

# **PLANO BIBLE CHAPEL**

## **New Members Class**





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# HISTORY OF PLANO BIBLE CHAPEL

For over 50 years, the people of Plano Bible Chapel have been faithfully following Jesus, loving each other, and serving the world for the glory of God. Our mission is to lead all people to a life changing, ever-growing relationship with Jesus.

In 1966, while still a student at Dallas Theological Seminary, Dr. Tom Constable and his wife, Mary, moved to Plano, Texas, with the vision of starting a Bible-centered church. Plano Bible Chapel began quietly as a small Bible study that started in the summer of 1968. This study consisted of six families who lived in Plano. Five of these families attended Believer's Chapel in Dallas and wished to attend church closer to their homes. Two of the six charter families are still members of our congregation.

Tom Constable became one of the first two elders of Plano Bible Chapel at its official founding in 1968. For the first 12 years of the church's history, the elders were responsible for the teaching during the Sunday morning Worship Service. In 1980, Jim Lewis began to serve as full-time pastor. As the pastoral staff grew, Jim Lewis assumed the role of Senior Pastor and continued to do most of the preaching until his retirement in 2002. Larry Murray was called to serve as Lead Pastor in 2004.

PBC's operates under the biblical principal that Jesus determines His will for His church through the good intentions of godly, yet imperfect people to lead His Body of believers. The Governing Board of Elders lead and shepherd God's people. Deacons serve and facilitate the ministry needs of the church. Pastors equip the Body for ministry and implement the vision of the Elders, and administrative staff coordinates ministry with various other leaders and communicates with the PBC family and local community.

Staff members include Larry Murray (Lead Pastor), Ryan Rives (Associate Pastor – Student and Worship Ministries), Craig Williams (Associate Pastor – Outreach and Spanish Ministries), Donna Blackmon (Office Manager), Aaron Busch (Communication Administrator), and Jennifer Edmunds (Financial Administrator).

Whether you're single, newlyweds, a large family, or empty-nester, welcome to PBC.

For more information about PBC ministries and service opportunities, visit the following:

- Plano Bible Chapel Website (Church Center): [www.planobiblechapel.org](http://www.planobiblechapel.org)
- PBC Online Directory: <https://planobiblechapel.adjace.com/>
- Plano Bible Chapel YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/c/PlanoBibleChapel>
- PBC on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/PlanoBibleChapel](http://www.facebook.com/PlanoBibleChapel)
- PBC on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/planobiblechapel/>
- Prayer Groups: email [pbcc@planobiblechapel.org](mailto:pbcc@planobiblechapel.org) to request an invitation to join [pbcc-prayer@googlegroups.com](mailto:pbcc-prayer@googlegroups.com) or request membership to PBC FaceBook Prayer Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/130384343720581/>
- Mailing Address: 1900 Shiloh Road | Plano | TX | 75074
- Contact Info: [pbcc@planobiblechapel.org](mailto:pbcc@planobiblechapel.org) (972) 423-5321
- Join PBC Weekly Email: <https://planobible.churchcenter.com/pages/mailchimp-signup>
- Additional New Member Resources: <https://bit.ly/PBC-Member-Resources>

## **WHAT WE BELIEVE**

**The believers in Jesus Christ who gather as a church at PLANO BIBLE CHAPEL hold to the essential, orthodox\* doctrines of the Christian faith. As essential biblical convictions, members must fully agree with these biblical, theological, and historical doctrines.**

1. We believe the Bible is the inspired Truth of God without error in its original writing.
2. We believe in One God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each of whom is equally and fully God.
3. We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, substitutionary death for the inherited and imputed sins of men, and His bodily resurrection.
4. We believe in the forgiveness of sins by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and that all who receive Christ through believing have eternal life and become members of His church.
5. We believe in the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His own, later to this earth.
6. We believe in the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and His indwelling and working in each believer.
7. We believe in a final judgment of man before God and the restoration of humanity and creation.

