

GRACE CLOVIS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Pastor's Welcome Class

An Introduction...

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The world today is full of sufferers from the wasting disease which Albert Camus focused as Absurdism (life is a bad joke) and from the complaint, which we may call, Marie Antoinette's fever, since she found the phrase that describes it (nothing tasted). These disorders blight the whole of life: everything at once becomes a problem and a bore, because nothing seems worthwhile. But Absurdist tapeworms and Antoinette's fever are ills from which, in the nature of the case, Christians are immune, except for occasional spells of derangement when the power of temptation presses their minds out of shape-and these, by God's mercy, do not last. What makes life worthwhile is having a big enough objective, something that catches our imagination and lays hold of our allegiance; and this the Christian has, in a way that no other man has. For what higher, more exalted, and more compelling goal can there be than to know God?

J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*

For I desire...the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

The Holy Bible Hosea 6.6

And this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

The Holy Bible *John 17.3*

You have made us for yourself, O God. And our hearts are restless until they rest in you.

St. Augustine

What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

WSC Q & A 1

PURPOSE OF A PASTOR'S WELCOME CLASS

1. To provide prospective members with a summary of the beliefs and practices of *Grace Clovis Presbyterian Church* and how these emphases find expression throughout the life and ministry of our church.
2. To invite people to become part of the life and ministry of *Grace Clovis Presbyterian Church* through the commitment of membership.

BECOMING A MEMBER OF GRACE CLOVIS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Once this class has concluded you will be invited to become a member of *Grace Clovis Presbyterian Church* by entering into a solemn covenant with the Triune God and this local body of his church. Each family/individual interested in making this commitment will have an opportunity to meet with the Session to express his/her understanding of the gospel and relationship to Jesus Christ. You will be asked a series of questions which broadly fall into two categories. The first three describe what it means to be a Christian. The last two are vows, or promises, describing what it means to live as a Christian. Over the course of the next several weeks, please read, reread, consider, and meditate on the following five questions:

1. Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving his displeasure, and without hope, save in his sovereign mercy?
2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon him alone for salvation as he is offered in the gospel?
3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the follower of Christ?
4. Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?
5. Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church, and promise to study its purity and peace?

I am very thankful that you are here and trust that these seminars will be an encouragement to you as you learn more about the one, true, and living God, his most Holy Word and the ministry of *Grace Clovis Presbyterian Church*.

OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE:

Introduction to Grace Clovis' First Principles, Vision and Mission;

Lecture 1: What is a Biblical Christian?

Lecture 2: What is Worship?

Lecture 3: What is the Church?

Lecture 4: Membership in the Local Church

Lecture 5: Privileges and Responsibilities of Church Membership

Lecture 6: History of the PCA

Lecture 7: What is Taught at Grace Clovis?

GRACE CLOVIS' FIRST PRINCIPLES

Grace Clovis Presbyterian Church shall be founded on and every facet of its future ministry informed and guided by an unwavering commitment to these first principles:

THE BIBLE

The whole counsel of God as expressed in the Holy Scriptures shall be the only authority concerning all things necessary for the glory of our great God and the salvation, faith, and life of the congregation. The Bible is the inspired, infallible, inerrant, and sufficient Word of God, which is necessary for salvation and growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is through the Word of God that we come to know and love God.

WORSHIP

Worship is at the very center of our existence and the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is ultimate because God is ultimate. Worship is the adoration of God and service offered to God as Father, through the Mediator Jesus Christ, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, in response to the grace of God revealed in the gospel. God is calling us above all else to be the kind of people whose theme and passion is the supremacy of God in all of life. Only when the glory of our great God in Jesus Christ is the overwhelming joy and desire of our life are missions and evangelism birthed. Only then is the church equipped to proclaim the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into his marvelous light. Missions exist because worship doesn't. Therefore, worship is the fuel and goal in missions. When Christ the king will come again, missions will cease, evangelism will stop, but worship will continue, but then in all perfection, for all eternity.

THE REFORMED FAITH

We are distinctively *Presbyterian* and *Reformed*. We do not hide our faith but joyfully believe those doctrines as articulated in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* with its *Larger and Shorter Catechisms* to be an accurate articulation of the teachings of the Bible.

