

Missions Philosophy and Policy

Harvest Community Church (7/11/26)

PART 1: Biblical Foundation and Philosophy of Missions

What is the mission of the church?

The Bible is our foundation –

The Bible is authoritative, clear, and sufficient for the life and mission of the church. As God's message to us, the Bible determines both the message we proclaim and the methods we employ as we follow Jesus.

2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 1:1-4, 21; Ps. 19:7; 119:105; Deut. 6:6-7; Matt. 4:4

The Bible tells us what we're supposed to do (our mission) –

At Harvest, we believe¹ that Jesus gave us our marching orders in Matthew 28:19-20, which Christians refer to as The Great Commission. There he told us to "go and make disciples of all nations," and he explained that this includes 2 things:

1. Helping people *become* Christians by proclaiming the gospel and baptizing those who receive it,
2. Helping people *grow* as Christians by teaching them to obey everything he commanded.

The Bible also tells us how we're supposed to do it (our methods) –

In Acts 1-2 scripture demonstrates how the Great Commission is carried out: the gospel was proclaimed in the power of God's Spirit, and the resulting new Christians were enfolded into history's first church. Three key elements are evident: God's word proclaimed (centering on the gospel), God's Spirit at work (his power changing lives), and God's people in community (a church).

As the New Testament unfolds it becomes clear that this was not just a one-time event; these 3 elements formed a pattern that was consistently followed by the early church as they spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. Proclaiming the gospel in the power of God's Spirit and establishing churches is the Bible's pattern for carrying out the Great Commission.

Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2:38, 41; 5:11, 42; 6:2; 8:1-4, 12-13, 25, 36-40; 9:27-31; 10:42, 47-48; 11:19-26; 12:1-5; 13:1-3; 14:21-27; 15:3-4, 22, 35-41; 16:5-10; 20:17-31; Rev. 5:9-13; 7:9-12

¹ <https://harvestcc.org/our-mission>

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A closer look at how disciples are made

People become disciples of Jesus (conversion) in response to hearing the gospel (evangelism) and then embark on a lifelong process of learning to follow Jesus better (spiritual growth).

Evangelism –

The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Our task is to faithfully and verbally proclaim to the world God’s salvation for humanity through Jesus’ atoning death and resurrection (evangelism).²

Rom. 1:16; 10:13-17; 2 Tim. 4:2; 2 Cor. 5:11, 18-21

Conversion –

God is sovereign in salvation; we rely on the Holy Spirit to convict people of sin and give spiritual life (regeneration) to all whom the Father has chosen before creation to be saved (election), graciously bringing them to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (conversion), as evidenced by a rejection of sin and their old life, and consistent pursuit of new life in Christ and spiritual maturity.³

Acts 2:38; 13:48; 18:8-10; 19:1-5; Rom. 8:28-30; 9:11-13; 11:5-7; Eph. 1:3-14; 2:1-9; 1 Thess. 1:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9; 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:1, 2:9; Rev. 13:7-8; 17:8; Jer. 31:33-34; Eze. 36:25-27; Mark 1:14-15; John 3:3-8; Col. 1:13-14; 3:1-17

Spiritual Growth –

The first step a new believer takes is to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then they engage in a lifelong process of maturing spiritually, as seen in the meaning of the word “disciple.” The Greek word used in Matthew 28:19 (“make disciples”), is:

matheteuo (from *mathetes*⁴) - to disciple. In other words, helping someone to *progressively learn* the Word of God to become a mature, growing *disciple* (literally, "a learner," a true Christ-follower); to train (develop) in the truths of Scripture and in the *lifestyle* these truths produce. In

² Elliott Clark, “The Primacy of Proclamation in Missions,” *Reaching and Teaching*, October 18, 2023, <https://rtim.org/the-primacy-of-proclamation-in-missions>

³ Adapted from Southeast Asia G, “The Sovereignty of God in Missions,” *Reaching and Teaching*, November 15, 2023, <https://rtim.org/the-sovereignty-of-god-in-missions>

⁴ *Bible Hub*, <https://biblehub.com/greek/3101.htm>: *mathetes* is derived from the root *math*, which means the “mental effort needed to think something through.”

