



Preparing Professing Youth Toward Baptism and Membership

A Parent Resource Guide

Dear Parent,

You are likely reading this because your son or daughter has expressed faith in Christ for salvation. Perhaps, along with that, he or she even desires to be baptized. We rejoice with you!

Often, with news of a profession of faith come significant questions. Questions such as: *What's next? How do I know if he has taken a step toward salvation or has been converted? How can I have confidence that she is ready to be baptized? What about church membership?*

These are natural and important questions, and some of them may be challenging to answer. No human being can know your youth's heart absolutely. Like any other person expressing faith in Jesus, a church cannot say with 100% certainty who is and who is not a Christian. Only the Lord knows perfectly.

Nevertheless, as children and youth begin to profess faith and inquire about baptism, Church on Mill reiterates our commitment to doing our best to whole-heartedly affirm the faith of any person we baptize and bring into membership. With young people, this can be especially complex. Young children often want nothing more than to please mom and dad. And in a home with believing parents, children know the thing parents want most is for their children to love Jesus! So, there can be a real temptation for children to profess faith—maybe even before conversion. Consequently, we recommend you wait to use this formally until your child has professed faith *and* is nearing or in her teen years.

As elders, we desire to walk closely with you as you parent your kids through professing faith in Christ. This document is an attempt to do that.¹ It is designed to equip you as you take on the responsibility to help your teenager think through his/her own profession of faith in the Lord Jesus. It is also designed to be your guide as you walk through the implications of the process laid out in the elder position paper, *An Approach to the Baptism and Membership of Children*. If you still need to read that paper, please stop now and do so. It provides the theological foundations behind the material in this document.

We love you and your child very much. We are here to walk with you. What a privilege you have as a parent to encourage the budding faith in the life of your child(ren)!

With love,

Church on Mill Elders

¹ Although many resources have been used in developing this curriculum, much of the following material has been simply adapted from similar resources used by Sterling Park Baptist Church and Whitton Avenue Bible Church.

CONTENTS

INITIAL STEPS	P. 3
PART ONE: RATIONALE	P. 4-10
A SEASON OF OBSERVATION & DISCIPLESHIP: THE MOTIVATION	P. 5
A SEASON OF OBSERVATION & DISCIPLESHIP: THE PROCESS	P. 6-10
THE YOUTH'S ROLE	P. 6
THE PARENTS' ROLE	P. 7-9
THE ELDERS' ROLE	P. 10
PART TWO: RESOURCES	P. 11-37
“ <i>JUST FOR STARTERS</i> ” GUIDE	P. 10-19
MEMBERSHIP STATEMENT OF FAITH	P. 20-34
MEMBERSHIP STATEMENT OF FELLOWSHIP	P. 35-37

INITIAL STEPS

“Mom. Dad. I want to get baptized.”

There are no sweeter words a Christian parent could hear from a child. Yet these sweet words can also feel intimidating! As their parents—the ones entrusted with their care—how do we faithfully shepherd our children who are confessing Christ for the first time?

Before a detailed response, here are three initial steps that may be helpful.

1. Rejoice!

First, praise God! Communicate how wonderful it is that your son or daughter believes in Jesus and desires to follow him.

2. Remember

Second, one truth that is especially helpful to remember regarding a child’s personal relationship with the Lord is that salvation is God’s work. Therefore, *our aim as parents and as a church is simply to recognize God’s work in our kids, not create a decision in our children.*

The Bible describes salvation as a rebirth (John 3:1-8). To be saved is first to be regenerated - made new. This is not something people can bring about. What a relief! Feel no pressure to talk your youth into a spiritual decision contrary to her will; instead, pray and aim to recognize if God has given a new spiritual heart. We are here to affirm the work of rebirth, which God himself does in an individual’s heart.

Hopefully, remembering this truth relieves some pressure. The fact that your child’s salvation is out of your hands is, at the same time, a bit scary yet also liberating. Aiming to observe God’s work in your child’s life, not manipulate or control it, is a very practical takeaway for parents from the biblical doctrine of conversion.

3. Communicate

We love knowing how the Lord works in children and youth at Church on Mill! If your child professes faith in Christ, please inform an elder so we can pray, rejoice, and walk with you.

Having taken these three initial steps, where do you go from here? We suggest that it is wise to move into a ***season of intentional observation and discipleship***, during which we all observe, encourage, and nurture your youth’s budding faith. Adults will typically follow this sort of process intuitively, but with youth, pursuing it with greater awareness and intentionality is often helpful.

PART ONE:

RATIONALE

A SEASON OF OBSERVATION AND DISCIPLESHIP: THE MOTIVATION

In what way is this season helpful? It is appropriate for every person's confession of faith to be evaluated and examined for his or her own encouragement and further instruction (Matthew 16:13-19). That is, upon hearing a confession of faith, the church should confirm one does believe the biblical gospel and watch for evidence of new life in Christ. 1 John provides a great resource for the type of things to be watchful for, as does the church's position paper, *An Approach to the Baptism and Membership of Children*. A church ought never to baptize and take into membership a person who simply professes faith without also having considered his confession and life in some way.

Baptism is to be observed when the credibility of one's conversion becomes naturally evident to the church, and the person is reasonably prepared for the responsibilities of church membership. With children and youth, it is especially important to be patient and practice thoughtful observation and discipleship. This process is engaged not out of suspicion or distrust but ultimately to increase everyone's confidence in God's good work of salvation.

As a parent, you form an important first step in this observation and discipleship process. The goal in evaluating a confession over time is not to aimlessly delay baptism, rather, the goal is to love each person well by ensuring each has a strong understanding of what God is doing in her life and how to practice a lifestyle of faith, repentance, and evident public commitment to Christ and his people. .