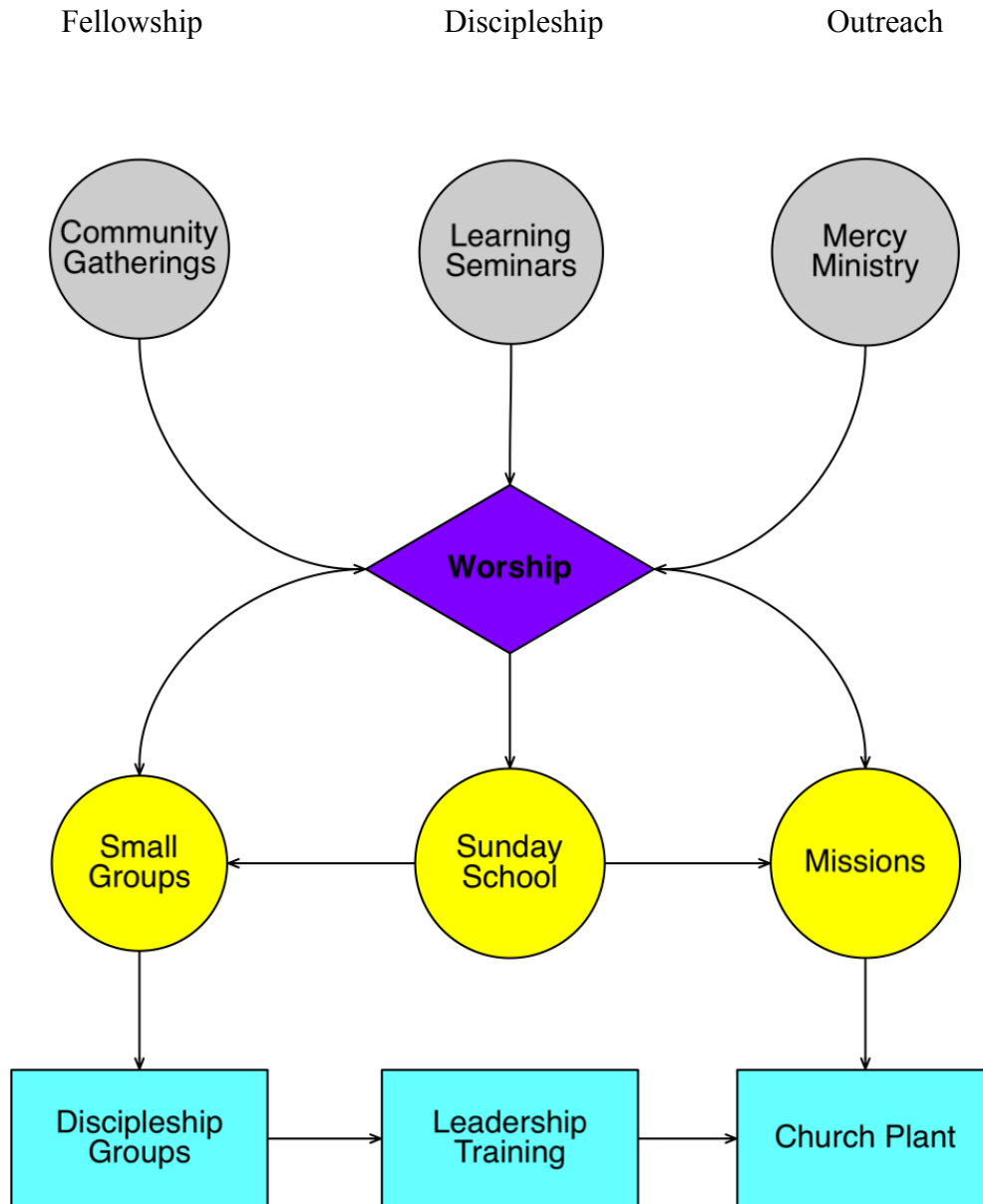
VISION

We exist to transform the people of Clovis by finding, equipping, and multiplying followers of Jesus Christ for the glory of God.

MISSION

Our mission is to be a church where every member has a mentor, every mentor oversees a ministry, and every ten ministries plants a new mission.

MINISTRY MODEL



Lecture 1: What is a Biblical Christian?

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN

1. A Christian is one who has realistically faced the problem of his own sin.
 - A. God is our Holy and Loving Creator [Genesis 1:1]
 - B. The radical and pervasive effects of the Fall [Genesis 3:1-24]
 - C. The bad news we don't want to hear [Romans 3:9-20; Shorter Catechism Q/A 13-19]
 - 1) A bad record – guilt

Sin as a legal offense: resulting in guilt and judgment
[Exodus 34:4-7; Romans 3:9-11, 19-20; James 2:10; Ephesians 2:1-3; Revelation 8:1]
 - 2) A bad heart – pollution

Sin as an experiential reality: death in all of its forms
[Romans 3:12-18, Mark 7:20-23, Isaiah 6:1-8]

Acceptance of Christ and appropriation of every element in redemption is conditional on awareness of God's holiness and conviction of the depth of our sin...Men and women cannot know themselves until they know the reality of the God who made them, and once they know the holy God, their own sin appears so grievous that they cannot rest until they have fully appropriated Christ. Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of the Spiritual Life*, p. 81-2

Although most human beings give the appearance, at times, of being confused seekers for truth with a naïve respect for God...the reality is that unless they are moved by the Spirit they have a natural distaste for the real God, an uncontrollable desire to break his laws and a constant tendency to sit in judgment on him when they notice him at all. They are at moral enmity with the God revealed in the Bible. Since his purpose crosses theirs at every juncture, they really hate him more than any object, and this is clearly displayed in their treatment of his Son. Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of the Spiritual Life*, p. 86

2. A Christian is one who understands and acknowledges the one remedy for sin.

Jesus Christ is God's Merciful remedy for our sin.