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summary: to disciple a believer is to help them *learn* to be a disciple of Christ *in belief and practice*.⁵

God uses his Word, his Spirit and his People to help disciples grow in “learning Christ,” a process called “sanctification.”⁶ More mature believers need to instruct and be godly examples for less mature believers to learn from and imitate. Making disciples is normally a slow process that requires patience as believers grow to maturity in Christ through the ordinary means of grace⁷ in the context of a local church.⁸ In this respect, it’s similar to a family: children grow within their own household, living in close relationship with their parents who instruct them in how to live and serve as visible models for them to imitate.

Phil. 3:17; 4:9; Col. 1:4-7, 28; 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Heb. 6:11-12; 13:7; 1 Pet. 5:3; 1 Tim. 4:12; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Thess. 4:1-8

What is a Biblically ordered local church?

A local church is a congregation of baptized Christians who regularly gather in person⁹ to hear the gospel rightly taught and the ordinances rightly administered. A *biblically ordered* local church is one that is set up, governed, and functions according to the teaching of Scripture, including:

- Word-centered ministry and expository preaching
- Gospel proclamation
- A Biblical understanding of, and dependence on, the work of the Holy Spirit
- Right administration of the ordinances (baptism and the Lord’s Supper)
- Proper understanding of and exercise of the authority granted to the local church
- Meaningful church membership
- Meaningful church discipline
- Biblical church leadership

See Part 3 below for more details and scriptural support for each of these.

⁵ Adapted from *Bible Hub*, <https://biblehub.com/greek/3100.htm>.

⁶ *Bible Hub*, <https://biblehub.com/greek/38.htm>: The word “sanctification” comes from the Greek word *hagiasmós* (from *hágios*: “holy”) – *sanctification* is the process of advancing in *holiness*. It refers to the believer being progressively transformed by the Lord into His likeness.

⁷ “Ordinary means of grace” refers to the foundational practices of the Christian life, such as corporate worship, Bible reading and preaching, prayer, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, etc. These are the means by which we are nourished and grow spiritually. See <https://learn.ligonier.org/qas/what-are-the-ordinary-means-of-grace-and-why-do-we-call-them-that>

⁸ Scott Logsdon, “Making Mature Disciples in Missions,” *Reaching and Teaching*, January 24, 2024, <https://rtim.org/making-mature-disciples-in-missions>.

⁹ Acts 20:7.

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What is Missions?

The word “missions” does not appear in the Bible; it’s an English word that has historically referred to churches sending¹⁰ Christians to make disciples of Jesus across geographical, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries. At Harvest, we will use the term “missions” as follows:

Missions is when churches send qualified workers across linguistic, geographic, or cultural barriers to fulfill the Great Commission by making disciples of Jesus, especially in places where there is little or no gospel witness.¹¹ Individuals who are sent out to do this kind of work are called *missionaries*. The primary aim of missions is to make disciples through evangelism and starting/strengthening local churches. All other missions work should be intentionally and strategically connected to this primary aim.

Why are Local Churches Central to the Task of Missions?

The importance of evangelism in missions is well understood: since people only become disciples of Jesus in response to the gospel, it makes sense that verbally explaining the gospel is central to missions work. However, the centrality of local churches to the task of missions is perhaps not as commonly understood. We believe that local churches are the origin, the means and the goal of missions:¹²

Local Churches as the Origin of Missions –

Local churches are responsible for assessing, equipping, training, sending and supporting missionaries.¹³ Every missionary should have a primary sending church.

Churches are where faithful missionaries are made. A prospective missionary’s local church is in the best position to assess their character, fruitfulness, and biblical knowledge.¹⁴ The most important development and training of missionaries occurs during years of membership in a healthy church, through the ordinary work of the church (worship, evangelism, serving, discipling

¹⁰ Gibson, *What is the Mission of the Church?*: The word “missions” comes from the Latin verb *missio*, which means “to send.” So literally, missions is about sending and being sent.

