

MOUNTAINVIEW FULL DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

Established and ratified in 2025

Introduction:

Mountainview Christian Church is an elder-protected, staff-led, non-denominational church with its historical roots in the Restoration Movement—a 19th-century American movement aimed at returning the Church to uniting Christians solely under Biblical authority, mirroring the doctrines and practices of the Church scene in the book of Acts, with the primary goal of Christian unity and world evangelism. Because of these historical roots, Mountainview practices weekly communion at the Church gatherings and open baptism by immersion.

Having a shared understanding of what we believe as a church and having agreed upon which beliefs are essential to the gospel, central to formational discipleship to Christ, and important to our mission as a church, Mountainview Christian Church holds to the beliefs found in this Doctrinal Statement. Our Doctrinal Statement is not an abstract intellectual exercise on paper and pixel. These doctrinal beliefs represent the root and fruit of a lived faith—a genuine whole-life relationship of love and union with our Maker, Savior, and Lord. Our mission to ***reach the world one person at a time as we learn to think, love, and live like Jesus and reproduce that in the lives of others*** is shaped by these beliefs. Our heart is that this Doctrinal Statement will not just guide our faith, but encourage, convict, inspire, and propel us to worship God with our whole lives.

Essential: Foundations of Christian Faith

We believe these foundational truths are essential in order to know who God is, who we are, and where we find our ultimate hope. These truths provide the basis for understanding the nature, character, and eternal purposes of God, the image-bearing, yet sinful and fallen nature of humanity that separates us from God, and the good news of God's redemptive plan through Jesus to reconcile sinners, establish his reign, and restore creation that offers hope and salvation to all people.

Central: Being Formed into Christlikeness

God's work of salvation has a continual impact as we learn to think, love, and live like Jesus. Though this list is far from exhaustive, we believe God has given clarity on how we are to live and thrive as He transforms us into His likeness for His glory. All Mountainview members who aspire to step into positions of spiritual leadership are to 1) aspire toward this life and 2) support these beliefs both privately and publicly.

Important: Beliefs and Practices

We believe the Essential and Central doctrines of our faith are revealed by God to us in the Bible and are true. However, there are other important Beliefs and Practices about which Christians of good faith differ in their interpretation and application, while still handling the Bible with integrity. This being so, we believe we can still walk in unity towards God's mission in our faith family with any follower of Jesus Christ who holds to the Essential and Central doctrines of our faith. Yet for the sake of unity, leaders and teachers within Mountainview are to know and accurately represent the following positions as stated below.

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ESSENTIAL: FOUNDATIONS OF THE FAITH

MOUNTAINVIEW CHRISTIAN CHURCH HOLDS TO THE FOLLOWING DOCTRINAL TRUTHS:

GOD

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, also called the Holy Trinity (Matt 28:19), distinct from one another, but all sharing equally in the fullness of deity.

Father: John 6:27; 1 Timothy 6:15-16; 1 Cor. 8:6

Son: John 1:1-5, 14, 10:30, 33; Hebrews 1:3

Holy Spirit: 2 Corinthians 3:17; John 15:26-27

THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

We believe that by the miracle of the virgin birth the Lord Jesus Christ, Eternal Son of God, became man without ceasing to be God in order to reveal God and to redeem humanity; that He died for our sins (the sins of all people) as a substitutionary sacrifice and rose bodily from the dead for our justification; and that He is now exalted at the right hand of God, Head of the Church and Lord of the individual believer, fulfilling His ministry as our Great High Priest and Advocate. We believe that Jesus Christ died, was buried, and was raised from the dead after 3 days (1 Corinthians 15:3-6). We believe in the personal second coming of our Lord to set up His earthly Kingdom and to reign over redeemed Israel and all the nations of the world.

Matthew 1:18-21; Luke 24:1-7; John 1:1-14, Acts 1:9-11; Romans 5:6-11; Hebrews 7:23-8:2, 8:6-13, 9:12-28, 10:10-14; 1 John 2:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20:4-6

THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. His ministry is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of sin, regenerates the believer, and places him in the Church, which is the Body of Christ. We believe that He indwells, guides, instructs, comforts, gifts, and empowers the Christian for godly living and service, and that He seals and keeps the believer until the Lord comes.

John 14:26; John 16:5-15; Acts 2; Romans 8:26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:12, 6:19, 12:7-13; Galatians 5:16-25
Ephesians 1:13-14

THE BIBLE

We believe that the Scriptures, all 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, are the authoritative Word of God. We believe that these scriptures in their entirety were written by human authors to an ancient audience through God's divine inspiration. All of Scripture is inerrant, without error in all it asserts in the original writings. All of Scripture points to and centers on Jesus and are a Christian's final authority in faith and conduct. (Mark 12:26, 35-37; Luke 24:25-27, 44; John 5:39; Acts 1:16; 17:2-3; 18:28; 26:22-23; 28:23; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 2:13; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21)

HUMANITY

We believe the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, were created in the image of God, but that they sinned, incurring not only physical death, but also spiritual death. Through birth, spiritual death is inherited by every member of Adam's race. We believe that humanity is subject to the power of Satan and has within themselves no possible means of recovery or salvation. Only when a person reaches an awareness of this reality are they in a position to receive God's free gift of salvation.

Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 3:23, 5:12-21, 6:23

OLD COVENANT VS NEW COVENANT

We believe that throughout God's redemptive plan, God instituted certain covenants (binding agreements of relationships between God and mankind). There are conditional covenants—where the results are based on the actions of both parties. There are unconditional covenants where the results are only based on the actions of God.

God makes a conditional covenant with Adam in the Garden. When that covenant was broken, sin entered into the world, and mankind was separated from God (Gen 1-3). God makes an unconditional covenant with Noah to never destroy the earth again through a flood (Gen 8:20-9:17). God makes an unconditional covenant with Abram to bless him, giving him land, make him a great nation through his own offspring, and that through him all the nations would be blessed (Gen 12, 15, 17)

Deuteronomy 27-30, God creates a conditional covenant with His people Israel—obey the Law that God gave through Moses and be blessed; disobey the Law, rebel against God, and be cursed and be kicked out of the land that God had promised their fathers. This is what is often referred to as the “Old Covenant” or the Mosaic Law. This Law and conditional covenant were given to the nation of Israel alone.

God prophesied through the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 31) of a New Covenant that God would institute. This is an unconditional Covenant of Grace solely based on the complete and sufficient work of Jesus. The author of Hebrews shares that the new covenant is “superior to the old one” (Heb 8:6); “by calling it ‘new’, (God) has made the first (old covenant) obsolete (Heb 8:13); with Christ as the mediator of the New Covenant (Heb 9:15); setting aside the first (Mosaic Covenant) to establish the second (New Covenant) by which we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb 10:9-10).

As New Testament followers of Jesus, under His New Covenant, we are not under or bound to the Mosaic Law that the nation of Israel was bound to. (Romans 10:4; Gal 2:16, 3:13). We can look to the Mosaic Law to learn of the righteous character of God, mankind's inability to save itself, and our propensity toward sin (Rom 5:20). Followers of Christ are now bound by the Law of Christ, or the Law of Love instituted by the Great Commandments (Matt 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-28; John 13:34)

SALVATION

We believe that salvation is the free gift of God, neither merited nor secured in part or in whole by any virtue or work of man or woman. Salvation is received only by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all true believers have, as present possessions, the gift of eternal life, a perfect righteousness, adoption into the family of God, deliverance and complete security from all condemnation, every spiritual resource needed for life and godliness, and the divine guarantee that they shall never perish. We believe that such a salvation can never be lost or forfeited.