- A. First, he is God and Man in one person—the only one who can provide remedy for our sin [John 14:6; Acts 4:12]
- B. Second, he lived a perfect life that we could not live [Hebrews 7:26,27]
- C. Third, he died the death for sin that we cannot die [Gal. 3:13; Isaiah 53:6]
- D. Fourth, Christ offers salvation [Matt. 11:28; John 6:37]

*The concept of substitution may be said to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting Himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices Himself for man and puts Himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives, which belong to God alone; God accepts penalties, which belong to man alone. John Stott, *The Cross of Christ**

3. A Christian is one who wholeheartedly responds to God's terms of salvation.

What are the terms? “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” [Mark 1:15]

- A. Faith:

WSC # 86:

Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.

- B. Repentance:

WSC # 87:

Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.

The way we enter the kingdom of heaven is the way we stay in the kingdom of heaven...by faith and repentance.

4. A Christian is one who manifests in his life the fruit of repentance and faith.

A. Obedience to God

Not everyone who says to me "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Matthew 7:21

He who says, "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whosoever keeps His Word; truly the love of God is perfected in him. 1 John 2:4,5

B. Sanctification: I am a new creation...

- 1) Dead to Sin! [Romans 6:1-14]
- 2) Work out what God has worked in! [Philippians 2:2-13]
- 3) The means of grace. [WSC #88-91]
 - a) The reading, but especially the preaching of the Word
 - b) Sacraments – Baptism and Lord's Supper
 - c) Prayer

The means do not sanctify; Christ does!!!!
- 4) God is committed to sin's eradication in my life, more than I am.

When the devil accuses us and says: 'You are a sinner; therefore you are damned,' then we can answer him and say: 'Because you say that I am a sinner, therefore I shall be righteous and be saved.' 'No' says the devil, 'you will be damned' 'No' I say, 'for I take refuge in Christ, who has given Himself for my sins. Therefore, Satan, you will not prevail against me as you try to frighten me by showing me the magnitude of my sins and to plunge me into anguish, loss of faith, despair, hatred, contempt of God and blasphemy. In fact, when you say that I am a sinner, you provide me with armor and weapons against yourself, so that I may slit your throat with your own sword and trample you underfoot. You yourself are preaching the glory of God to me; for you are reminding me, a miserable and condemned sinner, of the fatherly love of God, who 'so loved the world that He gave his only Son, etc.' (John 3:16) You are reminding me of the blessing of Christ my redeemer. On His shoulders, not mine, lie all my sins. For 'the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all,' and 'for the transgression of His people He was stricken' (Is. 53:6,8). Therefore, when you say that I am a sinner, you do not frighten me; but you bring me immense consolation. Martin Luther, Lectures on Paul's Letter to the Galatians, vol. 1, pp 36-7

WHAT'S REQUIRED TO JOIN THE CHURCH...

A credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ

1. Must have *Faith* in Jesus Christ [Acts 16:30-31]
 2. Must make a *Profession* [Romans 10:9-10]
 3. Must make a *Credible Profession* [1 John 4:20]
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Lecture 2: What is Worship?

MAN WAS MADE FOR WORSHIP

1. The garden as Temple/sacred place.
 - A. Genesis 1: man in the image of God [1:26-28] 2: God forms man [2:7] plants the garden [2:8] places man in the garden [2:15]
 - B. Eden is the garden of God [Ezek 28:13]
 - C. It is a fertile garden where all that is needed for life in full communion with God is found and provided [1:28]
 - D. It is a sanctuary- a place where the immediate presence of God was enjoyed, where God walked with them [3:8] in the cool of the day. The presence of God with man in blessing.
 - E. All of this is lost in the fall- they are cast out from the presence of God!

2. The temple as garden

The temple, the place where God dwells among his people is a re-creation of Eden [1 Kings 6:29 ff]

3. The eternal state as garden

- A. The dwelling of God with men [Rev 21:3]
- B. An Eden-like place [Rev. 22:1,2]

4. From Genesis to Revelation the story is worship lost, worship regained. Sacred place lost, sacred place regained.

ALL PEOPLE WORSHIP SOMETHING

1. To be made in the image of God – to be made for worship

2. What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy him forever i.e., man is made for worship
3. This is the logic of the first commandment. The ultimate issue is always the first commandment.
4. This is true for believer and unbeliever alike. We all worship and serve something/one - God or creation [Romans 1:25].
5. Psalm 115:1-8
6. If you change the object of worship you change the entire course of the life

The reform of worship is more important than the reform of doctrine...because the doctrine of salvation is a means to an end. And worship is the end! John Calvin

If it be inquired...by what things chiefly the Christian religion has a standing existence amongst us and maintains its truth, it will be found that the following two not only occupy the principal place, but comprehend under them all the other parts, and consequently the whole substance of Christianity, viz., a knowledge, first, of the mode in which God is duly worshipped; and, secondly of the source from which salvation is to be obtained...Surely the first foundation of righteousness is the worship of God. John Calvin

COVENANT WORSHIP

1. Covenant Worship is communion with God and service offered to God as Father through our Mediator Jesus Christ, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, in response to the grace of God revealed in the gospel.
2. A duty owed to God by all people.
 - A. By creation [Romans 1:18-23; Acts 14:15-18, 17:23-31]
 - B. By redemption [Exodus 19:5-6] God redeemed us to have a people for his own possession
 - C. Total life worship [Romans 12:1-2; WSC #1]
3. Corporate Worship, Family Worship, Private Worship