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\* Orthodox means "correct opinion." In Christian theology it refers to the correct views on the essential truths of the Christian faith and the proper observance of central Christian practices. Orthodoxy means the right opinion about crucial doctrines and practices in keeping with what true Christians have always believed based on biblical, historical, and theological doctrine. Orthodoxy is that which has been believed and practiced in the church "everywhere, always, and by all." See PBC Constitution and Doctrinal Statement, Article III – Doctrine, for more detailed doctrinal statement. As essential biblical convictions, Plano Bible Chapel members must fully agree with these biblical, theological, and historical doctrines.

# WHY WE BELIEVE WHAT WE BELIEVE

Everything we believe at Plano Bible Chapel is built on five historical, foundational biblical truths:

**1. The God of the Bible exists, and we can know Him personally. Eternal life is knowing God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ forever.**

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1) Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who draws near to Him must believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6) This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and the One You have sent—Jesus Christ. (John 17:3)*

**2. God has revealed Himself in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in His Word, the Bible. The Bible tells us how to know God and His will for our lives.**

*Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, He has spoken to us by [His] Son.... (Hebrews 1:1) "...I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth, so that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ... [My goal] is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death... (Philippians 3:8-10)*

**3. God inspired the Bible so that it was written without error in the original manuscripts, which God preserved through accurate copies and which we can read in good Bible translations.**

*All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17) Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth. (John 17:17) The entirety of Your word is truth... (Psalm 119:160).*

**4. Because the Bible has no errors, it contains no contradictions. We resolve apparent Biblical discrepancies by allowing the Bible to interpret itself.**

*...No prophecy of Scripture comes from one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, moved by the Holy Spirit, men spoke from God. (2 Peter 1:20-21)*

- **We use the majority of verses to interpret the minority:** Over 100 vs that teach that salvation is through faith in Christ alone (Jn 1:12; 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:29; 20:31; Rom 1:16; 3:22; 4:5; 5:1; 10:4; Gal 3:22) help us interpret 6 verses that some use to teach that baptism saves us: Mk 16:16; Jn 3:5; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Titus 3:5, and 1 Pet 3:21.
- **We use the clear verses to interpret the unclear:** 1 Cor 15:29 is the only vs that mentions baptism for the dead; we cannot base a major doctrine on such an unclear vs!
- **We use later verses to interpret earlier ones in God's progressive revelation:** Lk 16:19-31; 2 Cor 5:8; Rev 6:9-11; 14:9-11 affirm our conscious awareness after death, not "soul sleep" as Eccl 9:5 is sometimes misunderstood.
- **We use the NT to interpret the OT:** Jn 12:37-38; Rom 10:16; and 1 Pet 2:21-25 tell us that the Suffering Servant in Is 52:13-53:12 is Jesus the Messiah.

**5. We interpret the Bible normally (literally) in context accepting each part at face value for what it says or claims, whether history, poetry, or prophecy.**

- *Symbols of real people in poetry and prophecy: Psalm 22:12-21; Revelation 13:1-8*

These five truths form the foundation—the "why?"—of our doctrine as a church. Everything we teach is traceable to these five foundations.