¹¹ Adapted from John Folmar & Scott Logsdon, *Prioritizing the Church in Missions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2025), 59-60.

¹² Folmar & Logsdon, *Prioritizing the Church in Missions*, 6.

¹³ Brian Pate, “The Local Church and Missionary Sending,” *Reaching and Teaching*, January 10, 2024,

<https://rtim.org/the-local-church-and-missionary-sending>.

¹⁴ Andy Johnson, *Missions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 40-45.

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one another, etc.). It's vital for missionaries to be healthy church members themselves before they go overseas to train Christians how to be healthy church members where they live.¹⁵

Local churches are also responsible to support the missionaries they send well. This includes generous financial support, regular prayer and communication, pastoral visits, and extending hospitality during visits home.¹⁶

Local Churches as the Means of Missions –

Local churches function as Jesus's discipleship program for new and maturing believers everywhere. A healthy local church on the mission field is critically important both for the maturing of new converts and for the spiritual health of missionaries. A healthy local church also provides a strong witness to the unbelieving world through the love that the members show each other, the peace between members, through its corporate life together, and through members' love for, and service to, those in need.¹⁷

Local Churches as the Goal of Missions –

Until Christ returns, local churches serve as the visible outposts of God's Kingdom. They proclaim the gospel so people can become Christians and provide discipleship in community so people can grow as Christians. Establishing Biblically ordered churches in the local language is the best way to provide people everywhere with access to the gospel over the long-term.

Eph. 1:22-23; 3:10; 3:20-21; Col. 1:15-20

Local Church Partnerships –

Local church partnerships are integral to fulfilling The Great Commission.¹⁸ We see gospel partnerships throughout the book of Acts and the Epistles. We seek to partner with like-minded¹⁹ churches in our missions efforts.

Acts 20:4; Romans 15:22-33; Phil. 1:5; 4:15-16, 18; 2 Cor. 8:1-5; 11:9

¹⁵ Folmar & Logsdon, *Prioritizing the Church in Missions*, 6, 90-92.

¹⁶ Johnson, *Missions*, 49-50, 52-56.

¹⁷ Folmar & Logsdon, *Prioritizing the Church in Missions*, 125-132.

¹⁸ Ryan Robertson, "Gospel Partnerships in Missions," *Reaching and Teaching*, April 10, 2024, <https://rtim.org/gospel-partnerships-in-missions>.

¹⁹ By "like-minded" we mean common theological convictions, including the theology of the church (ecclesiology) and the theology of missions (missiology).

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Summary of our missions philosophy

Harvest's God-given aim in Global Missions is to make disciples of Jesus by sending qualified missionaries to proclaim the gospel and establish healthy/Biblically ordered churches.

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PART 2: Missions Policies and Practices

Criteria for Providing Missions and Missionary Support

In considering who we will support in our Missions efforts, and how much support we will provide, we will consider the following factors: 1) the individual's qualifications, 2) the missions work they are engaged in (or plan to be engaged in), 3) our relationship as a church to the individual and 4) whether we will be the primary sending church, or a supporting church.

Qualifications –

We are committed to assessing, equipping, training, sending and supporting missionaries who demonstrate the kind of biblical leadership modeled in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The missionary (and spouse when applicable) should evidence spiritual maturity, stability, gifting, and character over time as well as evidence of a faithful and fruitful ministry. They should be able to clearly articulate theological truths. They need to agree with our statement of faith and church covenant.

Work –

The missionary's vision and strategy should be in alignment with our theological convictions and Missions philosophy as outlined in this document. They should have a strategic plan to reach a particular people or region, especially in places where there is little or no gospel witness.

Ministries of good works and other parachurch ministries will be evaluated based on how intentional and effective they are in contributing to the work of evangelism, discipleship and the building or strengthening of healthy, biblically ordered local churches.

Relationship –

The missionary's relationship with Harvest should be deep. Our aim is that they would be known and trusted by the congregation; ideally, they would be members of Harvest for a meaningful time. Strong relationships take time to develop, and missionaries will commit to building and maintaining such a relationship with Harvest. They must be willing to communicate regularly with us and receive counsel from Harvest's elders. We will prioritize having fewer workers so that we can have deeper relationships.