- A. Corporate worship is the primary expression
 - B. Old Testament : Exodus 3:12;12:16; Leviticus 23:2ff; Numbers 28:18, 25; Temple and Synagogue: Psalm 74:8
 - C. New Testament: John 4:22-24; Acts 2:46; 1 Corinthians 11:17-18; James 2:2 Hebrews 10:24-25
4. Object of our Worship is God the Father, through Jesus our Mediator, by the Spirit [John 4:22-24]
- A. God is the recipient of our worship
 - 1) In worship we have communion with the triune God.
 - 2) Particularly as Father.
 - 3) Covenantal worship is an act of the covenant people to God. Thus not designed as evangelistic tool but an act of the covenant family.
 - B. Offered in dependency on Christ as mediator. Only as we are in him may we know God as Father.
 - C. Offered by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In our evangelistic zeal we are looking for programs that will attract people. We think we have put honey on the lip of the bitter cup of salvation. It is the story of the wedding of Cana all over again but with this difference. At the crucial moment when the wine failed, we took matters into our hands and used those five stone jars to mix up a batch of Kool-Aid instead. It seemed like a good solution in terms of our American culture.

Unfortunately, all too soon the guests discovered the fraud. Alas! What are we to do now? How can we possibly minister to those who thirst for the real thing? There is but one thing to do, as Mary the mother of Jesus, understood so very well. You remember how the story goes. After presenting the problem to Jesus, Mary turned to the servants and said to them, "Do whatever he tells you." The servants did just that and the water was turned into wine, wine rich and mellow beyond anything they had ever tasted before. Hughes Oliphant Old

PATTERN OF WORSHIP

1. Dialogical Principle

A. God speaks to his people

- 1) Salutation
- 2) Call to Worship
- 3) Word
- 4) Sacraments
- 5) Benediction

B. His people respond to God.

- 1) Praise
- 2) Confession
- 3) Prayer
- 4) Gifts
- 5) Faith & Repentance

2. Regulative Principle [WCF 1:6; 21:1]

A. How shall we worship? Two answers:

- 1) In any way that seems edifying, unless it is forbidden in Scripture
 - a) Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran view and of many other evangelical churches
 - b) The non-regulative principle allows for a great deal of human invention
- 2) Only in the way God prescribes in Scripture, whether by precept or example
 - a) The Reformed view
 - b) The regulative principle requires that everything included in worship be proven in the Scriptures

B. God is particular about how he is to be worshipped

- 1) Old Testament makes this clear

- a) All the regulations for his worship ie. tabernacle, temple
- b) The Consequences of disobedience
- c) Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10
- d) 1 Chronicles 15:13

2) A Clear Precept

- a) 2nd Commandment; Exodus 20:4-6
- b) Deuteronomy 4:1; 12:32
- c) Jeremiah 7:31

3) New Testament

- a) John 4:21-24
- b) Mark 7:7-8
- c) Colossians 2:23

I have also no difficulty in conceding to you that there is nothing more perilous to our salvation than a distorted and perverse worship of God. The primary rudiments by which we are wont to train those whom we wish to win as disciples to Christ, are these: not to frame any new worship of God for themselves at random and their own pleasure, but to know that the only legitimate worship is that which he himself approved from the beginning. John Calvin

The regulative principle of worship, far from being an extraneous appendage to Reformed life..., is nothing more nor less than Calvinism at worship. Everything which distinguishes the Reformed faith from other faiths is either best reflected in this principle or exclusively reflected in this principle...The health of Reformed Christianity can be measured, in part, by its worship. T. David Gordon

Lecture 3: What is the Church?

THE CHURCH IS A COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE IN COVENANT WITH GOD AND EACH OTHER.

1. The Church = *a covenant community*

The Greek word for church is *ekklesia* = “assembly, congregation, community” of people. Church = people, not a building of bricks and mortar.

A. Old Testament speaks of the “assembled” which in the New Testament is translated *ekklesia*

- 1) “Assemble the people before me.” [Deuteronomy 4:10]
- 2) Three times a year the men were to assemble “before the Lord.” [Exodus 23:14-17; Leviticus 23:1-2]
- 3) When the Temple was built, it becomes the center for the worship of assembled people [Psalm 22, 35, 40, 89, 107, 149]

B. New Testament Jesus says to Peter: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church...” [Matthew 16:18] Jesus is speaking about adding people, not more bricks.

The word “ekklesia” is frequently used in the book of Acts:

- 1) 5:11 – great fear came upon the Church
- 2) 7:38 – “ekklesia” is used of the OT people of God
- 3) 8:1 – great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem
- 4) 11:22 – church in Antioch – disciples first called Christians

C. Frequently Christians are thought of as people going to church. Rather, Christians are people who ARE the church.

2. The Church = a community of people in covenant relationship with God.

Christianity is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship, in Scripture, is called a “covenant”. Covenant is a word which describes how God has always related to men in all ages...

- Adam Genesis 1,2
- Noah Genesis 6,9
- Abraham Genesis 15, 17
- Moses Exodus 2 - 4
- David 2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 89, 103, 132
- “New Covenant” Jeremiah 31:31-32; I Corinthians 11:25; II Corinthians 3; Hebrews 8

A. What is a covenant?

A bond (relationship) in blood sovereignly administered.

