

The DNA of Christ Covenant Church



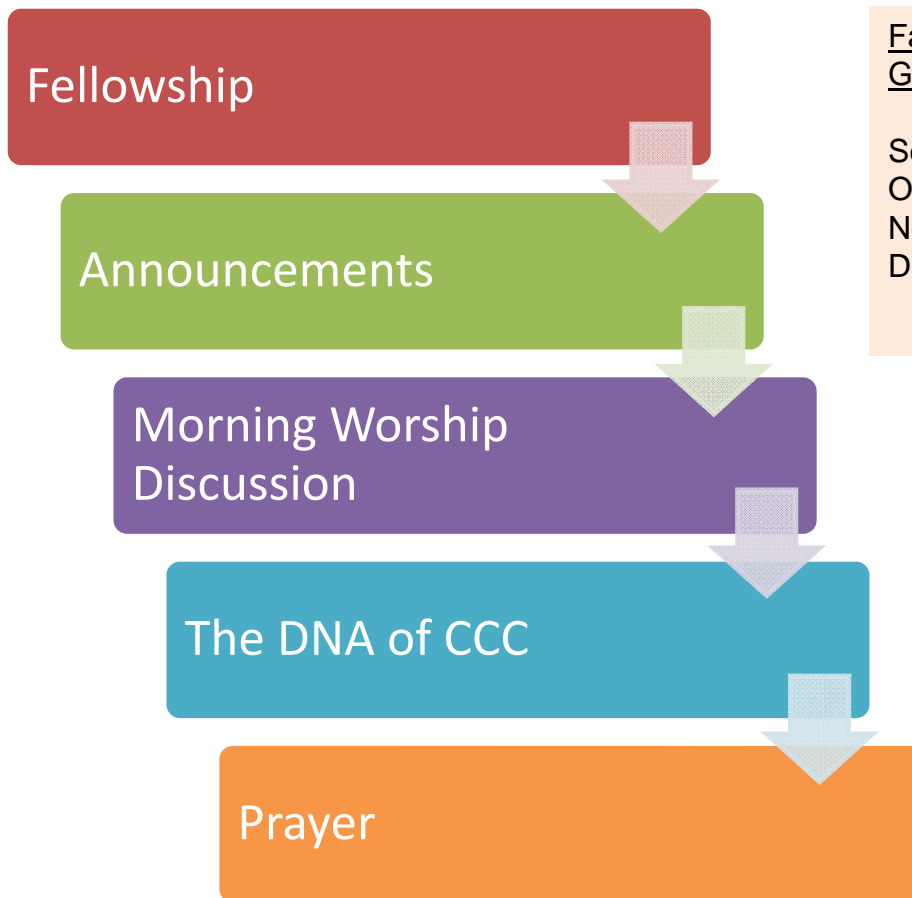
The DNA of Christ Covenant Church

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Community Groups

Fall 2010



Fall Community Group Dates:
September 19th
October 3rd, 17th
November 7th, 21st
December 5th, 19th

The Theology of Evangelism

Evangelism is a topic that makes many believers nervous. They typically feel like they are not qualified to participate and often seek to serve in any way other than this one. But perhaps the real issue is not one of participation, but understanding of the work of evangelism. This session is intended to provide the theological underpinnings of the Reformed (God-centered) view of the work of evangelism. It is also part of the DNA of Christ Covenant Church.

Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God: Two Truths

“What, then, are we to say about the suggestion that a hearty faith in the absolute sovereignty of God is inimical [unfriendly] to evangelism? We are bound to say that anyone who makes this suggestion thereby shows that he has simply failed to understand what the doctrine of divine sovereignty means. Not only does it undergird evangelism, and uphold the evangelist, by creating a hope of success that could not otherwise be entertained; it also teaches us to bind together preaching and prayer; and as it makes us bold and confident before men, so it makes us humble and importunate before God. Is not this as it should be? We would not wish to say that man cannot evangelize at all without coming to terms with this doctrine; but we venture to think that, other things being equal, he will be able to evangelize better for believing it.”

(J.I. Packer, “Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God.” IntersVarsity Press.)

Why?