We take the route of a careful approach at Church on Mill because, in part, we take the meaning and significance of the ordinances (Baptism and the Lord's Supper) seriously. Furthermore, since baptism is inseparably connected to a believer's commitment to and inclusion in the visible people of God, with observance of the Lord's Supper and practice of church discipline, we feel compelled to take a patient, deliberate approach. It is vital to be as sure as possible that the people we're baptizing and affirming as church members are truly born again. It is in this light that we ask youth to enter an intentional season of observation and discipleship with their parents and the church family.

There is no set length for this season. It could be weeks, months, or even years—and that is okay. Just as with *anyone* moving toward baptism, we only desire that there be sufficient time for the youth, parents, and church to be able to affirm the faith of the one making the confession.

So, how do we aim to go about that?

Beginning on the next page, you will find specifics.

A SEASON OF OBSERVATION AND DISCIPLESHIP: THE PROCESS

It is helpful to note that there are three different parties involved in this discipleship process: the youth, the parent, and the church (often initially represented by a pastor). Each of these plays a vital role in this season of discipleship towards baptism and membership. So, we will take them in turn.

I. DISCIPLING TOWARDS BAPTISM & MEMBERSHIP: THE YOUTH'S ROLE

What steps do we encourage the teenager to take as they walk towards obedience in baptism? Here are some steps to consider.

Learn from Your Parents²

The church would love for youth to take time to learn even more about the gospel, baptism, church membership, and the Christian life at home. So, it would be great for youth to begin an intentional process of studying and having meaningful conversations on these topics as parents sense baptism and membership may be drawing near. .

As the young person studies, encourage him to write questions down and talk about them with you and, if desired, their youth leaders and pastors. This document outlines what to study, so read on.

Learn from Your Pastors

Also, when a youth is ready, she should have an initial conversation with one of the pastors about her faith in Jesus. A parent may be involved in this conversation if desired. It is best to have this conversation after having walked through the material in this document.

The pastor's aim will be to listen, ask questions, encourage, and determine any practical next steps.

He may determine that the appropriate next step is simply to keep learning and praying at home with parents and at church with leaders and peers but to wait on baptism. In other cases, he may determine that attending the Church on Mill Membership Class is the next step.

Complete the Membership Process

Every prospective new member goes through our Membership Class, followed by a membership interview with an elder. Even if a youth has been around the church since she was born, this class will help answer questions and provide a foundation for a lifetime of thoughtful church engagement.

Following the membership interview and affirmation of the Membership Commitment, the youth will work on a written version of his conversion and then be scheduled for baptism and presented to the church for membership.

² If, for any reason, the youth does not have a parent capable of carrying out this discipleship, the church will provide an appropriate mentor.

II. DISCIPLING TOWARDS BAPTISM & MEMBERSHIP: THE PARENTS' ROLE

The second person with significant responsibility in this process is the parent. The Lord has entrusted this soul to your care in the family. We commend the following steps to you as wise and edifying.

Remember

First, as we stated above, it is important to remember the goal. Remind yourself that your role is not to bring your youth to a decision or to talk her into (or out of) something. Rather, your goal is simply to observe, encourage, and nurture your youth in her pursuit of God. Be her faithful partner. Be his present guide. Be her biggest cheerleader and encourager. Watch for God's work and tell him when you see clear examples of grace. This is to be a thrilling experience in the ordinary stuff of life.

Understand

Also, parents of students must understand that, as a church, we do not ordinarily have a category for individuals who are baptized but not brought into the membership of the church. Likewise, we see no biblical category for a church member who would not potentially be subject to formative and corrective church discipline. This includes members who are still under the direct authority of their parents. While seeking to be wise, loving, and patient in each case of discipline, parents should understand that all who are members of the church are potentially subject to God's good gift of discipline. This means that, in cases of ongoing, serious unrepentance, the elders and church will eventually need to become appropriately informed and involved.

Now, with this established goal and understanding in mind, what are good steps to take in helping your teenager walk faithfully toward baptism and membership?

We suggest committing to four things in this season: *walk, talk, look, and listen.*

Walk

View this journey toward baptism and membership as a walk, not a sprint. While it may be tough, we ask that you not feel the need to rush your child into baptism and church membership at the moment he professes faith. Again, our goal in this is not to needlessly delay your child's excitement, but rather, we want to love people well by ensuring they have a strong understanding of what God is doing in their lives and how they're responding to him.

Understanding what it means to be a Christian and coming to terms with the gravity of a life-long commitment to Jesus is more important than the speed with which baptism is applied.

Talk

As we walk, we should talk. We have already encouraged youth that their parents are the first place to go in thinking through the next steps in following Jesus. So now, we encourage you to be ready to talk with them. When the Bible addresses a parent's role in rearing their children in spiritual truths, the basic exhortation is to talk about the Lord and his gospel throughout each day.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 *And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*

Notice that this portrait of family discipleship is of a parent who is always ready and willing to talk about the truth. Fathers are singled out as having formative responsibilities in Deuteronomy 6, but certainly, throughout the Bible, both mom and dad are engaged in this thrilling ministry. Whether sitting at the kitchen table or running errands, lying down before bed, or waking up to a new day, God's design is that parents would be ever ready and willing to converse with their children about God and his gospel.

Now, this does not mean that you need to be the perfect answerer. No, kids often ask questions we are ill-equipped to answer! The point is that we are on the road with and talking to them along the way. There are many resources available to help in discipling your children and youth in the home. As a part of the process of leading a young person toward baptism and membership, we ask that the parents work through three things with your youth: (a) this paper, (b) "*Just for Starters*"³, and (c) the Membership Statements of Faith and Fellowship. A roadmap to use is located in the second section of this document.

If your child has experienced genuine conversion, she will have an authentic interest in God, the gospel, and the church. Your role is to create a welcoming environment to have gospel conversations. And remember, you are not alone in this. Go to other members and come to us for help. Discipleship is a community project: please don't go it alone!