B. This is clearly illustrated in the covenant God made with Abraham.

1) Promise: Genesis 17:3 “As for me...”

2) Stipulation: Genesis 17:9 “As for you...”

There are two potential results:

- Blessing
- Curse

C. The concept of covenant is the unifying theme throughout the entire Scriptures.

Recommended Reading: “The Covenant of Grace” by Calvin Cummings

D. What are the benefits of being in covenant with God?

1) Union and communion with Him [Rev 21:1-7]

2) “I will be a God to you and to your descendents after you” [Genesis 17:7]

3. The church = *a community of people in covenant relationship with God and each other.*

A church is a community! Union with Christ involves union and fellowship with the people of God.

BODY is a metaphor for our union with Christ. [1 Cor. 12:12-26; Ephesians 1:22-23; 3:6; 4:12-16; 5; Col. 2:19]

MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS

1. Are there many churches or just one? YES!

A. Universal Church [Eph 5]

B. Particular Churches [Rev. 1]

2. *Are there true and false churches?* YES!

The ultimate sign of a true Church is:

A. The true preaching of the gospel

B. The pure administration of the sacraments.

C. The exercise of Church discipline

Lecture 4: Membership in the Local Church

*"No one can have **God as Father** who does not have the **Church as Mother**"* Church father, Cyprian

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Many Christians and even Churches do not believe in church membership. They say "You can be a Christian and not be a member of a local church." Furthermore they might ask "Where do you find church membership in the Bible?"

We hope to understand two things: first, church membership is deduced from Scripture in a number of ways; secondly, you don't have to have your name on a Church registry to be a Christian, but if you don't, one thing you can't be is an obedient Christian.

How do we deduce from Scripture that church membership is important and necessary?

1. By Census, Genealogies
 - A. Genesis 49 – The OT Church in Egypt
 - B. Numbers 1-3 – The registry of the people of God
 - C. Ezra 2; 8 – Returning Exiles and Priests
 - D. Nehemiah 7 – Returning Exiles
2. Church Growth in the Bible
 - A. 1 Timothy 5 – regarding widows
 - B. Acts 2:41; 5:14; 6:7 – people who were **added** to the church lists
3. Church roll is a reflection of the membership list in heaven
 - A. Exodus 32:32-33 - Moses requests to be blotted out of the book
 - B. Psalm 87:6 – The Lord is the heavenly clerk who registers the Gentiles that are coming into the church
 - C. Philippians 4:2-3 – Paul mentions the saints whose names are written in the book of life

- D. Luke 10:20 – rejoice that your names are written in heaven
- E. Revelation 3:5 – To the Church in Sardis – the book of life

The heavenly book of life is not synonymous with the church rolls on earth but that is certainly to be the pattern of the church on earth. Church membership is really a sign of belonging to the people of God. It distinguishes people as being part of the church and not of the world.

4. Church government

- A. Hebrews 13:17 – The NT envisions the church to submit to the elders. Scripture presupposes a specific number who are governed
- B. 1 Peter 5:3; Acts 20:17ff – Elders instructed not to lord it over those in their charge
- C. 1 Thessalonians 5:12 – respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord
- D. Acts 6 – the church membership elects their elders

5. Church discipline

- A. Exodus 31:12-17 – being cut off from the church presupposes being part of a membership
- B. Matthew 18:15-17 – process of church discipline
- C. 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 – expel the wicked man from among you

Church discipline is for Christians. If they aren't members of the church you can't do church discipline on them. In order for a church to be faithful (one of the marks of a faithful church), there must be church membership.

6. Metaphors for the church

- A. 1 Peter 5:2; John 10 – Shepherd the flock, “The good Shepherd lays down his life for **the** sheep.”
- B. Ephesians 2:19 – Household of God. As our families are clearly defined. We know who is and who isn't family.

- C. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 – body of Christ. Some members are hands, some are feet, some are eyes etc. You can't have flying body parts in order to be useful. There must be commitment.
- D. Numbers 1; Ephesians 2:12, 19 – Citizens of a nation, the commonwealth of Israel, fellow citizens.
- E. Ephesians 2:20-22 – Church is a building. There are no Christians from the Bible's perspective that are "rolling stones." Christians are united to Christ the cornerstone and to each other.

Therefore, in the descriptions of the church the Bible speaks particularly of a Christian being part of the membership rolls.

It is for this reason that we require church membership to take the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is a sign of the covenant community. If it is given to those in the covenant community, and withheld from those outside it, then it follows that only those who are members of local churches should partake of it.

Analogy: Those who participate in the life of the church without being members of a local church are really in a common-law relationship with the church. They get some of the benefits of the church without committing themselves to the church. Many want the benefits of the church but refuse to commit themselves to the fidelity of the church.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

1. Many professing Christians in our day live year after year without membership in any church. There are many possible reasons:
 - A. They have not been taught
 - B. Many churches view membership as optional
 - C. Because of modernity: transitive, individualistic mindset
 - D. Bad experiences in local churches
 - E. Desire to avoid accountability
2. BUT membership in the local church is biblical and furthermore, membership and active participation in the local church is **vitaly important** for salvation itself.