- Glory of the One, True God (The Chief End of All Things)
- Obedience to our King (Honoring the majesty of Yahweh)
- How did you come to know Christ? (Precedence and Relationships)

What?

- The Good News of the God who loves sinners
- The Bad News of the reality of God’s wrath (holiness) and our estate.
- The powerful news that evangelism is the work of the Holy Spirit in using the scriptures to persuade sinners of the beauty of Christ.

Who?

- People who have understood the **why** and the **what** and desire to share it with others. (All Christians are witnesses of the grace of God)
- All who are providentially brought into the influence of the church (Necessity and Urgency)

Me-Centered Evangelism (Will Metzger, “Tell the Truth”)

Deceives Non-Christians by having them trust in their response.

Distorts Christians by causing them to look for another stage in their Christian life.

Disgraces God’s Honor by producing some professing believers with unchanged lives.

⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of the flesh nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:9-13, ESV)

The Practical Aspects of Evangelism: Structured Church Program or Lifestyle of Friendship Proclamation?

The truth is that the format of the evangelistic vehicle is not nearly as important as ensuring that the truth of Christ’s work is understood, so that we might share it in all of it’s power and glory. The Person of Jesus Christ and His glory is our heartbeat. Nevertheless, there are many practical aspects of proclaiming the greatness of Jesus Christ. Training, encouragement, developing opportunities, etc are all important components of evangelism. In this session we consider some of the practical aspects of the message and methods of presenting Christ. This is one aspect of the DNA of Christ Covenant Church.

Me-Centered	God-Centered
God Loves You – Primary Point of Contact	God Made You – Ownership – Primary Point of Contact
God is impotent before the sinner’s will	God is able to empower the sinner’s will
God is a friend who will help you	God is a king who will save you
Fallen yet has potential for good	Fallen and unable to come to God on his own
Seeks truth but lacks correct facts	Mind at enmity with God; None seek God
Needs love, help, friendship, and a new life	Needs new nature (mind, heart, will); regeneration
Makes Mistakes, Needs help with specific sins	Rebels against God; needs reconciliation
Humanity is sick and ignorant	Humanity is spiritually dead and lost
Christ is a priest -- Savior	Christ is a prophet, priest, and king.
Christ came for the benefit of man	Christ came to satisfy the righteousness of the Father and bring Him glory.
Evangelism is an invitation to be accepted now	Evangelism is a loving command to be obeyed now
God responds to our decision for salvation	God’s choice is the basis of our salvation. We respond to God’s initiative.
Saved by faith alone – repentance is optional for it is a “work”	Saved by faith alone – Repentance and faith are always present together
Sinners have the keys in their hands	God has the key in his hand



Discipleship – From Justification to Sanctification and Beyond

One of the significant differences between a reformed (God-centered) ministry and a me-centered ministry is that we trust that God is constantly at work in and among His people to make us more like Christ. It is His work of grace in us to make us what he declared us to be. The following diagram should help us to understand the purpose of Holy Spirit in keeping us “on track.”

OVERVIEW: THE ROCKET

The tone of the ministry must stand against the fragmentation in Reformed Theology and the Church.

When others observe our ministry, will they see us remaining true to our purpose and goals, or will we be pulled off-track?

These tangents tend to be personality-driven rather than theology-driven.

These tangents tend to be tradition-driven rather than ethically-driven.

Theological Tangents

Ethical Tangents

- Eschatology (end times)
- Theonomy (use of law)
- Denominationalism
- Worship style
- Etc

