



Kerrville Bible Church

What We Teach – A Journey Through the KBC Doctrinal Statement The Church Part 2 of 2 – March 6, 2022

We teach that the local church is autonomous, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5). We teach that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. Each local church, however, through its elders and their interpretation and application of Scripture, is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation. The elders determine all matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence and government as well (Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

Church Government

Christ is the Highest Authority - Elders operate under the authority of Christ, the Chief Shepherd, and are the highest level of spiritual authority within the local church. What in our culture might cause us to chafe against this?

Local Control - Each local assembly ought to be governed by its own elders, without controlling oversight from any other external sources such as denominational hierarchies, parachurch organizations, or other controlling influence apart from Jesus Christ and His word.

KBC owns the keys to its own buildings. Why is this important? Why might God have ordained it to be this way?

Typically, local government is the best government...when remaining true to the Word.

Contrast with other forms of church government:

- Episcopal - Found in Methodism, Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism. Prominent throughout much of church history. Two weaknesses - separates the offices of “bishops” and “elders”, and vulnerable to corruption (titles, authority, and positions instead of biblical qualifications).
- Presbyterian - Found with Presbyterian and Reformed denominations. Correctly focuses on elder rule, but accepts and operates under extra-biblical hierarchical structures of rule such as general assemblies.
- Congregational - Baptists, Lutherans, and Congregationalists. These emphasize the individual authority and autonomy of each local church and typically reject outside governing structures the other two accept. However, many times elder rule and authority is weakened in trade for democratic congregational decision making which is not supported by the New Testament.

Pure Democracy vs. Republic

We teach that discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers (Matthew 18:5-14), and the need for church discipline of sinning members are commanded by Scripture (Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16).

Discipleship, Mutual Accountability, and Church Discipline

The Great Commission - Go make disciples - baptizing and teaching. “We exist to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ”

2 Timothy 2:2 “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

Church Discipline

Though the word discipline carries negative connotations, the practice of church discipline ought to be motivated by a positive, loving desire both to preserve the purity of the church and to restore sinning brothers and sisters to the fellowship. Church discipline should never be motivated out of self righteous pride, political agendas, a desire to exercise power in an unbiblical way or in with an intent to embarrass people. Rather, it should be overseen by the elders who, as shepherds of the flock, sincerely long to see wandering sheep repent, return, and be restored. The process of church discipline is outlined by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 18:15–17:

15 If you brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

16 But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that **BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.**

17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

This passage outlines a four step process for how churches are to deal with sin among their members.

First, believers are to address sin on an individual level, approaching the offending party with a spirit of gentleness and humility. If the sinning brother responds to that private confrontation in repentance, the church discipline process comes to an end. He is forgiven and restored (Matt. 18:15).

But if he refuses to repent, the process moves to a second step, in which one or two more believers join in confronting the sinning brother. These witnesses primarily confirm that the sin was committed, and they also observe how the offending party responds after being confronted a second time (Matt. 18:16). It is hoped that the added weight of their rebuke will be enough to prompt a change of heart in the sinning brother.

Should he still refuse to repent after being given adequate time, the process moves to a third step. In light of the sinning brother's persistent hardheartedness, the witnesses are to bring the matter to the church (Matt. 18:17) by notifying the elders, who in turn communicate it to the congregation. Because of the public nature of this step, the elders must perform due diligence to confirm the facts of the situation—that the church member has sinned, has been confronted, and has refused to repent—before announcing it to the entire congregation. The purpose of alerting the church is twofold: to remind other members of the seriousness of sin and to encourage them to confront the sinning brother in the hopes that he will repent and be restored.

If the confronted brother still refuses to repent, the final step of church discipline is to formally separate and to ostracize him from the fellowship. The unrepentant person is no longer to be treated as a brother but as “a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matt. 18:17)—meaning as an outsider to whom the benefits and blessings of church membership are no longer extended. The motivation is not to punish the person but to see him yet come to his senses and repent. Putting them out of the church protects the purity of the remaining members and safeguards the congregation's testimony in the eyes of the world. The authority to practice church discipline in this manner comes from the Lord Jesus himself. Immediately after outlining the discipline process, Jesus explained, Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.

For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. (Matt. 18:18–20) The phrases “bound in heaven” and “loosed in heaven” were expressions that spoke, respectively, of actions either forbidden or permitted in light of God’s truth. In this context, the Lord’s meaning is clear. When the church follows the biblical procedure for church discipline, its verdict stands in harmony with God’s revealed will. Because of this, when unrepentant members are removed after following the proper process for discipline, the church can know their actions meet with God’s authoritative approval. Church discipline is therefore an earthly expression of heaven’s holiness.