# SIX DISTINCTIVE TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES\* AT PBC

- 1. We believe God has governed human history in periods of time called dispensations.**  
The word "dispensation" means an economy (like capitalism, socialism, or communism) or an administration, (like our 44 U.S. presidential administrations or like how parents relate differently to their children as they grow up). Understanding the different dispensations is one of our greatest tools to help interpret the Bible correctly. For example, God's has given distinct promises to both Israel and the church. If we confuse these 2 sets of promises, we misinterpret the Bible!
- 2. We believe Christ will return in the future in two phases: In the air to rescue His church (the Rapture) and to the earth to rescue Israel and rule the nations (the Second Coming).**  
These two events are separated by at least seven years of worldwide disaster and war called the Tribulation. Distinguishing these two phases of Christ's coming helps us correctly interpret many Biblical passages and preserves the immanency of Christ's return for us believers.
- 3. We believe the miraculous New Testament sign gifts, such as speaking in tongues and healing, are not normative for the worldwide church today, nor are they signs of a believer's salvation or spiritual maturity.**  
Our church believes in miracles! We pray weekly for God to heal the sick and intervene in people's lives. And He does! We see God save people and change them over time. We send out missionaries who study foreign languages so they can preach the Gospel in those cultures, and see God transform people. But we do not believe God gives the gift of speaking foreign languages or healing to every Christian and church in the world today. God gave those sign gifts to prove the truth of the apostles' message before they wrote the NT. Now that we have a complete, inspired Bible, we don't need miracles to prove it—the Bible itself is the miracle!
- 4. We believe God saves us, forgives us and gives us eternal life only by His grace through faith alone in Christ alone.**  
Today, the Gospel is presented in as many different ways in evangelical circles as there are different Gospel tracts. Most of these Gospel presentations call for faith plus any number of additional steps, promises, or commitments. Our church preaches the message that salvation is by faith alone in Jesus: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." (Acts 16:32)
- 5. We believe the NT model of the local church is to be governed by a team of elders who shepherd and oversee our flock and a team of deacons who serve us, all under Jesus Christ, our Chief Shepherd.**  
A team of elders protects us from 3 extremes in local churches: an outside hierarchy controlling us, a one-man dictatorship, or a congregation democracy where immature believers take charge. We believe God uses the good intentions of the elders, who are godly, yet imperfect men to determine His Will and decide the direction & policies of our church. They provide representative leadership, getting input from our staff, deacons, and ministry leaders. Our paid pastors and workers carry out the daily operation of the church. Our deacons serve us by taking care of ministry needs like facilities and finances. Our ministry leaders guide our members in carrying out our ministries. Our members vote to express their affirmation of major decisions like recognizing new elders and deacons. Legal decisions are made by a joint elder and deacon committee called the Trustees.
- 6. We observe the Lord's Supper every Sunday and baptize believers as a public confession of personal faith in Jesus Christ.**  
Observing Communion every week (Acts 2:42, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26) increases our worship and appreciation of the Lord Jesus Christ and His great sacrifice on the cross for us. It requires us to examine our hearts (1 Corinthians 11:28-29) in order to love God and love others as Jesus has loved us. Water baptism by immersion is a physical demonstration of the spiritual transformation that happens the moment a person believes in Jesus Christ. Baptism was commanded by Jesus Christ as a testimony of faith in Him (*Matthew 28:18-20*). Baptism identifies the believer with Jesus and with His body (*1 Corinthians 12:12-13*).

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\* Non-essential biblical beliefs that Plano Bible Chapel asks members to support, even if they hold different beliefs.

# CONVICTIONS AND PREFERENCES

At Plano Bible Chapel we strive to find a balance between the biblical convictions that are essential to Christian faith, the biblical beliefs that we hold as a church but other godly people may view differently, and the personal convictions that we have individually for Christian living. This desire for balance requires that we recognize the differences between biblical convictions and personal boundaries. When we understand as a church family the importance of a particular belief, thought, or preference, we'll be able to agree on the essentials of the Christian life and better prepared to disagree on less important ones. In other words, when we recognize the differences between convictions and preferences, we'll be able to celebrate our life in Christ and cooperate as the body of Christ in a way that leads to unity.

## **Where we are as Christians: *We know the Truth—God and His Word!***

God, the Supreme Being, exists. He is Truth and the standard for absolute truth. God has revealed Himself and His Will for us in a book that is absolutely true, the Bible. We can know truth by knowing God and knowing Him personally through His Word.

## **Where we are as a culture: *Absolutely no absolutes!***

Our culture says, "There is no such thing as objective, absolute truth. Something can be true for me, and its opposite true for you, and that's OK! We create our own truth." Insisting that anything is absolutely true is considered intolerant and ignorant (except of course, the belief that there are absolutely no absolutes!).