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Primary or Supporting Church –

The level of support we provide for individual missionaries will depend on whether we are their primary sending church, or another church is serving that role, and we are in a supporting role.

Categories of Support

Sent Missionaries –

These are full-time, biblically qualified missionaries sent out from our church, with whom we have a strong relationship with, and whose work is aligned with our missions philosophy.

Supported Missionaries –

These are full-time, biblically qualified missionaries whom we support but for whom we are not the primary sending church. Missionaries in this category will fit into one of these three sub-categories:

- a. Missionaries whose work strongly aligns with our missions philosophy and with whom we have a strong relationship.
- b. Missionaries with whom we have a strong relationship, but whose ministry is not as strongly aligned with our missions philosophy.
- c. Missionaries whose work strongly aligns with our missions philosophy, but with whom we have a more limited or developing relationship.

Partner Organizations –

These are biblically faithful organizations we support which vary in their alignment with our missions philosophy and the strength of our relationship:

- a. Partner organizations whose work strongly aligns with our missions philosophy and with whom we maintain a strong, ongoing relationship.
- b. Partner organizations whose work strongly aligns with our missions philosophy, but with whom we have a more limited or developing relationship.
- c. Partner organizations with whom we have a strong relationship, but whose work is not as closely aligned with our missions philosophy.

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Harvest's Commitment

	Sent Missionaries	Supported Missionaries	Partner Organizations
Financial Support	Highest level of ongoing support	Lower level of support than sent missionaries Amount based on degree of alignment with our missions philosophy and strength of relationship	Lower level of support than sent missionaries Amount based on degree of alignment with our missions philosophy and strength of relationship
Elder/Pastor Support	Proactive, regular visits by Harvest elders/pastors, regular counsel, care, encouragement and accountability	Lower level of support than sent missionaries, depends on alignment with our missions philosophy and strength of relationship	None
Strategic Support	Ongoing public affirmation by elders for church-wide support, regular updates to congregation (Sunday service, members meetings), opportunity to publicly share when visiting	Opportunity to publicly share when visiting, lower level of regular updates to congregation than sent missionaries	Opportunity to publicly share when visiting, lower level of regular updates to congregation than sent missionaries
Prayer Support	Regular prayer in Elders meetings, Sunday services and member meetings, and regular and more extensive updates in our missions prayer sheet	Regular updates in missions prayer sheet, lower level of public prayer support than sent missionaries	Regular updates in missions prayer sheet, lower level of public prayer support than sent missionaries

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Commitment to Harvest

	Sent Missionaries	Supported Missionaries	Partner Organizations
Sign and affirm our Statement of Faith	✓	✓	✓
Live holy lives of faith and repentance that adorn the gospel	✓	✓	✓
Provide us with monthly prayer requests and regular (at least quarterly) updates	✓	✓	✓
Pray regularly for the ministry of Harvest	✓	✓	
Provide a more in-depth annual update on family life, ministry goals and plans, etc.	✓	✓	
Maintain open and honest communication with us	Include Harvest's elders as partners in making major decisions regarding life and ministry (we have a "seat at the table" for big decisions)	Keep us informed of major changes in ministry philosophy and work, which should be made in partnership with the sending church	Keep us informed of major changes in ministry philosophy and work
Grow in theological knowledge and application to everyday life (including ecclesiology and missiology)	Invest in growing on their own and engage with resources we provide	Invest in growing on their own	

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Visit Harvest	Prioritize spending time with us while in the U.S. if possible	Spend time with us while in the U.S. if possible	
Plan for financial retirement	✓	✓	

Ongoing Evaluation

We will regularly evaluate our support for our missionaries and partner organizations to ensure ongoing alignment with the above criteria. If a missionary or partner organization is no longer in alignment with these criteria, we will wind down our support for them.