Look

Although regeneration itself is an invisible work of God, it is manifested in visible fruit. Thus, our next role is to look for the fruit of regeneration in a confessor's life. Jesus tells us that we know a tree by its fruit (Luke 6:43-45). If your teen is professing to love and trust Christ for salvation, this is a great time to begin observing his life for evidence that he has gone from spiritual death to spiritual life. Obviously, we all expect a teenager's life to be heading toward adulthood but not quite mature yet. But if one has true faith, expect to begin seeing some observable evidence of regeneration. Look for progress, not perfection.

What should you be looking for? Here are some categories and questions to guide you:

Look for Repentance from Sin

- Does your son/daughter demonstrate sorrow and remorse for his or her sin?
- Does your son/daughter confess her sins *to God* and ask for his forgiveness without your prompting?
- Specifically, what sins have your son/daughter repented of?
- Does your son/daughter confess sins to God independent of "*getting caught*" or "*having consequences*" from you?

Look for Faith in Christ

- In what practical ways does your son/daughter demonstrate that he/she trusts Jesus?
- How does your son/daughter respond to hardship?
- Does your son/daughter understand that she is saved only by God's grace and not because of any good within herself?
- Does your son/daughter demonstrate a genuine interest in spiritual things apart from your prompting?
- Does your son/daughter ever pray or read the Scriptures on their own initiative?
- Does your son/daughter desire to talk with you or others about God and the Bible?

³ Or another book that covers similar material pertaining to the normal rhythms of the Christian life.

Look for Good Works

- Does your son/daughter show practical love for others?
- Does your son/daughter demonstrate a genuine desire to tell others about Jesus?
- Is your son/daughter growing in the spiritual fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control?

Listen

While we certainly ought not to expect any young Christian to produce a theological treatise in every area of theology, it is wise to expect one to be able to understand and articulate certain foundational truths about the faith before being baptized and welcomed into membership.

In that light, as parents and elders, it is important for us to listen, seeking to discern what she does and does not yet understand. This is at the heart of the discussion/study guide included later in this document.

The point is not to sit down and run through these all at once. Plan regular times to meet with your teen, as well as make these things a part of your everyday conversation. Note things about which he may be unclear. Reflect on how you can help her think through them more clearly.

III. DISCIPLING TOWARDS BAPTISM & MEMBERSHIP: THE ELDERS' ROLE

The final entity with a responsibility in this walk towards baptism and membership is the church herself. In this formal discipleship process, the church is represented primarily by the pastors.

The elders have numerous responsibilities in this process:

Equip & Support

Salvation. Baptism. Membership. These are incredibly important issues that the pastors of the church must carefully and biblically provide leadership in. The pastors have a responsibility to provide both resources and opportunities to help parents and children throughout this exciting and important season. This is much of what our Pastor of Family Ministries does, yet all the pastors will provide encouragement and support to any child and parent regardless of where they are at in the process of considering baptism and membership.

Discuss & Discern

Throughout the process, your pastors will seek to discern that the youth's profession of faith is credible, being accompanied by biblical signs of conversion.

Lead Membership Process

Teach Membership Classes: Pastors will teach Membership Class at least three times throughout the year to any and all who are interested in learning more about membership at Church on Mill.

Conduct Membership Interview: Upon conclusion of the Membership Class, a final meeting with the teenager and an elder takes place to discuss salvation, the Membership Commitment, and the process that follows.

Oversee Membership Entry: After conducting a membership interview, if the teen, parents, and elders jointly believe it is fitting to proceed, the youth will then be asked, as every baptism candidate is, to write out his testimony and, upon approval, to share it in front of the church, be baptized, and then be welcomed into the rights and privileges of membership by vote of affirmation in a subsequent Members Meeting.

PART TWO:
RESOURCES

RESOURCE #1

“Just for Starters” Discussion Guide

Note for Parents: The following material is intended to be a guide, not a manuscript. You’ll want to secure at least two copies of the book *Just for Starters* – one for you and one for your teenager. The Family Ministries office will likely have copies available, so check with leaders.

With the book study through *Just for Starters*, in particular, our hope is to ‘get practical’ about some of the core elements of the Christian life. So, jump into that with both feet! Work through the book together and use this guide to drill down deeper into the practical matters of life with Christ. The goal is not to get through the material but to hear from your teenager and help shape her view of the Christian life.

If at any point you have questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to another church member, leader, or elder for help.

You will find a single-page discussion guide below for each chapter of *Just for Starters* (a separate book).

Just for Starters, Chapter One: Saved by God

Drive It Home: Sin is rebellion against God and an affront against his holiness. But, in love, Christ died for sinners.

Read: Romans 5:6-11 → John 3:16; 1 Peter 2:22-25, 3:18; Romans 3:21-26

Discuss:

- What is sin? Is sin the same thing as making a mistake? Being tricked by Satan?
- What is the difference between “being a sinner” and being a person sometimes “who sins?”
- What makes sin such a big deal to God? Why does He take it so seriously?
- What can a sinner do to make themselves right with God?
 - What are some ways that you might try to make yourself right with God?
 - **PARENT:** Share your experience with this as well.
- The Bible presents the answer to our sin and wrath problem to be Christ’s love - especially shown through Christ’s death on our behalf.
- How can Christ’s love and sacrifice make us right with God?

Personalize It:

- In what ways have you seen that not only do you do wrong things on occasion but that we are actually sinners to our core?
 - Practically, why does this fact even matter?
- How do you know that God loves you?
- When you stand before God, why would God accept you?
- What difference has Christ’s love for you made in your life?

Just for Starters, Chapter Two: Trusting in God

Drive It Home: Salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone - apart from good works.

Read: Ephesians 2:1-10 → Philippians 3:8-9; John 1:9-13; Romans 4:16-25

Discuss:

- Why do we need to be saved? Saved from what?
- What does faith have to do with salvation?
- What does it mean to trust God?
 - How is faith and trust different/similar to simple belief in/about God?
- Why is it good news that our salvation is not based upon our works?

Personalize It:

- Have you been saved? Tell me about that.
- What credit can you take for your salvation?
- Have you responded to God by putting your trust in him? How can you know?