A. There is a direct relationship between the Church and our own salvation

B. We need to avoid two errors:

1) The Church as “essential” to salvation:

This is the view of the Roman Catholic Church

- a) Church is the mediator between Christ and the sinner
- b) Church is the agent for dispensing grace

2) The Church as mere “accessory” to salvation:

This is the view of much evangelicalism

3. Membership and participation in the local church is **vitaly important** for salvation inasmuch as salvation involves growth in grace (sanctification), and the church is God’s primary means of growth in grace.

“He who endures to the end shall be saved” [Mark 13:13]

- Corporate worship [Hebrews 10:19-25]
- Preaching [1 Corinthians 1:20-25]
- Sacraments [1 Corinthians 11]
- Fellowship [Philippians 1:5,27]
- Oversight [Hebrews 13:17]

4. How important is it to be a member of the Church? Very!

Note the way the Westminster Confession 23:1 puts it:

The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the World that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

5. Membership in a local church is non-optional

6. Commitment to the local church is the single greatest, outward indicator of your commitment to Christ.

Lecture 5: Privileges and Responsibilities of Church Membership

PARTICIPATION IN THE ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE

1. Means of grace

There are certain things that God has appointed by which we grow in grace. These things have historically been called the ordinary means of grace. These basic disciplines are conduits that God uses to mature us in Christ.

These ordinary means of grace are [Acts 2:42]:

- The Word
- Sacraments – the Word made *visible*
- Prayer – the Word made *profitable*
- Fellowship – the Word made *practical*

A. They are *ordinary*:

- 1) In the sense that they are plain, normal and routine
- 2) Biblical uses for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace

B. They are *means*

God does not typically act by way of direct supernatural intervention in our lives. Rather, he employs means to accomplish his objectives [Romans 10:13-15]

C. They are means of *grace*:

Jesus Christ is the storehouse of all the blessings that I need to live my life as a Christian. How do I receive all those blessings? By faith, by availing myself of God's appointed means.

2. **Corresponding Responsibility:** *Attendance at the stated services.*

- A. Attendance at stated meetings of worship is expected at *Grace Clovis*. At *Grace Clovis* we see the corporate worship service on the Lord's Day as of primary importance.

- 1) This is clearly exemplified from OT Worship [Ex. 29:38-43, Ps. 92]
- 2) We are to “remember” the whole day as the “Lord’s Day” which is to be consecrated, sanctified, or set apart in a special way to the Lord. Note Christ’s example [Luke 4.16]
- 3) Unique communion with God [Heb 2:12; 10:19-22; 12]
- 4) NT precedent for the whole day (until midnight) [Acts 20:7] Hebrews also gives a special admonition *not* to forsake the assembling together...[10:25]

B. Attendance in a Discipleship Group is greatly encouraged.

The more we grasp the privileges of the Lord’s Day, as the market day of the soul, the more profound will be our rejoicing of “the day that the Lord has made” (Psalm 118.24) – a day especially designed to contemplate the beauty and glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. The more profound our rejoicing in *this* day, the more refreshed and rejuvenated we will be for the work of the *next* 6 days, and the greater the anticipation for that *final* day.

OVERSIGHT AND EQUIPPING BY SHEPHERDS

Scripture teaches that the edification of the saints is accomplished primarily through the work of elders. As much as the members of the church have a responsibility to build one another up, those who preach, teach and pastor have the primary place in God’s plan for your edification.

- To equip the saints [Eph. 4:8-12; Colossians 1:28]
- To edify the body of Christ [2 Tim 3:16-4:5]
- To shepherd their souls [Hebrews 13:17]

1. This work of the Shepherd is carried out in three primary ways:

A. Public preaching and teaching:

- 1) Christ’s ministry [Mark 1:38; Matthew 11:1]
- 2) Apostles’ ministry [Acts 15:35]
- 3) “Good ministers” ministry [1 Timothy 4:1-11]

B. Private visitation and counseling:

- 1) In addition to Paul's ministry of public preaching and teaching [Acts 19:8-10]
- 2) Paul devoted himself to the private, house to house ministry [Acts 20:20]

C. Prayer

One of the two primary responsibilities of elders [Acts 6:4]

2. **Corresponding Responsibility:** *Submission to those who rule over you.*

- A. Willing to be taught with joy
- B. Willing to be corrected with joy
- C. Willing to be lead with joy

Note the wording of the 5th membership vow.

THE MUTUAL EDIFICATION OF THE BODY

Edification means to “build up” one another. It has the idea of strengthening what is there, and adding to it more and more. Paul encourages the church of Thessalonica “*therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing*”¹ Thessalonians 5:11.

1. Edifying the Body

A. Encouragement

- 1) To comfort, to console, to cheer up
- 2) To motivate, to urge, to exhort, to appeal to
- 3) “*We sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith*”¹ Thessalonians 3:2.

B. Admonition

- 1) Occasioned by the observation of sin in a brother's life
- 2) Bringing that brother to an awareness for that sin
- 3) Motivated by a desire to help that brother deal with sin

- 4) *“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing”* 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

C. Instruction

- 1) Discipleship – See Great Commission [Matthew 28:19]
- 2) *“Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled”* Titus 2:3.