John 10:28; John 17:3; Romans 8:1-4, 10:9-10; Ephesians 1:1-10, 2:8-9; 1 John 5:11-13; Acts 4:12

JUSTIFICATION

When a person puts his faith in Christ, God justifies him (Galatians 2:16). Justification is God's act of forgiving our sins (Romans 4:6-8), declaring us innocent, and putting us into a right relationship with Himself so that we can now enjoy peace with Him (Romans 5:1). It is both something the

believer experiences now (Romans 5:1) and something he anticipates in the age to come (Galatians 5:5). God does not justify us in response to our performing works of the Law (i.e. legalistic strivings to earn God's favor, cf. Romans 3:20), but in response to our faith (Genesis 15:6). Justification is the judicial aspect of salvation (2 Tim 1:9-10). God graciously and fully pardons the sinner who trusts in Jesus for their salvation. The righteousness of Jesus is imputed to the new Jesus follower so that God views them as positionally holy and blameless.

SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is God's act of setting his people apart for His purpose (1 Corinthians 1:2, 6:11; 1 Peter 1:2). In this sense, it is similar to His "calling" (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). But sanctification also refers to the process whereby God causes us to share His holiness (1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 12:10). This does not happen all at once, nor will it happen completely in this life (1 John 1:8, Philippians 2:12-13). Neither will the progress always be steady; there will be setbacks (Romans 7:21ff). Yet this progress in holiness is essential, and therefore we must "pursue the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). But we must be ever so careful how we pursue it. We must never think of sanctification as adding works of the Law (i.e., legalistic strivings) to our faith. The Christian life is a life of faith from start to finish. Our initial response was faith, and our continued response must be faith (Galatians 3:2-3).

PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance in faith and the obedience of faith to the end of a person's life are evidence of a person's salvation and genuine conversion. (1 Corinthians 15:2, Hebrews 3:14, 2 Peter 1:5-11). God will see to it that His people persevere in faith (John 10: 28-30, Philippians 1:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, 1 Peter 1:3-5). The way in which God causes His children to endure is by giving us magnificent promises (2 Peter 1:3-4), which will be ours if we run the race, and by giving us terrible warnings of what will come if we fall away (Hebrews 10:26ff). We are commanded to have and maintain full assurance of our salvation (Hebrews 6:11, 10:22). Yet if we are tending to be arrogant about our status as though it were due to something in ourselves, we are warned to "take heed lest we fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). We are to test ourselves to see if we are in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5) and to be diligent to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). A clear evidence that we are God's is that we are growing in love for others (1 John 3:14, 4:7-8). God keeps His children eternally secure by giving them a lively longing for His promises and a healthy fear of His warnings. Those who make some kind of beginning in the Christian faith, but do not continue, give evidence that they never really had saving faith (Colossians 1:22, Hebrews 3:14, 1 John 2:19, 28-29).

GLORIFICATION

Glorification is God's act of "transforming the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory" (Romans 8:23, 1 Corinthians 15:51-57, Philippians 3:20-21). This is God's final act in His process of saving us and transforming us into the image of His Son (Romans 8:29-30). It will take place at the consummation of this age when Christ appears (Philippians 3:20-21). Christ is in us now as "the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27), and everyone who has this hope of glory "purifies himself just as He is pure" (1 John 3:3). So, in a very real sense, we are in the process of being glorified now, and we are in the process of becoming like Christ. "We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory...." (2 Corinthians 3:18). Through suffering with Christ in the present age, we will be glorified with Him in the age to come (Romans 8:17). This is the climax and goal of salvation. We who are "vessels of mercy" have been prepared beforehand for glory (Romans 9:13). Nothing else could satisfy our hearts' craving for enduring joy more than to behold the glory of God. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after...to behold the beauty of the Lord...." (Psalm 27:4).

FORGIVENESS OF THE BELIEVER

We believe that the believer in Christ is completely forgiven of all sin—past, present, and future—through the sufficient work of Jesus on the cross, being the sufficient sacrifice and payment for our sin. Our redemption in Christ is complete and God says to all believers: Christ sacrificed once to take away the sin of many (Heb 9:27-28) We have been made holy once and for all (Heb 10:10); “I (God) will remember their sins no more...” (Hebrews 8:12, 10:17) God is for every believer, no longer condemning them, so nothing can separate us from the love of God. (Romans 8:37-39). As believers in Jesus, we stand forgiven from all unrighteousness (Eph 1:7; Col 1:13-14; 1 John 1:9-10, 2:12)

GOD’S CALLING

“Those whom He predestined, these He also called” (Romans 8:30). God’s calling consists in His effectual getting the attention of an individual and confronting him with the beauty of the gospel in such a way that he embraces the gospel in faith. It is more than merely His general call (Matthew 22:14), which He issues to all people through general and special revelation. God calls each individual whom He has chosen at a given point in that person’s life (1 Corinthians 7:22). For God’s calling to be effectual it must include some kind of transformation of the heart as one is drawn to Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit. Yet it is also clear that men and women are moral agents because they act voluntarily and are responsible to God for their actions. God never forces any human to do anything against their own will. We all have the choice to fully accept or reject Christ’s offer of forgiveness of sin. (Rom. 10:11-13; John 12:48) Therefore, there is some mystery of both God’s effectual call and humanity’s use of free will, and both are at work simultaneously. (Phil. 2:12-13)

REGENERATION

Regeneration is the transformation of the heart. It is God’s act of “causing us to be born again” (1 Peter 1:3). This new birth is necessary because all people are spiritually dead in their sins (Ephesians 2:1) and unable to submit to God’s Law (Romans 8:8). Regeneration is the great promise of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34, 32:38-41; Ezekiel 36:26ff). It is God’s act of transforming our hard and impenitent hearts into hearts that are responsive to His promptings. He gives us a new set of inclinations (Jeremiah 31:33) by which we begin to prefer to humble ourselves to His offer of mercy and submit to His gracious will - the very thing we were unable to do apart from the regenerating power of the Spirit (Romans 8:7). Regeneration is not something which is initiated by man (John 3:4, Titus 3:5), but it is God’s act through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is twofold. First, it is the immersion of a person into the Holy Spirit at the point of conversion, at which time he is empowered to be a witness to God’s work in his life (Acts 1:8). Second, it is the immersion of a believer into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). When a person is immersed in the Holy Spirit, he is empowered to focus on growth, freedom, and life. He begins to discover and use his gifts and work to build up the Body of Christ. The ultimate manifestation of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is when the manifold wisdom and power of God is released through the CORPORATE BODY of believers, as each carries out ministry together.

In Ephesians 5:18, Paul states an emphatic command to be filled or controlled with the Spirit. It literally means, "Being kept/filled/controlled with the Spirit." It is a command that includes the idea of an ongoing God consciousness in one's life. Every Christian possesses the Holy Spirit in all His fullness from the moment he believes. Romans 8:9 says, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." At salvation, the believer is baptized by means of the Spirit into the Body of Christ, indwelt by the Spirit, and sealed by the Spirit until the day of redemption. (Acts 1:8, 2:1-13; Ephesians 4:16)

RESURRECTION AND THE ETERNAL STATE

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all people. Believers are resurrected to enjoy eternal life with God. Unbelievers are resurrected to experience judgment and then eternal suffering apart from God.

We believe that at the death of the body, the souls of those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation pass immediately into His presence and remain there until the physical resurrection of the body. When Christ returns, the souls of the dead will be reunited with their resurrected bodies to be with Christ forever in glory. Those who are alive on the earth at His coming will have their bodies transformed, without the corruption of sin, made fit to reside eternally with Him on the new earth He creates. (Rev 21:1-22:5)

We believe in literal hell, and that in hell unbelievers will be punished with everlasting separation from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power because they have chosen to be opposed to God (1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Philippians 1:21-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; John 20:1-9; Revelation 20:4-6, 11-15).