Just for Starters, Chapter Three: Living God's Way

Drive It Home: Salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone - apart from good works. This grace empowers and motivates us to obey God.

Read: Titus 2:1-15 → Romans 8:9-10, 12-14; Colossians 3:1-17; Galatians 5:16-25

Discuss:

- What is the relationship between the grace of God and our obedience to God?
- What is the blessed hope that we are to be waiting for?
 - Christians are called to live holy, upright lives as we wait for Christ's second coming.
- If we are not saved BY our works - then doesn't that mean that our obedience and good works are not important? Why/why not?
- Why is it important for professing Christians to live obedient lives?

Personalize It:

- What worldly desires do you struggle with?
- What does Scripture call you to do when we sin?
- How can you say 'No' to them? How can God's grace actually help you say 'No' to the sins that we struggle with?

Just for Starters, Chapter Four: Listening to God

Drive It Home: The Bible is God's Word! It should be a central part of every believer's life.

Read: 2 Timothy 3:14-17 → 2 Peter 1:20-21; Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 19:1-14

Discuss:

- What does it mean that Scripture is 'God-breathed' or 'inspired by God?'
- What does it mean that Scripture is 'inerrant?'
- What does it mean that Scripture is 'authoritative?'
- How do these attributes of Scripture actually all naturally come from our belief that Scripture is inspired by God?
 - Since God never errs - and Scripture is God's Word - we can be confident that Scripture never errs either.
- What do these passages tell us that Scripture is 'useful for?'

Personalize It:

- If Scripture is all of this, how should we use God's Word in our lives?
- What are some different ways that we, as believers, use God's Word?
- Do you ever read the Bible on your own? How often do you read it?
- How do you decide what to read?
- What is the most difficult part of reading your Bible?
- What are some other steps you can take to make the Bible a more central part of your life?

Just for Starters, Chapter Five: Talking to God

Drive It Home: Prayer is both a gracious invitation and a spiritual discipline of the Christian's life.

Read: Philippians 4:4-7 → Hebrews 4:15-16; Romans 8:15-17, 26-27; Matthew 6:5-15, 19:-34

Discuss:

- In your own words, how would you define prayer?
- Why do we pray to God?
- Why do we pray in Jesus' name?
- What types of things should we pray about? As we read throughout Scripture, we can be fully honest with God, and we can pray about anything and everything!
 - Our passage today even tells us that we should pray when we are ANXIOUS. Do you ever feel anxious about anything? Have you ever prayed when you feel anxious?
- Why should prayer be a regular part of the Christian life?
- How is prayer more than just a 'spiritual discipline' but something that we should really be amazed by and rejoice in?

Personalize It:

- Do you ever pray on your own? How often do you think you find yourself doing so?
- What types of things drive you to God in prayer?
- What are some things that you haven't prayed about yet - but that you really should?
- What difficulties have you experienced with prayer?
- What steps could you take to make prayer a more important part of your life?
- How are we to make sense of all the times we pray for something, but it doesn't seem like God answers that prayer?
- **PARENT:** Depending on how your child responds to this lesson, you could teach them a general prayer 'grid' such as "ACTS" – A (adoration), C (confession), T (thanksgiving), S (supplication) — or you could teach her how to use the 'Lord's Prayer' or a Psalm as a guide.

Just for Starters, Chapter Six: Meeting with God's Family

Drive It Home: One of the clearest types of evidence of a believer's love for Christ is his commitment to the local church.

Read: Hebrews 10:19-25 → John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 3:5-17; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:18-21

Discuss:

- Right now, you may not have much of a choice regarding whether or not you gather with the church on Sundays – but why does the BIBLE say it is important?
- How does being committed to gathering with Church on Mill help you to walk with Jesus more closely? How have you seen it help you to be encouraged in your faith?
- Being committed and regular in a church is not just FOR/ABOUT YOU, though, is it? What does Scripture say about the impact of our attendance and participation upon others?
 - **PARENT:** You could read Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18-21 as one example of how even our 'personal' singing is meant to teach and encourage believers around us.
- Why do some people not meet with God's people regularly?
 - What is lost when a professing believer doesn't? Individually? Corporately?

Personalize It:

- What is your favorite part about gathering with Church on Mill on Sunday mornings? What is your least favorite // hardest part?
 - **PARENT:** Use this opportunity to talk to your kids about the importance of each of the parts of Sunday morning - whether that be the class, singing, the sermon, or the Lord's Supper. Consider this as an opportunity for you to help your child make a plan on how they can understand and 'get more out of' that particular aspect of the service.
- Do you typically go to church thinking about what you can get from it or how you can invest and encourage others? Both things are good, but practically (get specific), how could you encourage and minister to others on Sunday?
- Did you know that you are never too young to make an impact on the church (both young and old)?! Did you know that as a believer, Scripture says that God has given you gifts and skills that you could use to build up the Body?! Are there ways that you'd like to be more involved than you are now?
- **PARENT:** If your son/daughter is at the age where baptism and membership are being pursued, use this time to talk about the importance of membership and how your child joining the church increases their responsibility to come in as a minister, not just a recipient or participator.

Just for Starters, Chapter Seven: Meeting the World

Drive It Home: God has not only called us to himself in salvation, but He has commissioned each and every one of us (young and old) to make an impact on the world around us.

Read: Colossians 4:2-6 → 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1; 1 Peter 3:15-16; 2 Corinthians 2:14-17; Matthew 28:18-20;

Discuss:

- What do you think this passage means when it talks about ‘outsiders?’ What are they ‘outsiders’ of?
- How does Scripture teach us that we should act and treat non-believers?
- Scripture often tells us that we are to impact the world with our WORDS and our DEEDS.
 - How do we share the Gospel with our Words? What words?
 - How do we share the Gospel with our Deeds? What types of deeds?
 - How can deeds actually share the Gospel message?
- 1 Peter tells us that we, as believers, should be ready to share the Good News at any moment! That can be a scary thought. How do you think a person could prepare and make sure they are ‘ready?’ What steps could they practically take?