2. **Corresponding Responsibility:** *Ministry in the Body of Christ.*

A. Hospitality

“Showing hospitality to one another without grumbling” 1 Peter 4:9.

B. Encouragement

C. Admonition

D. Instruction

THE MATERIAL HELP AND SUPPORT OF THE BODY

1. There are tremendous material benefits to being a member of a church community.
 - A. Financial assistance in times of trouble
 - B. Many hands make light work
 - C. Encouragement from the body
 - D. Prayers from the saints
2. **Corresponding Responsibility:** *Contributing support to the Body*
 - A. Prayer: for pastor, elders, deacons, members

Encourage participation at our weekly prayer meeting

B. Time: Volunteering for various responsibilities

C. Money: Tithing as a minimum.

- 1) Abraham tithed [Gen. 14.18ff]
 - 2) Israel gives a tithe to the Levites
 - 3) Malachi's challenge not to rob from the Lord but to pay the tithe [3:8ff]
 - 4) Jesus commends the tithe [Matthew 22:21]
 - 5) Our greatest motivation: God's indescribable gift! [2 Cor. 9:15]
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Lecture 6: History of the PCA

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

The Presbyterian Church in America has a strong commitment to evangelism, missionary work at home and abroad, and to Christian education. From its inception, the church has determined its purpose to be “faithful to the Scriptures, true to the reformed faith, and obedient to the Great Commission.”

Organized at a constitutional assembly in December 1973, this church was first known as the National Presbyterian Church but changed its name in 1974 to Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). It separated from the Presbyterian Church in the United States (Southern) in opposition to the long-developing theological liberalism which denied the deity of Jesus Christ and the inerrancy and authority of Scripture. Additionally, the PCA held to the traditional position on the role of women in church offices.

In December 1973, delegates, representing some 260 congregations with a combined communicant membership of over 41,000 that had left the PCUS, gathered at Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama, and organized the National Presbyterian Church, which later became the Presbyterian Church in America.

In 1982, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, joined the Presbyterian Church in America. The Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, had been formed in 1965 by a merger of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, General Synod.

The PCA has made a firm commitment on the doctrinal standards which had been significant in presbyterianism since 1645, namely the *Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms*. These doctrinal standards express the distinctives of the Calvinistic or Reformed tradition.

Among the distinctive doctrines of the Westminster Standards and of Reformed tradition is the unique authority of the Bible. The reformers based all of their claims on “sola scriptura,” the Scriptures alone. This included the doctrine of their inspiration which is a special act of the Holy Spirit by which He guided the writers of the books of Scriptures (in their original autographs) so that their words should convey the thoughts He wished conveyed, bear a proper relation to the thoughts of other inspired books, and be kept free from error of fact, of doctrine, and of judgment -- all of which were to be an infallible rule of faith and life. Historically, the concept of infallibility has included the idea of inerrancy.

The PCA maintains the historic polity of Presbyterian governance set forth in *The Book of Church Order*, namely rule by presbyters (or elders) and the graded assemblies or courts. These courts are the session, governing the local church; the presbytery, for regional matters; and the general assembly, at the national level. It has taken seriously the

position of the parity of elders, making a distinction between the two classes of elders, teaching and ruling. It has self-consciously taken a more democratic position (rule from the grass roots up) on presbyterian governance in contrast to a more prelatical form (rule from the top assemblies down).

The PCA Ministry Buildings in Lawrenceville is the location from which most of the ministries of the denomination are coordinated. These ministries are carried on by four Program committees -- Mission to the World, Mission to North America, Christian Education and Publication, Reformed University Ministries, and one service committee, the Administrative Committee, responsible for the administration of the General Assembly. Additionally, there are five agencies which also minister to the denomination: PCA Foundation, PCA Retirement & Benefits, Inc. (both located in Lawrenceville), Ridge Haven, (the PCA conference center located close to Rosman, North Carolina), Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Georgia, and Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, (the national educational institutions of the PCA).

The PCA is one of the faster growing denominations in the United States, with over 1700 churches and missions throughout the USA and Canada. There were over 345,000 communicant and non-communicant members.

The influence of the PCA extends far beyond the walls of the local church. Mission to the World has 519 career missionaries in almost 60 nations of the world, 169 two-year missionaries, and over 6500 short term missionaries. Because of the unique relationship between Mission to the World with over thirty mission organizations with whom some of our missionaries are working, some consider that the influence is far greater than our size might indicate. Indeed, PCA churches support an additional 690 career missionaries, covering over 130 nations. Further, with more than 100 chaplains in the military, Veterans Administration, prisons, and hospitals, and 45 college and university campus ministers, the Gospel is proclaimed to a rather large audience around the world not reached through usual outreach channels. Because of the emphasis on education, there are many members of the PCA who are teachers and professors at all levels, including a significant number of large universities and theological seminaries.

In this new century, the Presbyterian Church in America continues its commitment to evangelism world-wide and the building up of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. (excerpt taken from the PCA website)

ORGANIZATION OF GRACE CLOVIS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Lord willing sometime in or before 2017

Lecture 7: What is Taught at Grace Clovis?