CENTRAL: BEING FORMED INTO CHRISTLIKENESS

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

We believe God's grace not only provides forgiveness for us but continues to transform our lives to be more and more like Jesus. Jesus summarizes this life when he stated, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.'" (Matthew 22:37-39) We are called with the holy calling to live not according to the desire of the flesh (the old nature within, opposed to God), but according to the Spirit of God. We believe the grace of God empowers His followers to live a life that is growing in reflecting His character of love, joy, peace, patience,

kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. We trust the Spirit of God to lead the child of God into paths of righteousness.

Once a person is saved, he does not have license to habitually act in an ungodly manner. If a believer continues to sin, that is, habitually refuses to repent, the Lord will discipline him (Hebrews 12:5-11). In fact, God's discipline is an indication that one is truly God's child, a repentant response being an even stronger indication that one truly believes. The ultimate discipline, when a believer consistently refuses the grace of God, is that the Lord removes him from this life. (1 Corinthians 11:29-30; Romans 6-8; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 2:8-10)

THE CHURCH

We believe that the Universal Church is composed of all who, through saving faith in Jesus Christ, have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Those who are members of the true Church are called to participation in the local church. This spiritual body has Christ as its head (1 Cor 12:12-14). The church was prophesied by Jesus and began on the day of Pentecost (Matt 16:18; Acts 2:1-11). The church exists to bring glory to God by promoting the Kingdom of God through evangelism and edification. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13, Ephesians 4:15-16; 1 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 10:25; Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:18; Matt 16:18; Eph 4:11-12).

THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Greek word, pleroo (filled), gives two ideas: pressure and permeation. To be filled or controlled, "pressured," by the Holy Spirit is to be moved along in our Christian life by God Himself—a moment-by-moment enterprise bent on accomplishing the will of God. Pleroo also carries the idea of permeation or total control. A person who is filled in this sense is no longer under his own control, but under the control of that which dominates him. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is not to have Him progressively added to one's life, but to continually allow Him to control more and more of one's life.

The filling of the Holy Spirit is accomplished when a person surrenders his will, intellect, and emotions, as well as his time, talent, and treasure to Him. In the Ephesians 5:18-6:9 passages, the results are clear: speaking to others in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; being thankful for all things (5:19-20) and being in submission to fellow believers (5:21). Wives submit to husbands (5:22-24); husbands will love their wives with self-sacrificing service (5:25-33); children will obey their parents (6:1-3); etc. Colossians 3:16-25 is the parallel passage to Ephesians 5:18-6:9. Colossians emphasizes that the word of Christ must dwell in us richly, so that in all wisdom we will be teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Being filled and controlled is the result of having the word of God infused into our total beings, just as Colossians suggests. The Holy Spirit wishes to speak the Lord's words as they are found in the Scriptures. So, then we study and allow His words to permeate our lives, and as we consciously allow Him to control us, we are filled by the Holy Spirit.

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We hold to the truth that God has granted specific gifts to the Body of Christ, and that those gifts are to be manifested for the purpose of service within the Body (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). As they are defined Biblically, all the gifts are in operation today. However, not all the gifts are equally predominant. Following is a list of gifts or divine enablement (charismata) as they are found in Scripture, but we do not believe this list is exhaustive.

ROMANS 12:6-8	I CORINTHIANS 12:7-11, 28
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1. Prophecy 2. Serving 3. Teaching 4. Exhortation 5. Giving 6. Leadership 7. Mercy	8. Word of wisdom 9. Word of knowledge 10. Faith 11. Gifts of healings 12. Miraculous powers 13. Discernment 14. Tongues 15. Interpretation of Tongues 16. Helps 17. Administration
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GIFTED INDIVIDUALS GIVEN TO THE CHURCH

Four types of gifted individuals are given to the Body to equip the saints for service (Ephesians 4:11-12). These four types are present today, and their ministry is operational in some sense or other.

APOSTLES

Used in a secondary sense, he is not one who literally walked with Christ, but one who has a first-hand experience with Christ and who is “sent out” to establish new churches in areas where the gospel message either has never been heard or is lacking to some degree.
Romans 1:1-5

PROPHETS

Used in a secondary sense of those who speak a specific message from God to the Christian community, usually in an itinerant manner. These gifted individuals are not proclaiming new truth that can be considered additional Biblical truth but are speaking God's truth from the Bible. Usually, they address specific subjects that the Christian Church needs to hear.
Acts 13:1-5, 13-16, 32-35, 21:7-10

PASTOR-TEACHERS

Those gifted to shepherd the local church, using their compassion for people and teaching truth publicly and individually. Romans 12:6-7, 1 Corinthians 12:28, 1 Peter 5:1-4

EVANGELISTS

Those who specifically can and do win others to Christ by gaining a hearing of those outside of Christ. Evangelism can take place on a large scale, as from a crusade platform, or in an individual setting. (Acts 21:8, 2 Timothy 4:1-5)

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF GIFTS

The gifts are to be used for the building up of the Body. When the gifts function properly, the focal point will never be directed at the gift, but at the gift giver—Yahweh Himself or Christ Himself.

The gifts are discovered by Scriptural awareness of the gifts themselves, to begin with: through experimentation, that is, by serving others in various capacities to see which might be feasible; through the Holy Spirit as He might manifest a gift to an individual, strongly inclining that individual toward one type of service or another; and through recognition by others.

Each believer has at least one gift, but can have several gifts according to the need of the situation or the need of the Body he is placed in.

BAPTISM

We believe that Baptism is one of two ordinances left by Christ for the Church today. Baptism is an outward sign of the inward reality that a person has turned from man's way to God's way. While Baptism is not necessary for salvation, we believe it is an essential step in the process of becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. To baptize literally means to dip or immerse; therefore, the mode of Baptism here at Mountainview is immersion. We understand Baptism as a beautiful public statement of one's faith in Christ, and a physical picture of our alignment with His death, burial, and resurrection, and therefore a great privilege and step of obedience to Christ for all believers in Christ. This truth is a picture of one's "death to self" and being "made to live a new life". Baptism is also a statement to the world that one has begun the process of learning to die to self daily, and of allowing the Holy Spirit to enable that one to live a holy life. (Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 2:38-41, 8:36-38; Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:12; Gal 3:27)

COMMUNION

We believe that the Lord's table is the second ordinance left to the Church by Jesus Christ. Partaking of Communion is a symbolic act which represents one's present relationship and abiding fellowship with Christ. The elements specifically cause us to remember His broken body as payment for man's sin and His blood as a picture of the New Covenant, the Covenant of Grace, which is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Mark 14:22-25, John 6:53-58, 1 Corinthians 11:23-27)

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

We believe that inasmuch as it is through Christ that God reconciles the world to Himself, it is the purpose of the Church, in addition to building up every member of the Body, to make Christ known to the whole world. Every member of the Body shares in this purpose. Believers are sent by Christ to communicate the good news with grace and truth, introducing the non-Christian to a knowledge of Jesus Christ. We recognize many methods of evangelism, acknowledging that it is the Holy Spirit who ultimately brings people to Christ. (Matt 28:19; Mark 16:15; John 17:18-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 1:16, 10:12-15, 1 Peter 3:15)

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

Christian liberty is a predominant doctrine in the Word of God. Liberty is the freedom for believers to carry out the principles of the Word of God in ways that differ from one believer to another. In certain areas of conduct not specifically condoned or condemned by Scripture, believers must choose whether to participate or refrain. Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 10:14-33 are key passages in this regard. Four principles guide the believer in these "gray" areas:

1. PRINCIPLE OF WISDOM

1 Corinthians 6:12, 10:23 Within the confines of all that God has commanded, everything is lawful. However, even within those confines, not every application of the principles of liberty is beneficial or profitable. One must ask, "Is what I am doing profitable spiritually, socially, intellectually, and physically?"