Personalize It:

- Do you ever think about or pray for people that you know who don’t trust Christ?
- Who are you especially concerned about?
- What can you do or say that might lead to opportunities to share the gospel with them?
- Have you ever told someone about Jesus/the Gospel before? How did it go?
 - **PARENTS:** This is a great opportunity for you to share your experiences. Of nervousness - maybe some ‘failures’ - and the lessons you’ve learned. It would be great if you also talked about the excitement of just being able to share - even if the people don’t turn and trust Christ (i.e., ‘results’ vs. faithfulness to share).
- If I were a non-believer and I asked you the question, “How can I be saved?” - how would you answer?

RESOURCE #2

Membership Statement of Faith

Note for Parents: While we certainly do not expect any young Christian (of any age) to articulate a Ph.D.'s level of theological precision and understanding, we do believe it wise to expect one to be able to understand and articulate essential foundational truths about the faith before being welcomed into membership. As a member in a congregationally-governed, elder-led church, this knowledge is essential to the responsibilities of membership. You can study through this Statement in a variety of creative ways but do not rush or just instruct.

Our *recommendation* is that you have your teen independently study each of these statements (pages 21-34). Ask your teen to prepare to lead you in a discussion through each category as if you were a new believer who does not know much. Although this will be more challenging, we trust it will prove more rewarding and increase retention. Perhaps break your conversations into multiple parts to keep it fun and avoid it being overwhelming or cumbersome.

As your teenager walks through each section of the Membership Statement of Faith with you, listen for what you can affirm as well as any areas you might need to offer clarification or correction. Do not be afraid to ask questions such as, "Could you explain what you mean by that?" Your intent is not to stump or discourage, but to encourage and spur on in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Membership Statement of Faith

1. The Tri-une God

We believe in one God,⁴ eternally existing in three equally divine, unified Persons: the Father,⁵ the Son,⁶ and the Holy Spirit,⁷ who know, love, and glorify one another.⁸ This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love⁹ and in his holiness.¹⁰ He is the Creator of all things and is worthy to receive all glory and adoration.¹¹ He knows,¹² sustains,¹³ and rules over all,¹⁴ and providentially brings about his good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation.¹⁵

Study Notes:

⁴ Exod. 15:11; 20:2–3; Deut. 4:35, 39; 6:4–5; 32:39; 1 Kings 8:60; Isa. 44:6–8; 45:5–6, 14, 21–22; 46:9; John 17:3; Rom. 3:30; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; James 2:19

⁵ John 13:3; 20:17; Rom. 1:7; 15:6; 1 Cor. 15:24; Phil. 2:11; James 1:27; 2 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 1:6

⁶ Isa. 9:6; John 1:1, 14, 18; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Col. 1:19; 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:3, 8–10; 2 Pet. 1:1; 1 John 5:20

⁷ Gen. 1:2; Acts 5:3–4; 1 Cor. 3:16; Heb. 9:14

⁸ Matt. 3:17; 17:5; John 3:35; 5:20; 8:54; 13:32; 14:31; 16:14; 17:1, 5, 24

⁹ Exod. 34:6; Ps. 86:5, 15; 1 John 4:8–10, 16

¹⁰ Exod. 15:11; Lev. 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:26; Josh. 24:19; 1 Sam. 2:2; Pss. 22:3; 99:3, 5, 9; Isa. 6:3; 57:15; 1 Pet. 1:16; Rev. 4:8; 15:4

¹¹ Gen. 1:1; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 90:2; Isa. 40:26, 28; 45:18; Jer. 10:12; John 1:3; Acts 4:24; 14:15; 17:24; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; 11:3; Rev. 4:11; 10:6

¹² Isa. 46:10; 1 John 3:20

¹³ Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3

¹⁴ Ps. 103:19; Dan. 4:35; Matt. 10:29–30; Rom. 11:36

¹⁵ Gen. 50:20; Eph. 1:11; 3:11

2. Revelation

We believe that God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in creation¹⁶ and has supremely revealed himself in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word.¹⁷ Moreover, God has revealed himself in his written Word, the verbally inspired sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments.¹⁸ It is complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do,¹⁹ and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks.²⁰ The Bible is to be believed, as God's perfect instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.²¹

Study Notes:

¹⁶ Ps. 19:1–6; Acts 14:17; Rom. 1:19–20

¹⁷ John 1:1, 14; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:1–2; Rev. 19:13

¹⁸ Pss. 12:6; 19:7; Prov. 30:5; Luke 24:27, 44; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19–21

¹⁹ Ps. 119:9; Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; 1 Pet. 1:23

²⁰ John 17:17

²¹ Josh. 1:8; Ps. 19:7–11; Matt. 5:17–20; 28:18–20; Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:17; Heb. 2:1; James 1:22

3. Creation of Humanity

We believe God created men and women in his image and for his glory.²² Equal yet different, Adam and Eve were brought together in a one-flesh marriage union that establishes the only biblical pattern of sexual relations for men and women.²³ In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways.²⁴ Both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and develop their full potential in the ministries of the people of God.²⁵

Study Notes:

²² Gen. 1:26–27; 5:1–2; 9:6; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 10:31; James 3:9

²³ Gen. 2:18–24; Matt. 19:6; Rom. 1:26–27; 1 Cor. 6:9–7:5; 11:11–12; Gal. 5:19–21; Eph. 5:5; Heb. 13:4

²⁴ Gen 1:27; 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22–33; Col. 3:18–19; 1 Tim. 2:9–12; 3:4–5; Titus 2:4; 1 Pet. 3:1–7