Similar to parenting, discipline might make us uncomfortable to witness or to administer, but contrasted against the alternative it is clear that God’s design is necessary, loving, and superior.

Does this stand against the call for Unity?

The church is a place where righteousness and truth are championed and never compromised. Paul describes the church of the Living God as “a pillar and buttress of the truth”. Throughout the New Testament we see scripture call for unity and love and they are considered alongside commands for purity and truth. The Bible is clear that the loving unity described in scripture is not a superficial unity that turns a blind eye to fundamental doctrinal or moral issues. On the contrary, true unity is grounded in a shared commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ and the truth of His gospel. The New Testament rejects any pretense of unity that dilutes moral or doctrinal purity. When believers separate from false teaching or unrepentant sinners, they are not being divisive, they are following the command of the Bible to maintain purity.

Church Membership - Mutual Accountability

The New Testament displays a consistent pattern of a plurality of elders overseeing each local body of believers. The specific duties given to these elders presuppose a clearly defined group of church members under their care. Among other things, these godly men are responsible to shepherd God’s people, to labor diligently among them, to have charge over them, and to keep watch over their souls. Scripture teaches that the elders will give an account to God for the individuals allotted to their charge.

Those responsibilities require that there be a distinguishable, mutually understood membership in the local church. Elders can shepherd their people, provide oversight for them, and give an account to God for their spiritual well-being only if they know who is part of the flock and who is not. The elders of a church are not responsible for the spiritual well-being of every individual who visits the church or those who attend sporadically. Rather, they are primarily responsible to shepherd those who have submitted themselves to the care and authority of the elders, and this is done through church membership. Conversely, Scripture teaches that believers are to submit to their elders. Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey your leaders, and submit to them.” The question for each believer is, “Who are your leaders?” The one who has refused to join a local church and entrust himself to the care and authority of the elders has no leaders. For that person, obedience to Hebrews 13:17 is impossible. To put it simply, this verse implies that every believer knows to whom he must submit, which in turn assumes a clearly defined church membership.

Submission to Governmental Authority

We teach that, in general, the local church is to submit to the governing authorities of the State because they are ordained by God (Romans 13:1-7), seek the welfare of society at large, and pray “for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity” (1 Timothy 2:2), all while being salt and light in a decaying and dark world

(Matthew 5:13-16). However, there are times in a fallen world where the Church must openly resist and publicly renounce evil, even to the point of peaceful protest and civil disobedience, choosing to obey God rather than men (Acts 4:19-20; 5:29).

Romans 13:1-7

1 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

2 Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;

4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

5 Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.

7 Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

This concept goes back even further. Genesis 9:5-6

5 Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. "

6 "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.

History has demonstrated that even bad government is better than no government. There are certainly examples that would strain that point, however, even though pure anarchy is something rarely seen and experienced it is truly terrifying when each man does what is right in his own sight and there is no controlling authority whatsoever. This is somewhat conjecture on my part, but I think we see this in the time of Noah when Genesis 6:5-13 when God says that all the earth was corrupt in His sight and filled with violence and the wickedness of man was great on the earth.

This occurred before Genesis 9 with the common grace institution of governing authority by man to give account over the life-blood of men.

I don't have all the answers and am struggling with this concept currently, but some patterns from scripture are clear – we are called as Christians to be far more submissive than rebellious against authority.

We submit to Christ as our Lord, wives to husbands, children to parents, church members to elder leadership, and that pattern continues with our submission to governmental authority.

The Purpose of the Church

We teach that the purpose of the Church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Ephesians 4:13-16), by instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17), by fellowship (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42), and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:42). We teach that all saints are called to the work of service (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12;

Revelation 22:12). To that end, God gives unique and special spiritual abilities, also known as Spiritual Gifts, to each member of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

Within the Church there are several means which bring blessing, strengthen our faith, and cultivate spiritual growth in the lives of believers.