2. PRINCIPLE OF FREEDOM

1 Corinthians 6:12 "Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be mastered by anything." Although one might have Scriptural freedom for an activity, if one is enslaved by it, it is wrong to continue.

3. PRINCIPLE OF EDIFICATION

1 Corinthians 10:23 "Everything is permissible, but not everything is constructive." One has liberty, but does the use of that liberty build people up spiritually? It may be that an activity does in fact encourage or stimulate others in a positive way; it may be that an activity is neutral. If, however, an activity produces negative results for those in one's sphere of ministry, freedom in that area must be curtailed, and that activity stopped.

4. PRINCIPLE OF EXAMPLE

Romans 14:1-23 and 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, 10:31-11:1

We are free to exercise our choices but must realize that as Christ's followers we are to be examples of Godly living. Our actions can be a "stumbling block" to cause a "weaker brother" to sin. A stumbling block occurs only when one's freedom entices a weak person to violate his culturally dictated conscience and to enter into action he thinks is scripturally forbidden. A "weaker brother" is a young Christian who is not educated in the knowledge of the Word. Weak persons are to be taught the Word so they may become strong. A stumbling block or an offense does not occur simply because someone disagrees intellectually or even theologically.

GENEROSITY

Generosity is not about how much we make, but rather about the grace of God at work in our lives (2 Cor 8:1-5). It is birthed not from obeying a God who wants from us, it is birthed out of our understanding of what God has done for us (Isaiah 53:5, 7, 10-11). Yet, God repeatedly challenges us in this area because He knows our hearts can easily be deceived by greed (Luke 12:15). The result of greed never creates a tender heart for the sufferings of others but instead latches onto the lie that what I need to keep from worrying about money is more money. God teaches us the financial principle of scattering rather than gathering (Proverbs 11:24). If we focus on generosity and scattering the resources He's given us we will not be in want. But if you seek to hoard what God has given, you may very well find yourself in want. So, we are commanded to invest the resources God has given us into efforts that are attempting to make an eternal impact in people's lives (Matt 19:21; 1 Timothy 6:18-19).

Tithe vs Grace Giving for New Covenant Believers

A tithe (literally meaning a "tenth", or 10%) was a common, widespread practice in the ancient East culture, before the establishment of Israel and the Law of Moses. Twice in the Old Testament, a tithe was mentioned before God established the Law. Genesis 14:18-20, Abraham gives a tithe out of His spoils to

Melchizedek. Jacob vows to give God a tithe of all that He gave him (Gen 28:20-22). But there were actually three tithes prescribed in the Mosaic Law for the people of Israel: 1) the Levitical tithe (Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:21, 24) that were to go to the Levitical priests since they were not allowed land or an inheritance; 2) the tithe of the feasts (Deuteronomy 14:22-27), that was once a year offering, a tenth of one's produce—that was to be eaten in reverence to God; 3) a tithe for the poor (Deuteronomy 14:28-29) to be collected at the end of every three years of that year's produce to care for the Levites and foreigners. The Mosaic Law then prescribed "tithes" of 23.33%. Each tithe served a societal purpose prescribed solely for the nation of Israel.

In the New Testament, Jesus mentions the Tithe twice, both in the context of legalistic abuse (Luke 18:9-14, Matthew 23:23). It is rarely mentioned elsewhere. Rather, in the New Testament, the focus turns to sacrificial giving that reflects God's generosity toward us. This generosity is to be for the same purposes as the OT i.e. gratitude (2 Cor 8, 9; Phil 4:19; Matt 2:11), all participate in God's mission (1 Cor 16:2), support for ministry and ministers (Gal 6:6, 1 Tim 5:18, Rom 15:25-27, 1 Cor 9:13-14), and to help the poor and those in need (1 Tim 5:17-18, Lk 16:19-31, Lk 3:11, Matt 19:21).

Paul challenges us to think in terms of maximum generosity, classified as "grace giving", giving followers of Jesus a new paradigm of generosity outside of the "tithe" in the Mosaic Law. These new principles for generosity include: giving voluntarily (not out of obligation), giving cheerfully motivated out of love, giving sacrificially, giving out of a commitment and response to Jesus, and giving what each believer has purposed in their heart to give rather than a prescribed percentage.

Grace giving, not tithing, thus becomes the standard for all New Covenant disciples of Jesus. We are to pray and seek God's guidance, reflecting on His generosity when deciding what He would have us financially give--out of worship and response to Him. Wisdom would call us to budget and plan for living generously and sacrificially.

PROCEDURE FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Discipline is not a negative word, but ultimately a positive one. Biblical discipline involves training and is not unrelated to the word disciple. To disciple means "to conform someone to a standard." Church discipline specifically means that we aid in bringing believers into line with God's standard for His glory, the process of His Kingdom, and the restoration of the individual as well. (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:1-13; Rom 16:17; Galatians 6:1-2; 2 Thes 3:6, 14-15; 1 Tim 5:20; Titus 3:10-11; Hebrews 12:6,11). Discipline is for the unity of the Church community—reflecting the unity Jesus calls us to—and for the spiritual benefit and growth of followers of Jesus.

Matthew 18:15-20 is the classic text for church discipline and its process. This passage teaches that when one directly sins against another or indirectly sins by doing wrong, there is a responsibility to approach that brother or sister with his sin. There are four steps to follow if one is sinned against:

STEP ONE: TELLING HIM HIS SIN · MATTHEW 18:15 B

The present imperative "go" conveys the idea that you should continue to go and pursue him without being distracted. The second verb, in the aorist imperative, conveys the idea of being convincing in getting the point across.

Galatians 6:1 helps us to see the attitude we should have in confronting a sinning believer: "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also

may be tempted.” Verse 2 says, “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this you will fulfill the law of Christ.” What is the law of Christ? It is the royal law (James 2:8), the law of liberty (James 1:25) “...the law of love.”

So you go with a love that desires to help him carry the burden, and you go in meekness to restore him. If he is restored, you have won a brother; no further steps are necessary.

STEP TWO: TAKING SOME WITNESSES · V. 16

When there has been a definite refusal to repent, then you must take one or two more believers with you. These are not necessarily one or two people who saw or who knew about the sin. Rather, they are witnesses of the confrontation who can come back and confirm the words that were spoken there. Their presence is as much a protection of the one being approached as it is for the one approaching. It would be presumptuous to think that one person could make some ultimate determination about right or wrong, especially one who may be somewhat bitter because he has been sinned against.

STEP THREE: TELLING THE CHURCH · V. 17 A

We are to tell the whole assembly when a sinning believer fails to respond to the confrontation of the witnesses. This may mean a public proclamation to everyone or to key leaders of small groups so that they know there has been a refusal to respond to God’s offer of repentance.

* What is always the purpose of discipline? Restoration! So what do we tell the church? “Church, go after him to win him back. An individual went - no response. Two or three went - no response. Now we will all go and drown him in our concern.”

* In communicating the discipline process to the church, we typically communicate to the leaders and members in the person’s circle of influence.

STEP FOUR | TREATING HIM AS AN OUTSIDER · V. 17 B

If a person sins and refuses to repent after the church knows, we are to treat him as if he were outside our fellowship. He is not invited to associate with or participate in the blessings and the benefits of the Christian assembly. The ultimate purpose is that the sinning brother will come back to fellowship with God through repentance and back into unity with his brothers and sisters in Christ.

Those who call Mountainview home and see themselves as members voluntarily place themselves under the authority of the Mountainview elders and this disciplinary process.

