

GROWTH PATH

STEP ONE





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INTRODUCTION:

THE BODY OF CHRIST

“Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”

Ephesians 4:15-16 (NLT)

WELCOME TO THE GROWTH PATH

This class is a basic introduction to understanding the purpose of the local Church and to help you become more familiar with our church family. Since we have members from many different church backgrounds, this class was designed to explain who we are and what we're about.

WHAT IS TREE OF LIFE CHURCH ABOUT?

Tree of Life Church exist to establish God's Kingdom in our communities by leading people to become _____ followers of Jesus, so they might experience a life of freedom and fulfillment that God always intended for them.

THE GOAL OF THIS CLASS

To help you understand the importance of the local church and give you the opportunity to become a _____ of Tree of Life Church.

WHY IS THE LOCAL CHURCH SO IMPORTANT?

“So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.” Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Ephesians 2:19-21 (NLT)

The Church is God's Family; It is the hope of the world and God's plan for:

1. _____ **mankind back to God and others.**

“For there is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus.” 1 Timothy 2:5 (NLT)

2. _____ **mankind back to the path of life.**

“He refreshes and restores my life (my self); He leads me in the paths of righteousness [uprightness and right standing with Him—not for my earning it, but] for His name’s sake.” Psalms 23:3 (AMP)

3. _____ God’s rule and reign in the earth, which is His Kingdom.

“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” Matthew 16:18-19 (NASB)

4. _____ followers of Jesus Christ.

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:19-20 (NLT)

PART I:

OUR MAIN FOCUS

“So One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, ‘Of all the commandments, which is the most important?’ Jesus replied, ‘The most important commandment is this: Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. The second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.”

Mark 12:28-31 (NLT)

I. OUR MAIN FOCUS

To lead people to become all-in followers of Jesus Christ.

HOW WE ACCOMPLISH OUR MAIN FOCUS

I. WEEKEND SERVICES

Our weekend services serve people at all stages in their spiritual journey but are primarily geared toward helping people build-up their faith and connect to a life-giving relationship with God.

Our weekend Services focus on connecting with God in three ways:

1. _____

“But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.” John 4:23-24 (NLT)

2. _____

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.” Timothy 3:16-17 (NLT)

3. _____

“He said to them, “The Scriptures declare, ‘My Temple will be called a house of prayer...’” Matthew 21:13 (NLT)

II. LIFE GROUPS

Real life change happens in the context of relationships. In the Bible, they worshipped in the temple but ministry happened house to house. Our Life groups are primarily geared toward building biblical community where people can grow spiritually.

Our Life Groups focus on spiritual growth through:

1. _____

“What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us?” Romans 8:31 (NLT)

2. _____

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” John 8:32 (NLT)

3. _____

“So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.” Galatians 6:9 (NLT)

III. GROWTH PATH

Tree of Life’s Growth Path is designed to start you off on your spiritual growth journey so you can grow as a disciple and develop your purpose in God.

The Growth Path focuses on:

1. _____ **to God’s Family**

2. _____ **like Jesus**

3. _____ **in God**

4. _____ **with Jesus**

IV. TEAMS

All of us were created by God to make a difference in the life of another person. God has a plan for you where your abilities and strengths can touch the lives of others. We believe that your life will never make sense until you find, develop, and fulfill that purpose.

On the Dream Team:

1. **Every member is a** _____

2. **Every task is** _____

3. **Every member is a “10” in** _____

PART II:

OUR CULTURE

“Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.”

Matthew 7:20 (NLT)

II. OUR CULTURE

Culture is the byproduct of values shared by a group of people. Every home and organization has its own culture based on the values of the people that are a part of the home or organization. You can see the difference in cultures when you visit different businesses. For example, one grocery store may value having low prices while another store may value excellence over bargains. That value will affect the culture of that store, the people that work there, and the people that shop there. The result of that scenario might be a store with low prices but a poor shopping experience, while the other store will have a more pleasant shopping experience, rather than the cheapest prices in town. Neither one of these values are wrong, they just shape the culture of these environments.

Tree of Life Church is no different. We have a set of values that we place above others. These values are somewhat of an honor code or a standard that we choose to live by. These values shape the culture of our church and set us apart from other cultures. In other words, people like us do things like this.

TREE OF LIFE VALUES:

1. _____

What we seek first orders our lives, therefore, we seek God first through worship, His word, and prayer.

- **Worship:** The more we love Jesus, the more we become like him.
- **Word:** The Word of God is our spiritual life source and ultimate authority in our lives.
- **Prayer:** Prayer is our first response. We pray about anything and everything.

2. **My** _____ **My** _____

We all have a purpose and place in building God's church using our time, talents, and treasures.