## **Where we are as Christians in our culture: *When worlds collide!***

We must know the difference, not only between what is true and false, but also between what is objective and what is subjective and what is essential and what is non-essential. That's not always easy because not only do unbelievers disagree with us – Christians often disagree in areas of personal convictions and biblical beliefs.

## **What are Biblical Convictions and Personal Preferences?**

A conviction is a strong persuasion or belief about the truth. *Biblical convictions* are the doctrines held to be right or true by the church throughout the centuries. *Personal convictions* are based upon scriptural truth and applied to an individual believer's life. Personal convictions provide boundaries for an individual to live a godly life. *Biblical beliefs* are things that can be demonstrated in Scripture, but are non-essential so there is room for differing theological positions. *Personal preferences* are things that relate to our convenience and comfort.

## **The Spectrum of Truth**

- 1. Biblical Convictions (Essential/ Objective)** Without these biblical truths, Christianity and the ability to glorify God no longer exists.
- 2. Personal Convictions (Situational/Subjective)** How does God want me to live in the gray areas of life that are not specifically spelled out in Scripture?
- 3. Biblical Beliefs (Non-essential/Objective)** True believers in Christ may disagree on these theological beliefs or systems of belief.
- 4. Personal preferences (Autonomous/Subjective)** What do I like, and want, and choose?

## **Two extremes to avoid around convictions and preferences:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>1. No convictions at all:</b> No black and whites | <b>2. Convictions about everything:</b> No gray areas |
| a. No absolutes                                      | a. Denies the spectrum of truth                       |
| b. Give up knowing anything                          | b. Must know everything (must be God)                 |
| c. Leads to license (immorality, lawlessness)        | c. Leads to legalism (pharisaic, judgmental)          |
| d. An excuse to sin by rejecting accountability      | d. Avoids living by faith                             |



**Application: Five principles related to our convictions and preferences**

1. Don't judge other Christians according to your personal convictions or dogmatic about your biblical beliefs but show consideration for others. (Rom 14:1-23)
2. Give up your rights to certain freedoms for the sake of Christians who have personal convictions in those areas. (1 Cor 8:4-13) Our freedom in Christ must be used to glorify God and for the good of others. (1 Cor 10:23-33)
3. Keep man-made rules (personal convictions and beliefs) that are not specifically spelled out in Scripture (biblical convictions) to a minimum. (Col 2:16-23).
4. God uses men and women who live by grace in holding their biblical convictions, biblical beliefs, and personal convictions. He is glorified by believers who are committed to living a sacrificial life of conviction rather than compromise in a godless world (1 Cor. 10:31).
5. In areas of biblical convictions, don't subtract from or add to God's revealed truth in the Bible. (Dt 4:1-2; Rev 18-19)

	<b>PERSONALLY SUBJECTIVE</b>	<b>BIBLICALLY OBJECTIVE</b>
<b>ESSENTIAL</b>	<p><b>PERSONAL CONVICTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alcohol</li> <li>Body Piercing</li> <li>Dancing</li> <li>Education</li> <li>Gambling</li> <li>Global Warming</li> <li>Movies</li> <li>Music</li> <li>Social Media</li> <li>Politics</li> <li>Tattoos</li> <li>Voting</li> <li>Vaccinations</li> </ul>	<p><b>BIBLICAL ESSENTIALS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Truth and authority of the Scriptures</li> <li>The Triune God as Creator and Redeemer</li> <li>The fall of humanity and total depravity</li> <li>The person and work of Jesus Christ</li> <li>Forgiveness and eternal life by grace thru faith</li> <li>Redeemed humanity in Christ as His body</li> <li>The return of Jesus, judgement of man,</li> <li>Restoration of humanity and creation.</li> </ul>
<b>NON-ESSENTIAL</b>	<p><b>PERSONAL PREFERENCES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cars</li> <li>Clothes</li> <li>Cosmetics</li> <li>Exercise</li> <li>Musical instruments,</li> <li>Musical genres</li> <li>Ice Cream Flavor</li> <li>Food</li> <li>Pets</li> <li>Sports</li> <li>Hobbies</li> <li>Reading</li> <li>Toilet Paper unrolling</li> <li>Vacationing</li> </ul>	<p><b>BIBLICAL BELIEFS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation (old earth, new earth, etc..)</li> <li>Method of Personal Holiness</li> <li>Biblical Interpretation</li> <li>Mode of Baptism</li> <li>Role of Women</li> <li>Frequency of Communion</li> <li>Form of Church Government</li> <li>Time of the Rapture of the Church</li> <li>Time of the Second Coming of Jesus</li> </ul>