SANCTITY OF LIFE

We believe that all human life is sacred, created in God’s image, and possesses inherent dignity from conception to natural death. We believe that life begins at conception, and all life should be valued and protected, regardless of age, health, or condition. God shows the value He places on all humankind by creating humans, both male and female, uniquely in His image, as His only image bearers on earth, with Jesus becoming man and dying for all humanity for their redemption and holding all those accountable for taking life. Both abortion and euthanasia are seen as the unnatural taking of human life and are sins. (Gen 1:27, 9:6; Ex 21:22-23; Psalm 139:13-16; Matt 6:26; Luke 12:6-7)

MARRIAGE, SEX AND SEXUALITY

We believe marriage is much more than simply a cultural institution or legal contract. The Bible clearly communicates that God created marriage to be a lifelong covenant between a biological man and a biological woman. This definition was affirmed by Jesus Himself (Matthew 19:1-9). Sex is a gift created by God to be enjoyed and protected within the confines of a marriage relationship. (Genesis 2:24-25; Matthew 19:1-9; 1Cor 6:9-11)

While we affirm covenantal marriage between a man and a woman described in the Bible, we recognize that not everyone is married nor will be married, and this does not make them of lesser value or importance before God or in the family of God or suggest they may have any less of a fulfilled and meaningful life.

We acknowledge Jesus calls his followers to a lifestyle that is countercultural as we allow His grace to make us into new kinds of people. Jesus clearly calls us to a life of sexual integrity and purity. At the same time, we recognize we are a faith family made up of imperfect people and realize no one among us is morally perfect. We believe every person is created in the image of God and therefore of immeasurable value and worthy of our love and respect.

Whether you are single, married, LGBTQ, or straight, we are all learning together how to think, love, and live like Jesus. Mountainview will unapologetically teach and lead all people to submit to purity and a Biblical sexual ethic, as prescribed in Scripture—for our spiritual and physical flourishing, and hold all disciples of Jesus to this standard. While sexual attraction, whether same sex or heterosexual, is not a sin, when any attraction turns to lust or sexual activity outside of a marriage relationship as defined by Scripture, this violates what Scripture has made clear to us about our sexual purity and Biblical sexual ethic. We believe our primary identity is not found in our sexuality, but rather in who God is and who we are in relationship to Him. (Matt 5:27-30; Matt 19:4-6; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9-10, 18-20; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3-6; Col 3:5; 1 Thes 4:3-5; 1 Tim 1:9-10; Heb 13:4; Jude 1:7) We desire to come alongside one another and encourage each other as we submit ourselves to our loving God, who made us in His image and knows how to lead us into a life of flourishing and meaning. (John 1:12; Col 2:9-10; Rom 6:6; Gen 1:27; Gal 3:27-28; 1 Cor 6:19-20; Col 3:1-3).

DIVORCE AND SEPARATION

Marriage is a sacred union established by God to be a covenant relationship between one man and one woman for life. We understand that marriage was and is meant by God to be such an emotional, relational, physical, and spiritual bond that it is defined as each spouse being “one flesh” with the other, and as such, the marital covenant should not be separated by anything other than the death of a spouse. However, our reality is that we live in a broken world, where sin temporarily reigns. And each of us is a sinner ourselves, and our actions can lead to broken marriages and divorce.

Divorce is a painful and problematic issue for many people, including Christians. Virtually all of us have at least personally witnessed the anguish of a broken home. The Lord has not, however, left us ignorant about this vital subject. Since marriage is a reflection of His commitment to His people and is designed more for our holiness than our happiness (e.g., Isa 54:5-6; Hos 1:2; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:21-33), God has given many instructive words about marriage, divorce, separation, and remarriage.

GOD’S PERSPECTIVE ON DIVORCE

God emphatically declares, “I hate divorce” (Mal 2:16). His pattern is that a Christian man and woman be united in marriage until the death of one separates them, at which time the surviving spouse is free to remarry another believer (e.g., Gen 2:24; Rom 7:2-3; 1 Cor 7:39; 2 Cor 6:14). Despite His disdain for divorce, in rare instances He permits it as a concession to a person’s sin for the protection of the wronged party.

In Matt 19:3-9, Jesus teaches that divorce is an accommodation to man’s sin and is in violation of God’s purpose for the intimate unity of the marriage bond. It is a concession for the wronged party due to the other partner’s insensitivity to God, which is defined as “hardness of heart” (Matt 19:8) and means that the wronged party no longer has to remain in the broken situation (Matt 19:9; 1 Cor 7:10-15).

DIVORCE AS CONCESSION TO MAN'S HARD HEARTS

God's desire for a couple in marital crisis is first for reconciliation. The provision of "the blood of Christ" to restore the relationship between repentant sinners and the Almighty God through Christ's work on the cross (Acts 17:30-31). The provision of "divorce," although not God's original design or desire, but man was permitted by God to protect the innocent spouse of a broken marriage covenant. Notice what Jesus said in Matthew 19:6b: "What God has joined together, let man not separate." He did not say "man cannot separate," but that he should not separate it. We certainly agree, but as sin separated our original relationship with God, sin can also separate the members of a marital covenant as Jesus explains below.

Matthew 19:8a: "Jesus replied, 'Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard.' In his statement, 'Moses permitted you to divorce your wives...' Jesus was referring to Deuteronomy 24:1-4, in which divorce clearly ended the marriage and permitted a subsequent remarriage:

Deuteronomy 24:1-4: "If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, 2 and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, 3 and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, 4 then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance."

The man in this patriarchal culture would divorce for any reason and free himself to marry another, yet the divorced woman was not given such freedom. Moses' certificate of divorce especially helped the woman to be freed from her husband once a certificate of divorce was given. Clearly, Jesus knew he was talking about "divorce" here, i.e., the "dissolution of marriage," for that is what divorce is. He didn't have to explain that to his listeners; they already understood what he was referring to, for as we stated earlier, it was a divisive issue among "God's chosen people" even in Christ's day. The text that Jesus referred to clearly stated that the original marriage was ended, or it wouldn't have included the words "her second husband," "her first husband," or "to marry her again." The question about "divorce" intuitively included the question of "remarriage," or Jesus wouldn't have referred back to a text that included both divorce and remarriage. In Deuteronomy 24:1-4, the "certificate of divorce" was given so that the husband could remarry.

BIBLICAL GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE

In a marriage where one or both partners are believers, God allows—but does not require—divorce in only two situations.

1. Adultery Exception— The first exception to the general rule of lifelong marriage is fornication. In context, this term refers primarily to adultery (the sexual, physical unfaithfulness of a marriage partner) and includes homosexuality, incest, and prostitution (Matt 5:32, 19:8-9; 1 Cor 5:1). Adultery will also take place even after the "official" dissolution of the marriage if the divorce is on non-biblical grounds (Matt 5:32; Mark 10:11-12; Rom 7:3).

2. Abandonment Exception— The second reason for permitting a divorce is in cases where a non-believing mate refuses to live with his or her believing spouse and initiates a divorce. (1 Cor 7:13-15).

BIBLICAL AND NON-BIBLICAL

Mark 10:11-12: When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

Luke 16:18: "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

There are neither Biblical grounds for nor a right to a divorce in these verses. We would define them as "non-biblical" divorces, but it is likely that there is a guilty and an innocent party within these divorces, which would have to be determined by the individual details of the divorce. When you get divorced, you are divorced. The reason sexual activity is called adultery in a subsequent marriage is that you have no right to be remarried if you are the guilty and/or unrepentant party of either a biblical or non-biblical divorce. In God's sight, you are divorced, but you shouldn't be.

We believe God in His mercy, recognizing the hardness of even the genuine Jesus follower's heart, has made some provision for dissolving marriage under certain circumstances in order to protect the innocent. We believe a legal "divorce" does in fact "dissolve" the marriage covenant, in keeping with God's accommodation of the 'certificate of divorce.' We further believe re-marriage after divorce is lawful for the "innocent" spouse, if in fact there is one.

We further believe that even the 'guilty party' of a divorce, if and when he or she has sincerely repented and sought forgiveness from the innocent party, should be allowed to remarry.