3. _____ **as you are** _____ **as you are**

We accept each other as we are, but challenge each other to grow.

4. **Keep** _____ **keep** _____

We believe change happens when we are consistently present, especially in difficult times.

5. _____ **above** _____

We seek to understand each other and continue to pursue relationships despite our differences.

PART III:

OUR HOPE FOR YOU

“We hope that your faith will grow and that the boundaries of our work among you will be extended.”

2 Corinthians 10:15 (NLT)

III. OUR HOPE FOR YOU

YOUR NEXT STEPS

1. **Get water baptized.** (if you have not been baptized)
2. **Become a member of Tree of Life Church.**
3. **Make your way into a Life Group.**
4. **Serve on a Team.**

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

Having received Christ as my Lord and Savior and being in agreement with the values and ideas presented in the membership class, I now feel led by the Holy Spirit to unite with the Tree of Life Church family. In doing so, I commit myself to God and to the other members to do the following:

1. I will protect the unity of my church:

- By acting in love toward other members.
- By refusing to gossip.
- By following the leadership.

“So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on the growth of our fellowship together.” Romans 14:19 (Ph)

“Live in complete harmony with each other - each with the attitude of Christ toward each other.” Romans 15:5 (LB)

“Have a sincere love for other believers, love one another earnestly with all your heart.” 1 Peter 1:22 (GN)

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs.” Ephesians 4:29

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.” Hebrews 13:17

2. I will share the responsibility of my church:

- By praying for its growth.
- By inviting others to attend.
- By warmly welcoming those who visit.

“To the church...we always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers.” 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2

“Go out into the country...and urge anyone you find to come in, so that the house will be full.” Luke 14:23 (LB)

“So, warmly welcome each other into the church, just as Christ has warmly welcomed you; then God will be glorified.” Romans 15:7 (LB)

3. I will serve the ministry of my church:

- By discovering my gifts and talents.
- By being equipped to serve by my leaders.
- By developing a servant’s heart.

“Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you.” 1 Peter 4:10 (Ph)

“God gave...some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God’s people for works of ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” Ephesians 4:11-12

“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus...by taking on the very nature of a servant.” Philippians 2:4-5, 7 (NIV 1984)

4. I will support the testimony of my church:

- By attending church and Life Groups faithfully.
- By living a godly life.
- By giving regularly.

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Acts 2:42

“Let us not give up meeting together...but let us encourage one another.” Hebrews 10:25

“But whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy of the Gospel of Christ.”
Philippians 1:27 (Ph)

“Each one of you, on the first day of each week, should set aside a specific sum of money in proportion to what you have earned and use it for the offering.” 1 Corinthians 16:2 (LB)

“A tenth of all you produce is the Lord’s, and it is holy.” Leviticus 27:30

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

OUR STRUCTURE

“For God is not a God of disorder; but of peace...
Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly
way.”

1 Corinthians 14:33

II. OUR STRUCTURE

Tree of Life is committed to building a biblical foundation for church government. Spiritual life is produced when church government and theological correctness are combined with biblical preaching that proclaims the authority of God's Word and the presence of the Holy Spirit. We believe the principles of church government are universal and the scriptural formula for oversight and governance of the local church is relevant in every culture.

Tree of Life is a non-denominational, spirit-empowered church. As a non-denominational church, we are evangelical, focusing on biblical teaching and preaching more than church tradition as the guide to church behavior. Being a non-denominational church allows the leadership of Tree of Life to govern the church based on sensitivity to God's leading and direction in regard to vision, budgets, policies, formal standards and needs-based ministry.

OUR GOVERNMENTAL MODEL:

1. Lead by our Senior Pastor

Pastor Gabriel is the Senior Pastor and serves as the head of our leadership team. As such, he is focused on leading Tree of Life through inspired vision, direction, preaching and teaching.

2. Governed by our leadership council

Tree of Life practices a Leadership Council form of government. Although there are other important positions of leadership for instruction and ministry, it is the Leadership Council that has the responsibility to provide visionary direction and spiritual covering for the ministries of the church.

There are three basic functions of leadership council:

- To lead the church by governing the vision of the church and establishing policies which provide philosophical boundaries for church life.
- To uphold the biblical standards of behavior among church members. This includes enforcing church discipline for factious behavior, unrepentant sin and doctrinal error.
- To individually demonstrate a model for ministry and godly living to people as they lead the church.

3. Owned by our congregation

Another characteristic of a non-denominational church relates to control of church assets. Tree of Life's assets are owned by the congregation and administered by the leadership, rather than by a centralized denomination. The vision and direction of the church, along with the church's standards for leadership, membership and the Statement of Faith, are determined by the leadership council.