The Role of the Elders

The elders will be responsible for:

- Evaluating and proposing to the members who we will support, and how much support we will provide for them. The members will vote on these proposals as part of the annual budget process.
- The ongoing evaluation of each of our missionaries and partner organizations.
- Elder/pastoral support, and prayer support, as outlined in the “Levels of Support” section.
- Mobilizing Harvest for missions, including:
 - Regularly praying that the Lord would send workers out from our church.
 - A commitment to train up biblically qualified leaders, some of whom we’d like to send out as missionaries.
 - Regular evaluation of opportunities for our church to be involved in global missions.

The Role of the Missions Team

The Missions team will provide more practical support for, and contact with, our supported missionaries and partner organizations. This will include:

- Regular communication with missionaries to gain a deeper understanding of their needs.
- Regular gathering of updates and prayer requests to share with the congregation, including updating the missions prayer sheet.
- Regularly gathering to pray for them.

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- Helping facilitate missionary visits to the US, including the communication of their practical needs to the congregation and facilitating the meeting of those needs, as well as arranging for them to give more updated presentations outside of the Sunday service (for example after church).
- Organize practical support for their ministry as needed.

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Part 3: What is a Biblically Ordered Local Church?

A biblically ordered local church is one that is ordered, governed and functions according to the teaching of Scripture, including:

Word-Centered Ministry and Expository Preaching –

God gives life and health to a church through the Bible, and the Holy Spirit's application of it to each member. Therefore, the weekly gathering in Christ's name should be centered on the Word; it should be read, preached, prayed and sung. The weekly preaching should mainly consist of the exposition of God's Word to his people; reading, explaining, and applying a portion of the Bible. Expository preaching makes the main point of a passage of Scripture the main point of the sermon.²⁰

Heb. 4:12; John 14:25-26; 1 Tim. 4:13; Acts 2:42; 5:42; 6:2; 2 Tim. 4:2; Col. 3:16

Gospel Preaching –

The gospel is the overarching storyline of the Bible, as the entire Bible points to Christ and his redemptive work on the cross. The gospel should be proclaimed regularly in the weekly gathering for the benefit of those who haven't yet heard, so they can be saved. And it should be proclaimed regularly for the benefit of the believing congregation, to promote the health of the church and transform the way Christians live in the world.

Acts 14:7, 21; 16:10; Rom. 1:15; 15:20; 2 Cor. 2:12; 8:18; 1 Thess. 3:2

A Biblical Understanding of and Dependence on the Work of the Holy Spirit –

God's Spirit indwells every Christian, opening our minds to rightly understand his Word, transforming our hearts to fully obey his word, and empowering our serving and our witness to spread his word. Local churches need to depend on God's Spirit by praying together in prayer meetings and worship services, practicing a culture of prayer in their relationships with one another, and encouraging members to use their spiritual gifts to build up the church.

John 14:26; 16:12-14; Luke 12:11-12; Acts 1:8; 2:38; 4:31; 13:2-3; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Eph. 1:13; 2 Tim. 1:14; 1 Cor. 12

²⁰ "The Aim of Expository Preaching," The Charles Simeon Trust, accessed March 19, 2026, <https://simeontrust.org/host/manual-part1>

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Right Administration of the Ordinances –

There are two ordinances instituted by Christ which a local church should administer: baptism and The Lord's Supper. Upon conversion a new believer should be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe "baptism is a church's act of affirming and portraying a believer's union with Christ by immersing them in water, and a believer's act of publicly committing themselves to Christ and his people, thereby uniting a believer to the church and marking them off from the world."²¹

Matt. 3:6,16; 28:19; Acts 2:38, 41; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 27; Gal. 3:25-27

The Lord's Supper, or communion should be celebrated regularly in the gathering of the church. "The Lord's Supper is a church's act of communing with Christ and each other and of commemorating Christ's death by partaking of bread and wine, and a believer's act of receiving Christ's benefits and renewing his or her commitment to Christ and his people, thereby making the church one body and marking it off from the world."²²

Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:17-34

Proper Understanding of and Exercise of the Authority Granted to the Local Church –

King Jesus, the one with all authority, has given specific authority for governing the life of a local church to the entire congregation. This authority is called "the keys of the kingdom of heaven." A local church exercises these keys when they 1) formally recognize true believers²³ by admitting them into membership (see below) and 2) exercise church discipline of its members (see below).