# MEMBERSHIP POLICY

## 1. Types of Membership

- **Members:** Members are adults (at least 18 years old) who desire to make PBC their local church home. Children of members will be considered part of the PBC church family as regular attenders (see Section 2). Only members of Plano Bible Chapel may vote in official church matters. Only members will be eligible to serve as elders and deacons. Participation in PBC other ministries and leadership positions, as determined by the elders, may be limited only to members.
- **Regular Attenders:** A regular attender is any person who desires to regularly attend PBC and participate in its services and activities. Regular attenders and their children are considered part of our PBC family. Attenders are eligible to become members when they meet the membership requirements (see Section 2). Children of members are considered regular attenders until they turn 18, at which time they will be encouraged to become members.

## 2. Membership Requirements

- Members of Plano Bible Chapel commit themselves to our church in three areas:
  1. Affirm their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and their assurance of salvation
  2. Support the doctrinal positions and ministry purposes of the church
  3. Strive to mature in their relationship with God by actively participating in our church life and by spiritual growth, fellowship, prayer, service, support, and unity.

## 3. Reception of Members

1. **Attend a New Member Class**
2. **Sign the Membership Commitment form**
3. **Meet personally with a pastor and an elder at PBC**

Prospective members present themselves for church membership upon profession of personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and confession of baptism. After completing a required membership class and signing a membership commitment form, they meet with a pastor and an elder to affirm their faith in Christ and testimony of baptism, their support with the church's doctrinal statement and purpose, and their desire (with God's help) to mature in their relationship with God. Any new member who has not received believer's baptism will be encouraged to receive the ordinance of water baptism by immersion.

## 4. Termination of Membership

- At the discretion of the Governing Board of Elders, members who move from the Dallas area may be removed from church membership.
- A member will be removed from membership who (1) requests to be removed, or (2) departs from his previously expressed support of the doctrinal statement of the church, or (3) evidences a lack of purpose in living a holy life, or (4) clearly manifests disinterest and inactivity in the life of the church. Before the final decision is made the recourse of Matthew 18:15-17 will have been exhausted (if applicable), and such a member will have been given the opportunity for a hearing before the Governing Board of elders if desired.
- A member that has been absent from the church for a period of six months may be officially removed from church membership by the elders after appropriate steps have been taken to communicate with them.
- Acting on behalf of the Governing Board of elders, the elder secretary will see that all the applicable steps described have been taken and that the elders' decision has been officially communicated.

# MEMBERSHIP COMMITMENT

## Membership: Toward a Living and Active Faith: Moving from Visitor to Devoted Disciple

### MEMBERSHIP BASICS:

1. **Attend a New Member Class**
2. **Sign the Membership Commitment form**
3. **Meet personally with a pastor and an elder at PBC**

Prospective members present themselves for church membership upon profession of personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and confession of baptism. After completing a required membership class and signing a membership commitment form, they meet with a pastor and an elder to affirm their faith in Christ and testimony of baptism, their support with the church's doctrinal statement and purpose, and their desire (with God's help) to mature in their relationship with God. Any new member who has not received believer's baptism will be encouraged to receive the ordinance of water baptism by immersion.

