decisions affecting the entire church, the consensus of the congregation is sought. The areas of major decisions specifically are (1) the purchase of property and real estate, (2) the hiring of full time pastoral staff, (3) the annual budget, and (4) the recognition of church officers. In such cases, the matter will be presented at a congregational meeting. After discussion and questions, a period of two to three weeks will be given for input, feedback and the expression of reservations and questions. The elders will not proceed unless the church membership will be considered a clear consensus to move forward with unity.

Section two: Deacons:

Their number: The number of deacons at Community Bible Church shall be as many as deemed necessary by the elders.

Their qualifications. They must be fully in support of this constitution and in complete agreement with the doctrinal statement. They must also be spiritually qualified men demonstrating the minimum character qualifications specified in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. They must have godly reputations, be filled with the spirit and with wisdom (Acts 6:1-3). They also must be men of high character with their families in order and already actively serving and helping in the church before they will be considered for the office (1 Timothy 3:13).

Their recognition. The nominating committee for the deacons will be composed of two elders, including the chairman of the elders board and two present deacons (appointed by the elders). At least five weeks prior to a called business meeting, the membership shall be informed by the elders that nominations are open for deacon. Any member of the congregation may submit the name of another member by signing and completing the evaluation form for a deacon and submitting it to one of the elders. The nominating committee shall review each nominee on the basis of his meeting the biblical qualifications and on the basis of specific needs. Then, by unanimous consent of all the elders, the person will be recognized as a candidate for deacon. The remainder of the procedure will follow the basic steps outlined above for the recognition of an elder. When any questions have been dealt with, and with the unanimous recommendation of the elders, the candidate may then be presented to the congregation for recognition as a deacon. A deacon will serve for a three year term. A deacon may be resubmitted for another consecutive term if approved unanimously by the elders.

Their responsibilities and relation to elders. Deacons are godly men who aid the elders in serving the flock. They relieve elders of duties and tasks that would take them away from the ministry of prayer and the Word (Acts 6:1-4). They do not share in the oversight of the congregation with the elders, but have authority delegated to them by the elders to oversee specific tasks and functions in the church.

Section three: Other elected offices.

Church clerk, church treasurer and financial secretary shall be appointed by the elders after an affirmative consensus by the congregation. They must be in agreement with the church doctrinal statement, have demonstrated to the congregation a consistent spiritual life and have the basic skills necessary to the functioning of the office. The elders shall select and screen the candidates, and submit the names of the candidates to the membership at least two (2) weeks prior to the annual business meeting.

ARTICLE FIVE: Official Meetings

Section one: Annual meetings.

The membership shall meet annually for the purpose of the presentation of the annual budget, the presentation of the annual financial report, and the election of annually elected officers. Notice of the meeting shall be given by the elders to the congregation two weeks in advance in the Sunday bulletin.

Section two: Other official meetings.

Other official meetings may be called as needed by the elders. Notice shall be given in the bulletin, or from the pulpit at least one (1) week in advance.

Section three: The purpose of congregational meetings:

The purpose of congregational meetings is understood in the light of the congregations relation to the elders. Their purpose can be seen from two perspectives. *First*, is the negative. The purpose of meetings is not to initiate and pursue discussion of new plans or direction for the church. Such suggestions should be submitted to the elders for future consideration. *Second*, is the positive. The purpose of meetings is to help ascertain congregational consensus or affirmation concerning the proposals and plans presented by the elders. The elders submit proposals already discussed in detail and agreed upon by them. The elders will, therefore, support them as that which they believe is in the best interest of the church. The input and insight of the congregation will be considered both at the meeting and over a two or three week period before a decision will be made. Concerns must be given in person, not by an anonymous note. If the response of the congregation is not one of consensus, the recommendation will be tabled. Eighty percent of the church membership will normally be considered sufficient to move forward. On occasion, a higher percentage may be sought before proceeding, if so determined by the elders.

Section four: Quorum.

Quorum for all official meetings shall be 40% of the membership.

ARTICLE SIX: Amending the By-Laws

Amendments to this constitution may be made after a unanimous recommendation of the elders and an affirmative consensus of the congregation. Notice of any proposed amendments must be made at least four weeks prior to the date of their intended adoption. During that period, any member with concern or evidence that the contemplated change is not God's will may make this known to the elders in writing. Objections to the amendment will then be discussed openly at the meeting of the congregation for adoption.

ARTICLE SEVEN: Disposal of Property

Section one: Disposal of property

In the event of the dissolution of this corporation, the assets of the corporation are to be disposed of under the following conditions:

- (1) All debts and liabilities of the corporation are to be paid.
- (2) All remaining assets shall be distributed to a religious non-profit fund(s), foundation(s), or corporation(s), which is organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes and which has established its tax exempt status under section 501(C) (3) of the United States Internal Revenue code.
- (3) Under no condition shall any part of the assets of this organization accrue to the benefit of any private person.

Section two: Method of disposal

At the time of dissolution, the current membership of the church shall approve the recipient(s) of the assets of this corporation.