God's Word

Baptism

Communion - The Lord's Supper

Prayer

Worship

Fellowship

Church Discipline

Since....Let's touch on three of these

Prayer

Though often neglected in many churches, prayer (both corporate and private) is a vital means of grace that God uses to grow his people in holiness. In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Paul instructed the church in Thessalonica to "pray without ceasing." That imperative designates the heart attitude that ought to characterize every congregation. The command "pray" includes all facets of prayer: dependence, adoration, confession, intercession, thanksgiving, and supplication. The phrase "without ceasing" refers to a constant way of life that is characterized by a prayerful attitude, not an endless string of utterances. The perfect example of this kind of prayer was the Lord Jesus himself, whose fervent prayer life is depicted in the four Gospels. Jesus also taught his disciples how to pray and illustrated the importance of persistent prayer in his parables. This heartfelt commitment to prayer was exemplified by the early church, including the apostles, who prioritized it alongside the ministry of the Word. Paul's ministry was similarly characterized by a constant attitude of prayerfulness. God honoring prayer is motivated by a number of factors, including a yearning to fellowship with the Lord and bring glory to him, a dependence on God for his provision, a need for heavenly wisdom in the midst of trials, a plea for deliverance in the face of trouble, a longing to find relief from anxiety and fear, a desire to express thanksgiving to God for his goodness, a need to confess sin, a yearning to see the salvation of unbelievers, and a desire for spiritual growth both for oneself and for other Christians. The apostle Paul's desire to see believers grow in Christlikeness was a primary motivation in his prayer life. As he explained, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Worship

Worship is the theme of salvation history, the supreme purpose for which we as believers were redeemed, and the occupation to which we will be eternally committed. To worship the Lord is to ascribe to him the honor, glory, adoration, praise, reverence, and devotion that is due him, both for his greatness and for his goodness.

As the sovereign Creator of the universe, the triune God alone—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is worthy of worship. The worship of angels, saints, or other supposed deities constitutes idolatry, and is strictly prohibited in Scripture. It is the inexcusable refusal to worship the true God that brings his judgment on the unregenerate world (Rom. 1:18–32). True worship must begin in the

heart and mind of the worshiper. Hence, it cannot be equated with elaborate services, ornate buildings, eloquent prayers, or beautiful music. Those things may be outward expressions of genuine worship, but God accepts only that which flows from the heart from sincere devotion to him.

Though we might associate a church's worship with its music program, music is only one avenue through which worship can be expressed. Forms of worship can include prayer, expressions of praise and thanksgiving, and serving others for the sake of Christ. During our worship service itself, we join in corporate worship as a congregation by praising God through song, pleading to him in prayer, and listening to the reading and preaching of his Word. Contributing financially to the church through giving is also an expression of worship when done from a heart of joy.

For us as believers, the supreme act of worship is to offer all of ourselves as a living sacrifice to the Lord (cf. Matt. 22:37). Paul exhorted the Romans with these words: I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom. 12:1–2)

Worship, then, encompasses much more than the singing portion of a church service; it is a way of thinking and living for God's honor and glory. While worship may be passionate, it must always be grounded in truth. As Jesus explained, "The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23–24).

Many in the church today confuse emotionalism for worship. But emotional experiences that are not governed by theological truth do not honor the Lord. Genuine worship engages the mind; it does not bypass it. Moreover, God honoring expressions of worship are characterized by decency and orderliness. For this reason, we do not promote mindless, chaotic, or worldly practices in the name of worship. These things undermine rather than foster the kind of worship that honors God.

Fellowship

The word fellowship comes from the Greek term *koinōnia*, meaning "partnership" or "sharing." The basis for fellowship is salvation. Because believers are in fellowship with the Lord Jesus, they are also in fellowship with one another. As the apostle John explains, "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). The *practice* of fellowship is premised on our *position* of fellowship in Christ.

Because we are united to the Lord Jesus in faith, we are united to one another in love. The practice of fellowship consists of sacrificial service toward other members of the body of Christ.

Paul uses the metaphor of a human body and explains how each church member ought to contribute to the life of the whole: For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a

single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

This is a magnificent metaphor illustrating the common life that believers share under their Head, the Lord Jesus. It is this kind of unity, commonality, and togetherness that should characterize the fellowship of Kerrville Bible Church, and in every church. Expressions of fellowship include discipleship, mutual accountability, and joyful service.

The fellowship of believers not only provides a context for Christian service, it also offers spiritual protection to all of us as members. The Christian life is meant to be lived not in isolation but in community with other believers as they "stir up one another to love and good works" (Heb. 10:24). Like sheep who get separated from the rest of the flock, Christians who isolate themselves from the church become easier prey to temptation and sin. Consequently, the New Testament instructs believers to regularly attend and participate in the local church (Heb. 10:25).