### MEMBERSHIP COMMITMENTS:

Members at Plano Bible Chapel are actively involved in the life of the body. Below are some of the Next Steps that members take to grow and serve:

1. **Worship the Lord** (Psalm 29:2; 96:9; John 4:24; Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 13:15)
  - a. Gather weekly with the church body for corporate worship through prayer, song, preaching, giving, and communion
  - b. Practice personal Bible reading and prayer
2. **Devote Yourself to the Word and Prayer** (John 17:17; Acts 17:11; Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:16)
  - a. Listen to the preached word each Sunday
  - b. Join a Sunday School class for interactive learning and equipping
  - c. Practice personal Bible reading and prayer
3. **Pursue Unified Community** (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Thessalonians 5:11)
  - a. Join a small group for fellowship and service opportunities
  - b. Join a Sunday School class to build community as you learn together
  - c. Join a Bible Study at PBC
4. **Practice Generosity** (Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7; 1 Timothy 6:17-19)
  - a. Determine to make regular financial gifts to God's work through PBC
  - b. Find a place to serve at PBC within 90 days
  - c. Seek God's leading to sacrificially give
5. **Embrace Mission** (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:13-15)
  - a. Join a small group for service opportunities
  - b. Pray for the salvation of 3 non-believers
  - c. Participate in outreach events and support our PBC missionaries
  - d. Assist attendees in the ESL ministry
  - e. Host a Neighborhood Bible Club
6. **Serve Joyfully** (Mark 10:45; Romans 12:11; Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10)
  - a. Serve in the BOMO ministry for one-on-one discipleship
  - b. Teach or help in the Children's Ministry

- c. Teach an adult class
- d. Participate in “Fix-It Fridays”
- e. Serve in the AWANA Clubs ministry

## **MEMBERSHIP COMMITMENTS in greater detail:**

### **WORSHIP**

Worship is an integral part of the life of a believer in Jesus Christ. It represents both an acknowledgement of God’s rightful rule over our lives and a heartfelt response to the love that He demonstrated by sending Jesus as the sacrifice for a debt we could never repay.

Worship is both an individual and a corporate undertaking. In our personal lives we should be regularly spending time in God’s Word and in talking to our Heavenly Father in prayer. We do this out of a desire to know Jesus more fully and not out of obligation. Paul said it this way in Philippians 3:8a – *“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”*

One way to think about personal time in God’s Word is to “shoot for seven days and get five”. Personal time in the Word should never be a “check-the-box” exercise or a legalistic pursuit. The goal is to spend time in fellowship with God and learn more about Him through the inspired Scriptures. A Bible reading plan can be very helpful in this regard and there are many apps available today such as the Bible app (YouVersion) which have reading plans that encourage daily time in God’s Word.

From a corporate perspective, we gather each week to worship God through singing, prayer, and the study of His Word. It is important as believers to participate in corporate worship. Hebrews 10:24-25 provide important guidance here: *“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”*

In a world with easy access to sermons, podcasts and a multitude of other resources, it may be tempting to conclude that one can worship and grow in isolation. Technology can create a false sense of community and lure us into a habit of not fellowshiping with other believers in person. However, this is clearly not the biblical model. God designed us for relationship with Himself and with others and technology cannot replace that effectively. Members of Plano Bible Chapel are expected to fellowship together each week in person and encourage each other. This is vital to the ongoing health of the body.

### **THE WORD**

The Bible is our guidebook and helps us navigate through life. Psalm 119:105 pictures the Word as a *“lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”* We are constantly bombarded by untruths or half-truths in our culture while societal pressures seek to conform us to the world’s standards. God’s Word is our bedrock and foundation. In fact, Jesus said in Luke 6:47-49,

*“Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”*

The Bible was inspired by God and therefore, is the very Word of God. In 2 Peter 1:21 we are told that *“no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”* 2 Timothy 3:16-17 expands on this: *“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”*

God uses his Word in our lives in many ways. Some examples are:

- Conviction of sin (Hebrews 4:12)
- Direction for living (all throughout Scripture)
- Strengthen our faith (Romans 10:17)
- Inform us of Satan’s strategies and protect us from them (Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Peter 1:3-4)

- Empower us to live godly lives (Psalm 119:9; John 17:17)
- Reveal Christ and God's plan for mankind (John 1:14; John 14:6; Hebrews 1:3)

At Plano Bible Chapel, we hold God's Word in high esteem. We believe that to live godly lives in a world that desperately needs Jesus, we must spend time in God's Word. The Holy Spirit uses God's Word to point out areas in our lives that require attention. The ultimate goal is to be transformed and become more like Christ.