4. Funded by tithes & offerings

At Tree of Life Church we practice tithing for the support of Christ's Body, the church, as God commands. We recognize that giving 10% of our income is the Biblical standard of giving.

The giving of tithes and offerings is worship to Jesus Christ and is an expression of the relationship between the individual giver and the Lord. Funds are not "income only," they are worship, and must not be considered as a business transaction, but as an expression of gratitude toward God.

APPENDIX:

STATEMENT OF FAITH

“In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God’s promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge”

2 Peter 1:5 (NLT)

TREE OF LIFE'S STATEMENT OF FAITH

ARTICLE 1: GOD

It is the testimony of both the Old and New Testaments and of the Christian Church that God is both One and Triune. The biblical revelation testifies that there is only one God and that He is eternally existent in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

A. God the Father

God the Father is the creator and sustainer of all things, and He created the universe in love. He created man in His own image for fellowship and called man back to Himself through Christ after the rebellion and fall of man.

B. The Son

Jesus Christ is eternally God. He was together with the Father and the Holy Spirit from the beginning, and through Him all things were made. For man's redemption, He left heaven and became incarnate by the Holy Spirit through the virgin Mary; henceforth, He is forever one Christ with two natures—God and man—in one person.

C. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is God, the Lord and giver of life, who was active in the Old Testament and given to the Church in fullness at Pentecost. He empowers the saints for service and witness, cleanses man from the old nature and conforms us to the image of Christ. The baptism in the Holy Spirit, subsequent to conversion, releases the fullness of the Spirit and is evidenced by the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

ARTICLE 2: THE SCRIPTURE

We affirm that the Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, is alone the only infallible, inspired Word of God, and that its authority is ultimate, final, and eternal. It cannot be added to, subtracted from, or superseded in any regard. The Bible is the source of all doctrine, instruction, correction, and reproof. It contains all that is needed for guidance in godliness and practical Christian conduct.

ARTICLE 3: THE ATONEMENT

Christ's vicarious death on the cross paid the penalty for the sins of the whole world, but its benefits are only applicable to those who receive Jesus as their personal Savior. Healing—body, soul, and spirit—and all of God's provisions for His saints, are provided for in the atonement, but these must be appropriated.

ARTICLE 4: SALVATION

The Word of God declares clearly that salvation is a free gift of God, based on the merits of the death of His Son, and is appropriated by faith. Salvation is effected by personal repentance, belief in the Lord Jesus (justification), and personal acceptance of Him into one's life as Lord and Savior (regeneration). The new life in Christ includes the privileges of adoption and inheritance in the kingdom of God's beloved Son. Salvation is an act of free will in response to God's personal love for mankind. It is predestined only in the sense that God, through His omniscience, foreknew those who would choose Him. It is secure in the eternal, unchanging commitment of God who does not lie and is forever the same. Salvation should produce an active lifestyle of loving obedience and service to Jesus Christ our Savior.

ARTICLE 5: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

We believe that the Scriptures portray the life of the saint in this world to be one of balance between what is imputed to us as Christians and what is imparted to us according to our faith and maturity. Hence, God's provision for His children is total, and the promises are final and forever. The shortcomings of the individual and of the Church are because of the still progressing sanctification of the saints. The Christian life is filled with trials, tests, and warfare against a spiritual enemy. For those abiding in Christ until their deaths or His return, the promises of eternal blessing in the presence of God are assured. To remain faithful through all circumstances of life requires dependence upon the Holy Spirit and a willingness to die to personal desires and passions.

ARTICLE 6: THE CHURCH

The goal of the Church is to make disciples of all nations and to present the saints complete in Christ. The five-fold ministry of Ephesians 4 governs the Church, the offices of elder and deacon, as well as other offices mentioned in scripture. Church policy is a balance between congregation and eldership authority, emphasizing the final authority of the Church leadership. It is essential to the life of the Church that scriptural patterns of discipline are practiced and that oversight for Church discipline, individual and corporate, is exercised by the leadership of the Church.

ARTICLE 7: BAPTISM & THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Word of God enjoins on the Church two perpetual ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first, baptism, is the outward sign of what God has already done in the individual's life and is a testimony to all that the person now belongs to Jesus. It is identification with Jesus and is affected in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of the death of the Lord and is done in remembrance of Him until He comes again; it is a sign of our participation in Him. Both institutions are restricted to those who are believers.

ARTICLE 8: ESCHATOLOGY

We affirm the bodily, personal, second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the saints, the millennium, and the final judgment. The final judgment will determine the eternal status of both the saints and the unbelievers, determined by their relationship to Jesus Christ. We affirm with the Bible the final state of the new heavens and the new earth.



PO BOX 4212 FORT WORTH, TX 76164
WWW.TREEOFLIFE.CHURCH