SEPARATION

Separations in marriage are not specifically addressed in Scripture. However, it may be determined that a separation—either through civil punishment of the offender, court-ordered separation, mutually agreed upon separation, or unilaterally decided separation—is prudent for the safety of an endangered spouse and protection of any children in the home. Mountainview also recognizes that civil authorities may play a role in these matters.

DIVORCE AND MEMBERSHIP

Although Christians should never view God's grace as a license to sin (e.g., Rom 6:1-2), sins relating to the marriage relationship are forgivable by God. Jesus Himself modeled a gracious spirit toward adulterous people whom He was leading to spiritual awakening (John 4:5-30; 8:1-11; cf. King David's story in 1 Sam 13:14; 2 Sam 11:3-4; Ps 51; Acts 13:22). We realize this argument is somewhat different, but believe there are biblical principles here that apply.

David committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband, Uriah the Hittite, killed. When Nathan brought God's message to David and David repented of his sin, God disciplined him, but He did not tell David to "put away" Bathsheba. He allowed the marriage to stand. He disciplined them both for their sin (they were both guilty), but David and Bathsheba were permitted to continue their marriage. Then God gave them another son, Solomon, through whom the human ancestry of both Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Joseph, his father (it was thought) came and ultimately Christ and the Throne of David. The argument could be made that David was permitted to stay married because Uriah was dead, but wouldn't that make the argument that murder is in some way a lesser sin than divorce? We don't think so. Murder kills a person and divorce "kills" (so to speak) a marriage; both are sin, and both are forgivable. God forgave their sin, allowed the remarriage of David and Bathsheba, and blessed it.

DIVORCE AND RECOVERY

In keeping with God's heart, Mountainview strives to move people toward Christian maturity and spiritual wholeness regardless of their present marital state or history. Everyone is welcome at Mountainview, and we do not consider divorced people to be second-class citizens nor treat them as such.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

It is our clear position that domestic violence or abuse is wrong and cannot be tolerated in any way. We are committed to coming alongside individuals experiencing domestic violence and helping them recognize, address, and find freedom and safety from abuse.

1. Definition of Terms – Domestic violence (sometimes referred to as domestic abuse or Intimate Partner violence) occurs when a family member, partner or ex-partner attempts to physically or psychologically dominate or harm the other. Abuse means to mistreat or misuse someone with the intent to dominate, control, or prevent them from making free choices. Domestic violence is a pattern of controlling, assaultive, and/or coercive behaviors that includes all forms of physical injury/abuse, sexual abuse, intimidation, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, and spiritual abuse or threats of such.

2. Mountainview's Encouragement – Our goal, in line with God's heart (Eph. 5:2, Pr. 21:7, Mal. 2:16, Ps. 11:5, I John 4:18), will be to promote safety at all times, then reconciliation of relationships, first with God, and secondly between spouses and families (2 Cor. 5:18-21). Domestic violence must not be tolerated and must be addressed. No one deserves to be abused – ever!

As a basic principle, we encourage a ZERO TOLERANCE for domestic violence or abuse in any relationship. We encourage clear communication, setting clear boundaries, and enforcing clear consequences for abusive behavior.

DIVORCE AND LEADERSHIP

We believe that a person who has been divorced can serve as an Elder, Life Group Leader, or in other leadership roles only if that person has dealt with his past by way of confession, repentance, attempted restoration, or restoration and transformation. Following a divorce, wisdom and best practice share that there ought to be a period of up to one year before the individual in question is eligible for leadership. After the end of that period of time, the situation would be evaluated by the Elders or the leadership core. This evaluation would take into consideration who initiated the divorce, what the circumstances were, what efforts were made toward restoration, their present walk with the Lord, their desired level of leadership, and how the issues leading to divorce have been dealt with.

* In regard to an Elder role, special attention to a divorced person serving will take place so as not to cause an offense or to aid in the ruin of that individual's life. The leadership of Mountainview believes that the truths of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus, which require a person to be above reproach, are doctrines that govern one's present lifestyle; that is, setting aside the past, one must now have an established reputation for living righteously before God. This is also true for anyone having a significant and/or public moral failure in their past.

GENDER AND HUMAN IDENTITY

The Biblical understanding of males and females as it relates to the transgender movement. The goal is not to build a wall, but that God might build up His church in truth and grace so that we can welcome everyone in to experience an abundant life with Him (1 Tim. 6:19; John 10:10). At Mountainview we desire to walk alongside all who desire to learn more about and follow Jesus together, so He can transform us to think, love and live like Him.

Our Theological Understanding: We affirm the inherent honor, dignity and value of the two sexes as created in God's image – intentionally male and female – each bringing unique qualities to sexuality and relationships. God created the first humans in His image; He created them male and female (Gen. 1:27). He made the woman to be distinct and yet of equal value to the man (Gen. 2:18-22). God created us as 'whole people.' We were created with a soul and body that exist in the interacting duality of God's design. God depicts the existence of a man and a woman as essential to His creational plan, not as something that can be redefined by shifting cultural constructs. The two, male and female, are neither identical nor interchangeable. Therefore, actions that intend to undo or hide the sexed bodily component of a human seem to be a distortion or denial of a person's image-bearing nature and God's plan for His creation.

While men and women in Scripture may express their masculinity and femininity in a wonderful diversity of ways, Scripture still operates with the binary categories of men and women. You are one or the other. We also believe the rare genetic anomaly of intersex individuals does not undermine the creation design of two sexes. Therefore, we do resist the attempt being made at a cultural and legal level to view gender as a matter of choice. A man's chromosomes cannot be engineered into female chromosomes. Altering one's appearance cosmetically or surgically cannot change the underlying reality of a person's biological makeup.

Our Pastoral Understanding: We also recognize that those caught up in all of this are deeply hurting people. Those who experience gender dysphoria are precious to God and to us. Their internal struggle is real and to be taken seriously. Gender dysphoria is when a person's emotional and/or psychological sense of themselves does not align with their birth sex. Each person needs to know that, even though God has stated a different perspective than their own, God and His church do love every person. We do not trivialize one's experience nor seek to explain it away with quick, easy answers. We are there for all people, are ready to listen, and deeply desire what is best for them. Compassion and dignity for dysphoric individuals are not in tension with disagreeing with transgenderism as a social movement.

Ultimately, we believe our identity is not something we achieve but rather is received from our creator as image bearers meant to be in a harmonious relationship with God (Luke 10:27; Jeremiah 9:24, 24:7; Gen 1:26-27; 2:7). We believe our primary identity is not found in our sexuality, education, race or wealth, but rather in who God is and who we are in relationship with Him. God has fearfully and wonderfully made each one of us (Psalm 139:14). We have been created male or female, gifted and ordained to do good (Gen 5:2; Eph 2:10). We are fully known and perfectly loved and pursued by God, who held nothing back in His desire to offer the chance to be reunited with Him through Jesus Christ. This is the identity given to us by God that He asks us to fully embrace, and yet we often struggle to do so.

In this created-but-broken world, we understand that not all identities or feelings are to be accepted or fostered because we are all guided by a mixture of good and broken desires. We also recognize that many of our questions regarding our lives will remain a mystery to us. This doesn't mean they are a mystery to God, who is Sovereign, all-knowing and good. The Biblical story of Creation, Fall, and Redemption tells us that we should not be shocked when we experience desires that will not, in fact, bring about the wholeness we are seeking; and equally that we can never be self-righteous about how others struggle. We lovingly encourage all people to get back in touch with their creator and who He created them to be. As Jesus did, we must present the truth regarding God's best for people with humility, concern and compassion for the person and their story. We desire to walk alongside anyone who desires to know God more.