The mission of Plano Bible Chapel is "leading all people to a life changing, ever growing relationship with Jesus." The Bible tells the story of God's redemption of mankind after our rebellion against Him beginning in the Garden of Eden. All of Scripture, beginning with the Old Testament, points to Jesus Christ as the "author and finisher of our faith" as the writer of Hebrews states. As a member of Plano Bible Chapel, members are expected to spend time studying and applying God's Word. This is a critical component in fulfilling our mission of reaching our community for Christ.

## **UNIFIED COMMUNITY**

God did not design us to operate in isolation from each other. We were designed for relationship with God and relationship with others. At Plano Bible Chapel, we seek to be a grace-filled community where we can learn and grow together. We believe that fellowship with other believers is a key feature of walking with God.

In 1 Corinthians 12, the apostle Paul uses the analogy of a body to describe how members of a church can work together effectively. In fact, he points out the folly of trying to go it alone. In verse 17, he states, "*If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?*" He continues, "*The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'*" (1 Cor 12:21). Every member at Plano Bible Chapel is important and has a role to play. We were each uniquely designed by God and together we can operate as the hands and feet of Christ in a hurting world.

In John 17, Jesus prays what has come to be known as the high priestly prayer. There is a theme that resonates throughout much of His conversation with the Father. That theme is unity. In verses 20-23, Christ says,

*"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me."*

Unity within the body of Christ provides a testimony to the world around us that Jesus changes lives. John 13:34-35 says, "*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.*"

Grace and love should be the hallmarks of our community as we seek to serve the Lord effectively together. There may be conflicts but here too, the Bible is our guide:

- "*Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love*" (Ephesians 4:15-16).
- "*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you*" (Ephesians 4:32).
- Jesus emphasized the importance of making things right when we have offended a fellow believer. In Matthew 5:24 he said, "*So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*"
- Matthew 18:15-17 provides a framework for dealing with sin in the body and it begins with a one-on-one conversation between the offended and the offender.

## **GENEROSITY**

In his excellent book on financial management, Master Your Money, Ron Blue explores several principles related to possessions and how to manage them according to the Bible. The first principle is: "God owns it all". God created everything and thus has a claim of ownership over all that He has made. Our generosity is a response to the generous blessings that He has given us.

In the Old Testament the concept of a tithe or tenth was established as the standard. One tenth of a new crop was to be given to God as one example. However, in the New Testament giving is not viewed as compulsory or as a simple

formula but rather a matter of the heart. In 2 Corinthians 9:7 Paul says, *“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”* Through faith in Christ we are willingly sharing the many blessings that He has given us with others. We are, in effect, acknowledging that God owns it all and we are cheerfully participating in His work in the world.

The principle of sowing and reaping is repeated throughout the New Testament. In 2 Corinthians 9:6 Paul says, *“The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”* Our generosity is evidence of our faith. If we hoard our resources for ourselves, it indicates that we do not trust God to provide for our needs. On the other hand, giving generously recognizes God as our provider and the source of all that we need.

As believers, we are called to share what we have with those who are less fortunate. In God’s economy, we are designed to be conduits for His many blessings and not reservoirs. He entrusts us with money and possessions so that we can be His hands and feet to distribute those resources where they are needed. Throughout Scripture God’s heart for widows, orphans and the poor is revealed time and time again. What a blessing to be able to participate with Him in meeting the needs of those less fortunate than us!