²⁵ Acts 2:16–18; Rom. 12:4–8; 1 Cor. 12:7, 11; 1 Pet. 4:10

4. The Fall

We believe that Adam, made in the image of God,²⁶ distorted that image and forfeited his original purity by falling into sin through Satan's temptation.²⁷ As a result of sin, all creation is cursed, and all human beings²⁸ are alienated from God, corrupted, and condemned finally and irrevocably to death.²⁹ The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand.³⁰

Study Notes:

²⁶ Gen. 1:26–27; 2:5–8

²⁷ Gen. 3:1–24

²⁸ Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:21–22

²⁹ Gen. 2:17; 6:5; Pss. 58:3; 130:3; 143:2; Eccles. 7:20; 9:3; Isa. 1:6; 59:2; 64:6; Jer. 13:23; 17:9; John 8:34; Rom. 1:18–3:20, 23; 5:16, 18; 6:23; 8:5–8, 10; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 4:17–19; Titus 1:15; 1 John 1:8, 10

³⁰ Isa. 59:1–20; 61:1–4; Matt. 19:25–26; John 3:16–19, 36; Rom. 1:18; 2:5, 8; 5:9; 9:22; Eph. 2:3; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:16; 5:9

5. The Plan of God

We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation.³¹ In love, God commands and implores all people to repent and believe in Jesus,³² for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved.³³ God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace place faith in Jesus and will one day glorify them³⁴—all to the praise of his glorious grace.³⁵

Study Notes:

³¹ Gen. 12:2–3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8; Rev. 5:9; 7:9–10

³² Ezek. 18:23; Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:14–15; 1 Tim. 2:3–4

³³ Acts 4:12

³⁴ Rom. 5:1–8:39; 1 Cor. 1:2; Phil. 1:6; 3:21; Col. 3:3–4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 9:28; 10:14; 1 John 3:2–3

³⁵ Eph. 1:6, 12, 14; 1 Thess. 1:2–4; 2 Thess. 2:13

6. The Gospel

We believe that the biblical gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ—God’s very wisdom and power to those who are being saved.³⁶ This good news is centered on the historical events of the cross and resurrection.³⁷ By his life and death, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute.³⁸ He died for our sins to reconcile us to God, and by his resurrection was vindicated by his Father, defeated Satan, broke the power of death, and brought us everlasting life.³⁹ When the gospel is received, believed, and held firmly, individuals are saved from eternal condemnation into this everlasting life.⁴⁰

Study Notes:

³⁶ Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:19–31

³⁷ Matt. 28:1–20; Acts 2:14–39; 1 Cor. 15:13–19

³⁸ Isa. 53:5–6; Rom. 4:25; 5:1–11

³⁹ John 12:31; 14:6; 2 Cor. 5:18–19; 15:54–55; Gal. 1:4; Col. 2:15; 2 Tim. 1:10; 1 Pet. 3:18; Rev. 1:18; 2:11; 20:6

⁴⁰ Joel 2:32; 1 Cor. 15:1–2, 11; Heb. 10:23; Rev. 20:15

7. The Redemption of Christ

We believe that the eternal Son⁴¹ became flesh: fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures.⁴² The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary.⁴³ He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father,⁴⁴ lived a sinless life,⁴⁵ proclaimed the kingdom of God,⁴⁶ performed miraculous signs,⁴⁷ was crucified to satisfy God's just wrath,⁴⁸ arose bodily from the dead,⁴⁹ and ascended into heaven.⁵⁰ As the mediatorial King,⁵¹ he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God's sovereignty,⁵² and is our High Priest, righteous Advocate, and Savior.⁵³

Study Notes:

⁴¹ Isa. 9:6; John 1:1–2; 8:58; 17:5, 24; Col. 1:17; Rev. 1:17

⁴² John 1:14; Rom. 1:3–4; 9:5; Phil. 2:7; Col. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:14

⁴³ Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38; Gal. 4:4

⁴⁴ Matt. 26:39; John 6:38; 18:11; Rom. 5:19; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8; 10:5–7

⁴⁵ John 8:29; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5

⁴⁶ Matt. 4:17, 23; 24:14; Mark 1:14–15; Luke 4:43

⁴⁷ John 20:30–31; Acts 2:22

⁴⁸ Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10

⁴⁹ Matt. 28:1–20; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–53; John 20:1–21:25; Acts 10:41; 1 Cor. 15:1–8

⁵⁰ Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9–11

⁵¹ 1 Tim. 2:5

⁵² Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33–34; 5:31; 7:55–56; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Phil. 2:9–11; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22

⁵³ Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1

8. The Justification of Sinners

We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of sin. By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making full satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf.⁵⁴ By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by grace through faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God.⁵⁵

Study Notes:

⁵⁴ Isa. 53:4–6, 12; Rom. 5:15–19; 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 2:14

⁵⁵ Gen. 15:6; Rom. 3:21–5:1; Gal. 2:15–16; 3:8, 11, 24; Eph. 1:7–8; 2:8

9. The Power of the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit applies this salvation to his people. Sent by the Father and the Son,⁵⁶ the other Helper is present with and in believers.⁵⁷ He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment,⁵⁸ and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith.⁵⁹ In him they are baptized into union with the Lord Jesus,⁶⁰ such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed,⁶¹ sanctified,⁶² gifted,⁶³ adopted into God's family,⁶⁴ and participate in the divine nature.⁶⁵

Study Notes:

⁵⁶ John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7

⁵⁷ John 14:16–17, 26; Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 2:12–15; 6:19; 2 Cor. 1:22; Gal 5:16–18; Eph. 1:17–19

⁵⁸ John 16:8–11

⁵⁹ Ezek. 36:27; 37:14; John 1:13; 3:3–8; 2 Cor. 4:3–6; Eph. 2:1–6; Col. 2:13; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23; 1 John 5:1

⁶⁰ Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; Rom. 6:1–4; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:12

⁶¹ Titus 3:5

⁶² Rom. 7:6; 8:13; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 5:22–23; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2

⁶³ 1 Cor. 12:7–11

⁶⁴ John 1:12–13; Rom. 8:15–17, 23; Gal. 4:4–6; Eph. 1:5–6

⁶⁵ Eph. 4:24; Heb. 12:10; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 3:2