IMPORTANT: BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The gifts of Healings, Prophecies, and Tongues are among the gifts that appear less predominant today. According to the teaching of the apostle Paul, these are less important than the overall gift of love for each other and for Christ, which unites us all. Because these gifts are also among the easiest to abuse, Paul gave much instruction on how they were to be exercised. Together with Paul's instruction (alongside the patterns in the rest of Scripture) and to best preserve the unity of the Spirit and the building up of the body of Christ at Mountainview, these gifts are to be exercised within the following parameters:

THE DOCTRINE OF TONGUES

Tongues in the New Testament are dialects and/or languages of the world, unfamiliar or peculiar to a specific region or social group, which are spoken under the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). They are unlearned and incomprehensible to the one speaking, but to those hearing, the language is understandable (Acts 2:5-11). The Tongues of Acts 2 are the same as the Tongues in 1 Corinthians 14. If one speaks in tongues, he is to pray for the gift of interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:13).

The gift of Tongues was used in the early church as a sign for unbelievers, especially unbelieving Jews (Acts 2:7-8 and 1 Corinthians 14:22). Whenever the sign is used, the unbeliever hears and recognizes that God is present. Tongues, defined as a supernaturally spoken unlearned language/dialect, can still happen today, but in most cases, this gift is not needed. It is the exception rather than the rule, because in congregations where everyone speaks the same language, the Tongue is not necessary.

Romans 8:26 has been used by many to support the concept of a prayer language spoken in Tongues. However, in this passage, Paul is talking of groanings that cannot be uttered. He is not talking about a language. The Spirit intercedes on behalf of the believer to express the heart of God. There are times when we do not know how to pray because we have a burden, confusion, or longing about a person or situation.

The concept of Tongues of Angels in 1 Corinthians 13:1 is often used to explain what many people are doing when they speak unintelligible utterances. However, the reference is simply saying that even if it were angels speaking, no amount of talk would substitute for love. Every time an angel appeared and spoke in the Bible, that angel spoke in the language of the people listening (Genesis 18:1-5, 19:11-22; Luke 2:8-14; Hebrews 13:2). No other reference corroborates that angels speak some unique language; no reference indicates that there is an "angelic language" we might knowingly or unknowingly speak.

If at any time during the gathering of the congregation of Mountainview, including community groups, an individual begins to speak in tongues, an interpreter should immediately identify themselves and the known language they understand to be spoken. Since the scripture indicates tongues are a known language, if the interpreter cannot identify the language being spoken, the one speaking should be silent, as the word of God instructs us in I Cor 14:28.

THE GIFTS OF HEALINGS

The Gifts of Healings as described in I Cor. 12:9 are plural and involve spiritual, physical and emotional aspects. All members in the body of Christ are expected to pray for one another to be healed in all aspects at any time.

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

We recognize this gift as different than the Old Testament “Office of Prophet,” where those filled with the Holy Spirit spoke for God, declaring, “Thus says the Lord.” These Prophets of God were seen as declaring the very will and words of God. Their words were the absolute truth. Those who disobeyed the Prophet’s words did so at great peril. If a Prophet of God ever spoke a false word, they were to be considered a false prophet and put to death.

Those with the gift of Prophecy today speak by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but their words are not automatically elevated to the status and authority of the OT Prophets. I Thess. 5:20-21 tells us specifically that all prophecies are to be tested. The Word in the NT is used more in a secondary sense. Used in a secondary sense of those who speak a specific message from God to the Christian community, usually in an itinerant manner. These gifted individuals are not proclaiming new truth that can be considered additional Biblical truth but are speaking God’s truth from the Bible. Usually, they address specific subjects that the Christian Church needs to hear. Acts 13:1-5, 13-16, 32-35, 21:7-10

Any individual feeling they have the gift of prophecy or the ability to speak certain words of knowledge should make it known to the elders of the church that their gift be tested and confirmed. We recognize that God gives individuals specific inspiration to exhort and encourage one another. This can be done at any time and should always be done with humility, encouraging the listener to test the prophecy with his or her own prayers.

Any individual claiming to have a word from the Lord, speaking with God’s unquestioned authority, who gives instructions or advice that proves false or causes harm is in danger of being declared a false prophet and is subject to church discipline.

ANGELS, DEMONS, AND SATAN

We believe that angels are “ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14). Angels have at times appeared to men, unrecognized as angels (Judges 13:16). Their appearance can also be with great and frightening glory, as the Christmas story attests. Throughout Christ’s earthly ministry, angels were sent to minister to Him. They were there, for example, at His birth, His baptism, His temptation, and the crucifixion.

Fallen angels are those who chose to assert their own power and will above that of God and so were cast down from their places in heaven. Chief of these is Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12). He is depicted as one who makes

war on the saints, tries to undo God's work (Mark 4:15), instigates evil (John 13:2, 27), gains the worship of men (Luke 4:5-8), deceives (Revelation 12:9), disguises (2 Corinthians 11:14), instigates doubt (Genesis 3:1), misuses Scripture (Matthew 4:6), and accuses Christians before God (Revelation 12:10). He is called prince of the power of this air (Ephesians 2:2) and ruler of this world (John 14:30). A number of these fallen angels are being held, waiting for final judgment, where Satan will be bound for 1,000 years (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 1:6, Revelation 9:1, 11; 11:7; 20:1). Scripture is clear that our true battle is spiritual, with fallen angels and demonic forces (Ephesians 6:12)

By His life, death, and resurrection, Christ has triumphed over Satan as God said He would (Genesis 3:15, Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 10:17-19). Ultimately, Satan will be subdued forever. The believer need not be overcome by Satan. We are told to resist the devil, and he will flee (James 4:7). We overcome the devil as God's word abides in us (1 John 2:14). Ephesians 6:11-16 describes more precisely the way in which Satan is to be overcome.

WOMEN IN MINISTRY

There is a spectrum of views among Bible-believing people regarding the role of women and men in ministry and church leadership. On one end of this spectrum is a perspective commonly called "egalitarian." This viewpoint believes that women and men may hold any position in the church, including lead pastor and elder. On the other end is a viewpoint commonly called "complementarian." Those with this viewpoint believe that men and women are of equal worth, but roles in the church for each are different, with primary leadership and teaching responsibilities reserved for men. In between these ends of the spectrum are myriad variations or modifications to both viewpoints. These various viewpoints can be supported by reasonable and biblical lines of reasoning, many of which we can both understand and respect.

Given the controversial nature of this topic, it is important to note that the team of elders at Mountainview Christian Church considers the Scriptures to be the inerrant word of God. We do not believe that cultural relevancy dictates the truth of God. Furthermore, we believe the word of God is best understood in its literal, historical, and grammatical context. Thus, the historical context in which the New Testament letters were written can have a bearing on their meaning. Finally, we believe that Scripture should interpret Scripture. That is, when we have a difficult or unclear passage, we depend on the whole of Scripture to help us understand it. We do not believe Scripture contradicts itself. So, if there is an apparent contradiction, we look to the rest of Scripture in its literal, historical, grammatical context to help us understand.

Having spent hours of praying and studying the Scriptures as well as credible scholars with different perspectives, the consensus of the Mountainview Christian Church elders is best described as Soft Complementarianism."

Which is to say:

At Mountainview, we believe every person is made in God's image, and there is equality in God's love and the outpouring of His Spirit to all women and men who are counted as His children through the grace and mercy granted us in Jesus. Further, we believe God grants gifts in His measure to all of His followers, and that women and men share in this giftedness for His glory. Some women and men are gifted in teaching, and we endorse the use of this gift broadly and wisely. We also believe qualified women and men may exercise leadership in a number of other ways, including, but not limited to, mixed community groups, teaching adult classes, leading worship and communion, baptizing new believers, etc.