Our perspective plays a critical role in our giving. Are we focused more on this life or the one to come in eternity? James says that this life is *“a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes”* (James 4:14). Generosity operates from an eternal perspective. Our resources can be used to further God’s kingdom here on earth which has consequences for eternity. Jesus spoke to this in Matthew 6:19-20 when he said, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Sacrificial giving is exercising our faith and giving above and beyond our comfort level while trusting God to provide. R. G. LeTourneau, who gave 90% of his earnings to God’s work, had this to say about giving, *“It’s not how much of my money I give to God, but how much of God’s money I keep for myself.”*

## **EMBRACE MISSION**

In Acts 1:8, just prior to ascending into heaven, Jesus leaves his disciples with these words, *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* Clearly the mission of the disciples is to spread the good news of the gospel throughout the world. The Holy Spirit empowers us for this work.

We live in a world that is dying. Sin is rampant, people are hurting and life for many is overwhelming. Jesus is the answer! He alone can provide hope to the hopeless. As believers we have the privilege of sharing the good news that Jesus Christ has overcome sin and death.

God has strategically placed each of us within a unique sphere of influence. This includes family, friends, our school or workplace, and our neighborhood. Many of the people that we frequently interact with do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and may not have heard the good news that salvation is offered as a free gift. Peter encourages his readers to *“honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you”* (1 Peter 3:15). The way we conduct ourselves should raise questions in the minds of those around us. We should radiate love, joy, peace and hope in a world that rarely experiences these fundamental desires of the human heart.

Our lives should stand out from this world around us and cause others to ask us why we think and act differently. Matthew puts it this way, *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven”* (Matthew 5:14-16). Eugene Peterson in *The Message* describes our responsibility to be salt and light as bringing out the God flavors and the God colors in the world.

## **SERVING JOYFULLY**

Peter and Paul both refer to themselves as servants or bondservants in their letters. As believers, we too are servants of the King. We owe our allegiance to Him who loved us and saved us despite our rebellion. Romans 5:8 tells us that *“God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Service is a critical part of the Christian life. Even Jesus, the very Son of God, “*came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*” (Mark 10:45). Jesus is our example, and as believers we are called to use our gifts and talents to serve within the church and the community around us.

As the disciples followed Jesus, they discussed on more than one occasion who might be the greatest among them. Jesus turns that thinking upside down! In Matthew 23:11 he taught, “*the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*” As believers in Christ, we are called to be humble servants who use what God has given us for the benefit of others. Such humble service is the mark of a devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

It can be tempting to approach church with the question, “What’s in it for me?” or stated another way, “What do I like or dislike about attending here?” Certainly, our society conditions us to evaluate everything in this manner. However, such an attitude is completely contrary to the teachings of Scripture. In Galatians 5:13 Paul reminds the church, “*For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do no use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh but through love serve one another.*” Over and over again the Scriptures remind us that it’s not about us—it’s about Jesus!

Each of us has been uniquely blessed by God with talents, communication styles and spiritual gifts. We operate as part of the body of Christ, both locally within the church and broadly across the globe. Our service enables the body to accomplish the work of the Father and results in a harvest of spiritual fruit. Fully participating in service alongside other believers magnifies the impact that we have for the gospel inside the church, extends to the community around us and ultimately impacts the world.

In Philippians 1:6 we have the promise that “*He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*” By serving others, we participate in that process of sanctification. We begin to understand our role in building the kingdom as we positively impact the lives of others.

There is joy in serving our Savior!

## **MEMBERSHIP NEXT STEPS**

With a desire to see the church continue to grow in our commitment to Christ, the elders at PBC ask members to make the following six commitments:

- Attend the PBC worship service each week.
- Practice daily personal prayer and Bible reading.
- Join a Sunday School class, small group, and/or Bible Study.
- Determine to make regular financial gifts to God’s work through PBC.
- Find a place to serve at PBC within 90 days.
- Identify and pray for the salvation of three non-believers.