10. The Kingdom of God

We believe that those who have been saved by God and regenerated by the Holy Spirit enter the kingdom of God⁶⁶ and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins; the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God; and the promise of the glory yet to be revealed.⁶⁷ Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace;⁶⁸ therefore, as citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves,⁶⁹ doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God.⁷⁰ The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation;⁷¹ it inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.⁷²

Study Notes:

⁶⁶ Matt. 5:20; 7:21; 18:3; 19:23–24; Mark 9:47; 10:23–25; Luke 18:24–25; John 3:5; Acts 14:22

⁶⁷ Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; Rom. 11:27; 1 Cor. 11:23–26; 2 Cor. 3:6–18; Heb. 8:1–13; 9:15–22; 10:15–18; 13:20–21

⁶⁸ John 14:15; Eph. 2:10; James 2:14–26; 1 John 2:2–6, 9–11, 15–17, 19, 29; 3:6–9, 14–15, 24; 4:7, 16, 20; 5:18

⁶⁹ Lev. 19:18; Rom. 13:9–10; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8

⁷⁰ Gal. 6:10

⁷¹ Matt. 12:28; Mark 1:14–15; Luke 11:20; John 3:3, 5; Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20; 6:9–10; 15:24–28; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Col. 1:13

⁷² Gen. 12:1–3; Col. 1:13; Rev. 21:1–4

11. God's New People

We believe that God's new covenant people are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies.⁷³ This universal Church⁷⁴ is manifest in local churches⁷⁵ of which Christ is the only Head;⁷⁶ thus each local church is, in fact, the church, the family of God,⁷⁷ the bride of Christ,⁷⁸ the assembly of the living God,⁷⁹ the body of Christ,⁸⁰ and the pillar and foundation of the truth.⁸¹ The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline,⁸² her great mission,⁸³ and, above all, by her love for God,⁸⁴ and by her members' love for one another⁸⁵ and the world.⁸⁶ These distinguishing qualities are fostered in the congregational church through a humble, biblically qualified male eldership⁸⁷ and a passionate, servant-oriented male and female diaconate.⁸⁸

Study Notes:

⁷³ Eph. 1:20; 2:6; Heb. 12:22–24

⁷⁴ Matt. 16:18; Acts 8:3; 9:31; 1 Cor. 10:32; 12:28; 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Eph. 1:22–23; 3:10, 21; 4:4; 5:23–25, 27, 32; Phil. 3:6; Heb. 12:23

⁷⁵ Matt. 18:17; Acts 13:1; Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 1:2; 4:17; 7:17; 16:19; 2 Cor. 11:8; Col. 4:15–16; Philem. 1:2

⁷⁶ Eph. 1:22–23; 4:15–16; 5:23

⁷⁷ Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 4:17

⁷⁸ Eph. 5:25–32

⁷⁹ 1 Cor. 5:4; James 2:2

⁸⁰ 1 Cor. 12:12–27; Eph. 1:22–23; 4:15–16; Col. 2:19

⁸¹ 1 Tim. 3:15

⁸² Matt. 18:15–20; 1 Cor. 5:1–13; 2 Cor. 2:6–8; Gal. 6:1–2; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14–15

⁸³ Matt. 28:19–20

⁸⁴ Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27; Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 2:9; 16:22; Eph. 6:24; James 1:12; 2:5; 1 Pet. 1:8; 1 John 2:15; 5:2–3

⁸⁵ John 13:34–35; 15:12, 17; Rom. 12:9–10, 13; 13:8–10; 1 Cor. 16:14; Gal. 5:13–14; 1 Thess. 3:12; 4:9; Heb. 13:1; James 2:8; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2:17; 3:8; 1 John 2:7–11; 3:10–18; 4:7–8, 11–12, 16–21; 2 John 5

⁸⁶ Matt. 5:43–47; Luke 6:27–36; Rom. 12:14, 17–21

⁸⁷ 1 Tim. 2:8–3:7; Titus 1:5–9

⁸⁸ Rom. 16:1–2; 1 Tim. 3:8–13

12. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that Christian baptism and the Lord's Supper are visible and communal actions which serve as signs of the immense goodness of God toward his people in that they place before our eyes the invisible actions God accomplished in salvation.⁸⁹ Baptism is a one-time, symbolic act of obedience for every individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work and become his disciple.⁹⁰ The Lord's Supper is a regular, symbolic act of obedience for all genuine followers of Christ.⁹¹ It symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of his blood on our behalf and is to be observed repeatedly together throughout the Christian life as both a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death and demonstration of our unity with other members of Christ's body.⁹²

Study Notes:

⁸⁹ Matt. 3:11; 28:19; John 1:33; 4:14; 6:51; 7:37–38; 1 Cor. 6:11; 11:23–26; Eph. 2:4–6; Phil. 3:20; Col. 2:9–15; Titus 3:4–7; 1 Pet. 3:21–22

⁹⁰ Matt 28:18–20; Acts 2:37–41; 8:36–38; 10:44–48; 16:30–33; Rom. 6:3–4

⁹¹ Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 5:1–13; 10:14–21

⁹² Matt. 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:17–20; John 6:32–58; 1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:17–34; 12:13

13. The Mission of the Church

We believe God's people should increasingly be marked by Christlikeness, prayerfulness, joyful obedience, love for God, and love for neighbor,⁹³ as members seek the fulfillment of the church's mission. The mission of the church, graciously given by God, is to make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father and by teaching believers to obey all God commands.⁹⁴ As salt and light,⁹⁵ disciples eagerly and faithfully sacrifice to seek and save the lost,⁹⁶ love others in word and deed,⁹⁷ work for righteousness and justice,⁹⁸ and care for all in need.⁹⁹

Study Notes:

⁹³ Matt. 22:37–40; John 14:15; Rom. 12:12; Eph. 5:1–2

⁹⁴ Matt. 28:19–20; Luke 24:44–49; Acts 1:8; 8:1, 4; 1 Cor. 10:31–11:1; Phil. 1:12–18

⁹⁵ Matt. 5:13–16

⁹⁶ 1 Cor. 9:19–23

⁹⁷ Gal. 6:10

⁹⁸ Lev. 19:9–18; Amos 5:24; Mic. 6:8; James 1:27–2:10

⁹⁹ 1 John 3:16–18

14. The Restoration of All Things

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated.¹⁰⁰ We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell,¹⁰¹ as our Lord himself taught,¹⁰² and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness.¹⁰³ On that day the Church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering, and triumph of Christ, with all sin and its wretched effects forever banished.¹⁰⁴

Study Notes:

¹⁰⁰ Matt. 16:27; Mark 13:32–37; John 5:21–29; Acts 1:11; 17:31; 1 Cor. 15:20–28; 2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:4; Heb. 9:28; Rev. 1:6–7; 19:11–16; 20:11–15; 21:1–2

¹⁰¹ Isa. 66:15–24; Matt. 13:40–42; Mark 9:47–48; Rom. 2:3–11; 2 Thess. 1:5–10; Jude 6–7; Rev. 14:9–11; 20:10–15

¹⁰² Matt. 22:11–13; 25:30, 41–46; Mark 9:43–48; Luke 16:19–31

¹⁰³ Isa. 65:17; Matt. 25:31–40; John 14:3; 2 Tim. 4:8; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1–5

¹⁰⁴ Isa. 35:1–10; 1 Cor. 15:51–57; 2 Cor. 5:2–4; Eph. 5:27; Phil. 3:21; 1 Pet. 3:18; Rev. 7:13–17; 19:7–9; 21:2; 22:3–5

RESOURCE #3

Membership Statement of Fellowship

Note for Parents: In addition to a Membership Statement of Faith, Church on Mill also utilizes a Membership Statement of Fellowship. While the former outlines the doctrines we confess together the Bible teaches, the latter articulates the basic behavior God calls us to as his sons and daughters in Christ. Historically, churches have called these twin foundational documents a *confession of faith* and a *church covenant*.

As someone pursuing membership in a congregationally-governed, elder-led church, it is essential your teen have an awareness of the responsibilities of membership (namely, believing the Bible's teachings as outlined in the *confession* and pursuing the behaviors Scripture calls us to together as outlined in the *covenant*). You can study through this Statement in a variety of creative ways but do not rush or just instruct.

Our *recommendation* is that you have your teen independently read this document (pages 36-37). Ask your teen to prepare to lead you in a discussion through it as if you were a new believer who does not know how Christians are to obey God in everyday life together. Although this will be more challenging, we trust it will prove more rewarding and increase retention. Perhaps break your conversations into multiple parts to keep it fun and avoid it being overwhelming or cumbersome.

As your teenager walks through the Membership Statement of Fellowship with you, listen for what you can affirm as well as any areas you might need to offer clarification. Do not be afraid to ask questions such as, "Why would it matter if you made a habit of doing the opposite of what that sentence calls for?" Your intent is not to stump or discourage, but to encourage and spur on in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Membership Statement of Fellowship

As those who have been brought to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ by the grace of God, we are now Christians, saved from the just penalty and enslaving power of sin. Being new creations in union with Christ, we will, with God's help, live as God's people. Therefore, we now, by God's grace and for God's glory, joyfully commit as one body in Christ.

We will walk together in Christian love with humility, gentleness, and patience, laboring for the maturity and fruitfulness of this body.¹⁰⁵

We will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor to bear each other's burdens and sorrows, always remembering to pray for one another.¹⁰⁶

We will be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.¹⁰⁷

We will exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other, and if occasion requires, we will humbly plead with one another to cease in sinful behavior and encourage the confession of sin to one another.¹⁰⁸

We will regularly gather together in corporate worship, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves.¹⁰⁹

We will pursue and encourage in each other a deeper understanding of God and his will through personal spiritual disciplines, relying upon God's power to enable us to live out what we learn so that God is glorified, others are blessed, and we are transformed.¹¹⁰

We will strive to properly manage the resources God has given us, including our time, bodies, spiritual gifts, talents, finances, and possessions.¹¹¹

We will aim to bring up all who are in our care and through example, word, and deed seek the salvation of our friends, family, community, and all the nations.¹¹²

We will seek, by God's power, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and pursuing holiness, remembering as new creations in Christ we have a special obligation to live holy lives.¹¹³

We will work together for the continuance of a faithful gospel ministry in this church, as we sustain its corporate worship, ordinances, mission, doctrine, and, under the final authority of God's Word, its

¹⁰⁵ John 17:20-23; Eph. 4:3-13

¹⁰⁶ Rom. 12:15; James 5:16

¹⁰⁷ Eph. 4:1-3

¹⁰⁸ Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; Gal. 6:1-5; 1 John 1:6-10

¹⁰⁹ Acts 2:46; Heb. 10:24-25

¹¹⁰ Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Tim. 4:7-10

¹¹¹ Prov. 3:9-10; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 12:7-31; 2 Cor. 8:1-9:15; Gal. 5:22-26; Eph. 4:1-16; 5:15-18

¹¹² Deut. 6:4-25; Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:9; Eph. 5:22-6:4; Col. 4:5

¹¹³ Rom. 13:12-14; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 5:16-26

governing documents.

We will, if we move from this church, as soon as possible, unite with some other Christian church among whom we can carry out the spirit of this statement and the principles of God's Word.

These commitments do not imply that we will never fall short. Nevertheless, the desire of our hearts is to fulfill each of these responsibilities in the power of the Holy Spirit. Honesty, humility, and the pursuit of holiness are ordinary for the people of God, but sinlessness will not be a daily reality until we are all in the presence of Jesus Christ. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.¹¹⁴

Study Notes:

¹¹⁴ 2 Cor. 13:14