GRACE CLOVIS IS CATHOLIC (UNIVERSAL)

1. The Apostle's Creed
2. The Nicene Creed
3. The Athanasian Creed

GRACE CLOVIS IS EVANGELICAL

1. Scripture Alone
2. Faith Alone
3. Grace Alone
4. Christ Alone
5. God's Glory Alone

GRACE CLOVIS IS REFORMED

1. Covenant of Grace

God's covenant is the unifying theme of the entire Bible

2. Baptism of Infants

A. We baptize our children not to make them members of the covenant but because they are members of the covenant by virtue of the faith of their parents.

B. Baptism is an expression God makes to our children of what he has said and done. He has entered into covenant with them, and made promises to them.

3. God is Sovereign in Grace

God rules with absolute authority and exercises complete control over all things and events

4. God is Sovereign in Salvation –a tiptoe through TULIP

A. Total Depravity

Man in his natural state is dead in sin and completely incapable within himself to reach out towards God. Man is totally at enmity with God. [Ephesians 2:1-3, Romans 3:10-23]

B. Unconditional Election

There is absolutely no condition in any person for which God would save him. As a matter of fact, long before man was created, God chose or predestined some to everlasting life. He did this out of His mere good pleasure, [Ephesians 1:4, 5, 11; Romans 9]

C. Limited Atonement (particular)

God in His infinite mercy, in order to accomplish the planned redemption, sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to die as a substitute for the sins of a large but specific number of people. [Matthew 1:21; John 6:44-45; 65; Romans 8:28-33]

D. Irresistible Grace

The Holy Spirit sovereignly and effectually draws men to himself in salvation. [John 3:8; 6:37; 6:44; Ezekiel 36:26]

E. Perseverance of the Saints

This is that gracious work of God's sanctification whereby He enables a saved person to persevere to the end. Even though the process of sanctification is not complete in this life, from God's perspective it is as good as accomplished. [John 6:37-39; 10:27-28; Philippians 1:6; Romans 8:29-30]

5. The Pursuit of Personal Holiness
 - A. The Christian life is a long obedience in the same direction
 - B. Vital to our salvation, and a vital part of God's grace in salvation, is our being enabled to lead holy lives
 - C. Holiness is to be our great objective in this life; not out of legalistic burden, but out of love and thankfulness to God for our redemption
 - D. Personal holiness, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is so important that the Bible teaches that:
 - 1) Holiness is the end to which we are saved [Ephesians 1:4; Colossians 1:22; 1 Peter 1:15; 2:5]
 - 2) Final Judgment will be of our works [2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 12:36ff]
 - 3) We will be rewarded for our good deeds [1 Corinthians 3:10ff; Matthew 5:12; Colossians 3:24; Hebrews 11:26]

GRACE CLOVIS IS PRESBYTERIAN

1. Forms of Church Government
 - A. Prelacy (Episcopal or Hierarchical)
 - B. Independent (Congregationalist)
 - C. Presbyterian (Rule of Elders)
2. Biblical Principles of Church Government
 - A. Elders and Deacons are chosen [Acts 6:1-6]
 - B. The office of bishop and elder are identical [Phil. 1:1; James 5:14; Titus 1:5-7]
 - C. Plurality of elders [Acts 14:23; 20:17; Titus 1:5]
 - D. Ordination by a plurality of elders [1 Tim. 4:14; Acts 6:6; 13:1-3]

- E. Privilege of appeal to the assembly of elders or appeal to the higher court [Acts 15; 16:4]
- F. The only Head and King of the church is the Lord Jesus Christ [Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:18]

3. The Offices of the Church

A. Elders [presbuteros; episkopos] – The body of elders is the Session.

- 1) Why do we have elders? [Acts 14:23; II Tim. 2:2; Titus 1:5]

The office actually goes back to the elders of the OT Church. But it is of particular significance that near the end of the Apostolic age, the Apostles began to appoint (ordain) elders in the church to carry on her ministry. Theirs was not merely human wisdom, for as apostles they spoke the inspired Word of God.

- 2) Qualifications [I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9]
- 3) Teaching and Ruling elder – 1 office, 2 functions [I Tim. 5:17]
- 4) Responsibilities [W.C. Chapter 3, paragraph 2]
 - a) Administer the Word [I Tim 4:11-16; II Tim. 1:13-14; Matt. 16:18,19]
 - b) Pray [Acts 6:4; Mark 1:35]
 - c) Shepherds/Pastors [Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17]
 - d) Rule [Heb. 13:7,17]

B. Deacons – The body of the deacons is the Deaconate.

- 1) Why do we have deacons? [Acts 6:1-6]
- 2) Qualification [I Tim. 3:8-13]
- 3) Responsibility – Minister of mercy

4. The Courts of the Presbyterian Church in America

A. Session

- 1) Particular Church
- 2) Teaching Elders [Ministers]
- 3) Ruling Elders

B. Presbytery

- 1) Regional Church
- 2) Northern California Presbytery
- 3) Meets three times annually
- 4) Attended by Ministers and Ruling elders of local churches

C. General Assembly

- 1) Whole Church
- 2) Meets annually
- 3) Attended by Commissioners from throughout denomination

5. The Standards of Grace Clovis Presbyterian Church

A. The Bible

B. The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms

C. The Book of Church Order