Teaching, or any gift used by women or men for the building up of the body of Christ, will always be exercised in full submission to the authority of our elder team. The only position we believe Scripture reserves for men is that of an elder. We believe the responsibility for the overall direction of the church rests upon the shoulders of men who are appointed to the elder team. We believe, however, the overall direction for the church can only be determined through a spirit of prayer and total dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as frequent dialogue and input from both women and men throughout the church.

Believing that the lists of gifts in Ephesians 4 and Romans 12 are not gender specific, the title of Pastor may be given to qualified men or women who are employed on staff to function in that capacity. The primary teaching responsibility at Mountainview will fall to the lead pastor, who is an elder. Non-elders may be asked to teach from time to time under the full authority of the elder team.

Our intent is to be a church where men and women love, respect, and value each other. Through meaningful dialogue and decision-making, we encourage each person to use their God-given gifts, talents, and experience for the sake of the church and the Kingdom of God. We understand that the family of Mountainview has a variety of church backgrounds and convictions and has a wide range of views on this matter, which we respect. Despite the diversity of opinions on this important issue, we do not believe that this is a core doctrinal issue that should divide the church. The Bible very clearly teaches that we are to have unity in the midst of diversity on non-core doctrinal issues.

A Summary of Key Scriptures and What We Believe

First and foremost, we believe male and female believers in Jesus Christ are equal in stature before God the Father, and through our redemption in Jesus Christ, we all are one. We believe that God, throughout Scripture as well as today, uses both women and men in very significant roles, and that God gifts both men and women for the equipping of His church. And, as mentioned earlier, we believe the lists of gifts in Ephesians 4 and Romans 12 are not gender specific and thus can apply to men or women. Therefore, we encourage women to pursue and exercise their gifts and to fill every other leadership role to which they are qualified and called.

Although the Scripture is clear that women functioned as disciples (Luke 10:38-39), teachers (Acts 18:24-28), deacons (Romans 16:1-2), and prophets (Acts 21: 8-9), there is no clear reference to a woman ever holding the office of an elder. We believe the tenor of Scripture, including Paul's reference to the principle of headship, (1 Corinthians 11: 3ff and Ephesians 5:22ff) as well as God's pattern of leadership (Old Testament priests, the Apostles, and qualification of elders in 1 Tim. 3), indicates the role of elder and lead pastor (who is. assumed to be an elder in our context) are the responsibility of spiritually qualified men.

Much of the controversy over women teaching in the church comes from 1 Corinthians 14:32-35, where Paul writes that women should remain silent in the churches; they are not allowed to speak but must be in submission. Paul also says in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 that "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission" and "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent." A wider study of the context sheds much light on these difficult passages. When you look at the context of both 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy, Paul is dealing with proper order and authority during the worship services. He states in 1 Cor. 14: 33, "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace-as in all the congregations of the Lord's people." 1 Corinthians 14:40 "But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way."

Many theologians agree that in both churches, there were problems with some of the women asking questions and exercising their gifts in a manner that disrupted the worship services and challenged the men in authority, which prompted Paul to address the matter. He was not prohibiting the use of their spiritual gifts; he was prescribing the proper way to exercise them, i.e., in full submission to the elders. In 1 Cor. 11:3-16, Paul just instructed how women should pray and prophesy in church. Since women can't literally be silent and pray and prophesy at the same time, "silent" must mean something other than literally not speaking in the worship services. If women were allowed to pray and prophesy in the worship services, they would not be violating whatever Paul meant by being silent and learning in quiet submissiveness. Evidently, they are not mutually exclusive. They can do both at the same time.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the head of the church, working through male elders who have been entrusted with authority as the final decision-makers. This is true of our church as well. However, we also believe the Bible teaches that the gifts the Holy Spirit distributes to the church, to build up the body and equip his people for works of service, are not gender specific. (1 Cor. 12: 4-6, 28-31. Ephesians 4:11-13) Therefore, anyone, male or female, with the gift of teaching may exercise that gift as long as it's in full submission to the authority of our elder team.

1 Timothy 2, Paul gives instructions to Timothy for orderly worship. Verses 11-15 are some of the most controversial and debated verses on the subject of women in ministry. While some of the instructions are hard to interpret, Paul clearly reserves the authoritative teaching/preaching of the Word in the worship service to qualified men. It is often said by those who hold contrary views that this is a cultural restriction based on what was happening in Ephesus, where Timothy was leading. But it is the view of the elders of Mountainview that Paul's restriction of women teaching/asserting authority over men goes beyond the culture of their time when Paul cites the creation order and the Fall in Genesis 1-3 for his foundational reasoning. It is the view of the elders of Mountainview that the primary, authoritative preaching/teaching of the Scripture in the worship services is reserved to the Lead Pastor (as the elder who preaches/teaches; ref 1 Tim 5:17) and other qualified/gifted men, under the authority of the elders of Mountainview. This restriction only refers to this narrow position of teaching and does not refer to women leading or holding positions of authority outside of the church service, including the areas of civics, business, education, etc.

We also understand that there may be times when gender does matter in a particular role, not because it is required or prohibited by Scripture, but simply because it is prudent. For example, it is wiser to have a man leading a men's accountability group, or for a woman to be leading a women's recovery group. So, we want to exercise both freedom and discernment in these matters.

The above discussion is not meant to be an exhaustive study of the topic but simply a summary of our position. For more detailed information on the egalitarian and complementarian positions and other relevant Scriptures, contact the church office and one of our elders would be more than happy to share resources that discuss the topic in greater detail.

UNIVERSAL CHURCH, LOCAL CHURCH, AND ISRAEL

The Universal Church consists of all believers in Jesus as Savior, globally, for all time—birthed and launched on Pentecost in Acts 2 under the New Covenant of Grace in Jesus. The sign for the New Covenant for every believer is the presence and indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The local church is manifested in local assembling/gatherings of Jesus followers. These local churches are to use their spiritual gifts under the governing authority of the Elders to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8) and live out the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:36-40).

The church and Israel are distinct from one another, each having their own distinguishable futures under God's sovereign redemptive plan (Rom 2:28-29, 9-11; Eph 3:1-12; Acts 1:6-8).

END TIMES EVENTS AND TIMING*

Jesus will first come to receive His own to Himself (rapture), and later, after a period of tribulation, will come (second coming) to set up His earthly Kingdom and to reign a literal one thousand years over redeemed Israel and all the nations of the world. (Isaiah 9:6-7, 11:1-10, 65:20-25; Jeremiah 23:5, 31:33; Micah 4:2-4; Matthew 19:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20:1-6) Following this thousand year Messianic reign, Satan and all those who have rejected Christ will be judged once and for all at the Great White Throne judgment, and then be eternally separated from God in Hell (Rev 20:1-3, 7-15; 2 Peter 3:3-10; 1 Tim 4:16; 2 Thess 1:7-9) Christ will then hand over the kingdom to the Father, having completed His redemptive work. The old heavens and earth will be destroyed, and God will establish a new heaven and earth for His followers to dwell with Him forever. (1 Cor 15:24-28; Rev 21; 22:5, 11)

Jesus makes it clear that no one knows the day or hour that He will return other than the Father (Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32-34). Anyone who claims to have, or know, the date of Jesus' return should be quickly rejected. While we don't know the day or the hour, Scripture repeatedly teaches us that Jesus' return is imminent and should be anticipated by all believers. Wisdom shares that we should anticipate Jesus returning at any moment but prepare like He isn't returning for another 100+ years. (Matt 24:44, 25:13; Luke 12:40; Romans 8:19-25; 1 Thess 4:13-18; 1 Cor 1:7, 15:50-54; Phil 3:20, 4:5; Titus 2:13; Jude 21)

* While the Bible gives sufficient data to verify the inevitable reality of these end-time events, Christians of good faith differ in opinion on their specific timing and sequence