Matthew 16:13-19; 18:15-20; 28:18-20

Meaningful Church Membership –

Church membership is "a covenant between baptized believers whereby they affirm one another's professions of faith through the ordinances and agree to oversee one another's discipleship to Christ."²⁴ Church membership marks off a local church from the world and makes the gospel visible by identifying those who are born again and committed to following Jesus together. While

²¹ Bobby Jamieson, *Understanding Baptism* (Nashville, TN; B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 6.

²² Bobby Jamieson, *Understanding The Lord's Supper* (Nashville, TN; B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 25.

²³ By "true believers" we mean individuals who demonstrate a clear understanding of the gospel, and have a credible profession of faith, that is, they have repented of their sins and turned in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁴ Jonathan Leeman, *Understanding Church Discipline* (Nashville, TN; B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 27.

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the words “church membership” don’t appear in the Scriptures, it is hard to imagine how one might fulfill numerous biblical commands without it:²⁵

1. Elders need to know who the members of their church, as they are commanded to 1) keep watch over their souls and be accountable for them, 2) pay careful attention to them, 3) equip them for the work of ministry, 4) shepherd and exercise oversight over them and 5) be an example to them.

Heb. 13:17b; Acts 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 5:1-3

2. As members relate to their elders, they are commanded to 1) obey them and submit to them, 2) consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith, 3) esteem them very highly in love because of their work, and 4) support them financially.

Heb. 13:7, 17a; 1 Peter 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Cor. 9:14; Gal. 6:6

3. As members relate to other members, they are commanded to 1) love one another as a witness to the world, 2) pursue relational harmony in their church, 3) regularly meet together to stir up and encourage each other, and 4) obey numerous other “one-another” commands in the Bible which are most effectively done in a community of believers who have committed to each other, know and love each other.

John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:10; 14:19; 15:7; Heb. 10:24-25; 1 John 4:11; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:2-3; Col. 3:16; 1 Pet. 4:9

4. Members own the critical task of ensuring their church remains faithful to the gospel in its teaching. If the teaching of their church turns to a different gospel than the one true apostolic gospel, the members are to protect the gospel by rejecting those who are teaching a false gospel.

Gal. 1:6-9

Meaningful Church Discipline –

Church discipline is the biblically ordained work of correcting sin in the life of the church. Its purpose is to correct, to rebuke and to warn. In most cases this should be done privately and informally. On rare occasions, it can also include a final step of excluding a member from membership in the church because of serious unrepentant sin. The goal of church discipline is always repentance, reconciliation and restoration.²⁶ It should be noted that the biblical teaching on church discipline presupposes a local church can clearly identify those who are under their authority: baptized believers who have covenanted together to form the local church (i.e. its

²⁵ Mark Dever, *Understanding the Great Commission* (Nashville, TN; B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 28-30.

²⁶ Leeman, *Understanding Church Discipline*, 4, 31-35.

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“members”). A local church should not try to discipline an individual who is not yet a believer (we need to share the gospel with them), or one who truly is a believer but has not placed themselves under that local church’s authority.

Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6-15, Gal. 6:1-2; 2 Cor. 2:5-7; Matt. 18:12-14

Biblical Church Leadership –

There are only two church offices according to Scripture: elders and deacons. Elders are to be godly, qualified men who serve as teachers, shepherds (pastors) and overseers of the church, and lead by godly example. “Faithful elders are a *critical* ingredient for the health of the church and the success of its mission because they support and equip church members who are the *essential* ingredient for both health and mission.”²⁷

Deacons are servants of the church, focusing on practical needs of members and the unity of the whole body.

1 Tim. 2:12; 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 2:1-15; 1 Pet. 5:1-5; Acts 6:1-7; 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11-16

²⁷ Sam Amadi, “Dignify the Work of Membership,” *9 Marks*, February 5, 2025, <https://www.9marks.org/article/dignify-the-work-of-membership>