- Home-schooling
- Dating/Courting
- Halloween
- Harry Potter
- Music
- Etc

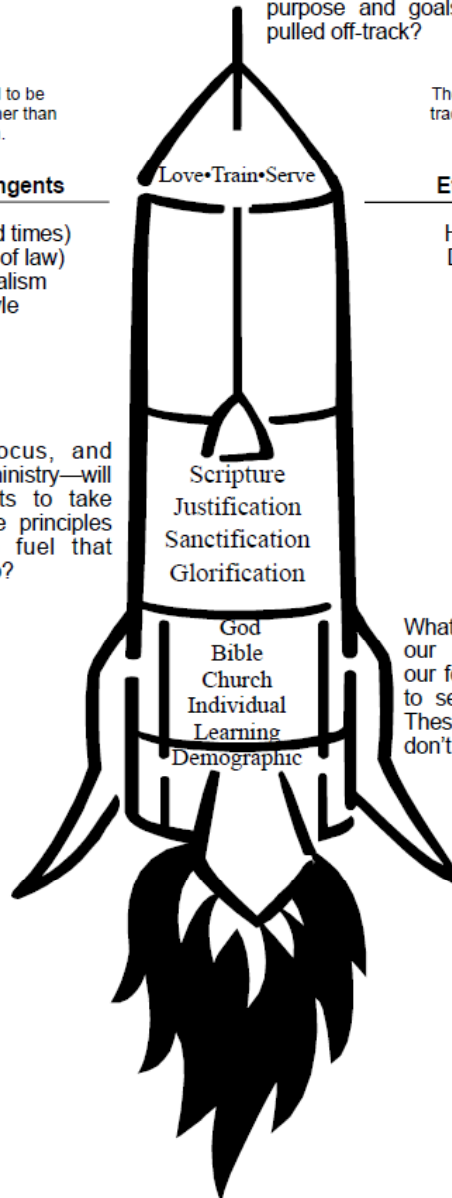
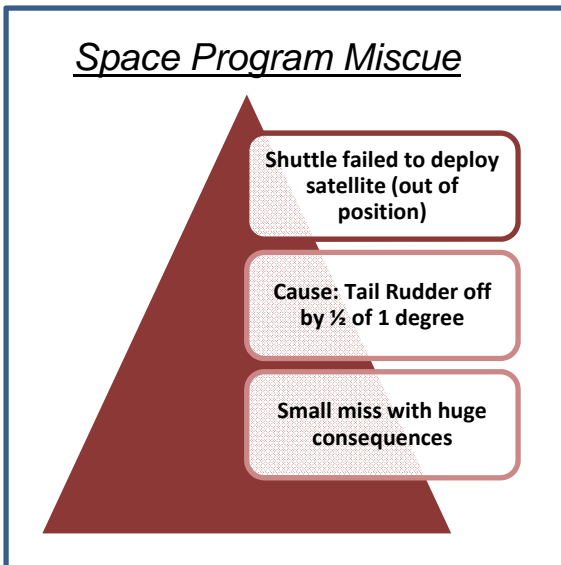
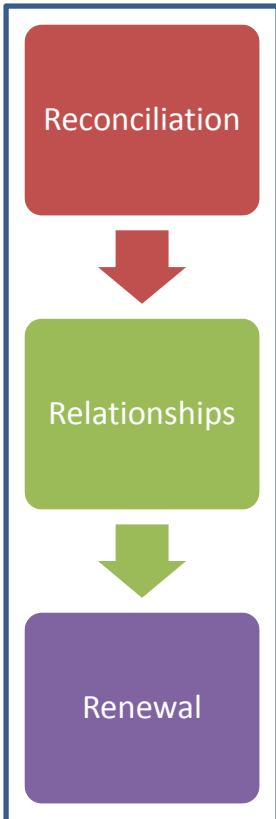
Love•Train•Serve

Scripture
Justification
Sanctification
Glorification

If our power, focus, and identity drive our ministry—will we allow tangents to take control, or will the principles we hold be the fuel that powers what we do?

God
Bible
Church
Individual
Learning
Demographic

What steers our ministry? If our presuppositions become our focus, we will not be able to see where we are going. These guide our ministry; they don't consume it.



Discipleship – Relationships and the Means of Grace

The means of grace are given by God as a way to encourage us in the faith. As we utilize these means of grace in the context of covenant relationships, the church grows in Christlikeness. But the growth we experience is not one where we become more reliant upon our own performance. Instead the means of grace teach us that growth in Christ is largely a recognition of our growing need for Christ and His work on our behalf. More of Him, less of us. This growth in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is the DNA of Christ Covenant Church.



Mercy – “Go and do likewise.” (Luke 10:37)

Jesus is a friend of the poor. When John the Baptist asked if Jesus was the “one who was to come,” Jesus reassured him by saying that “. . . the good news is preached to the poor” (Luke 7:21-22). When we think of mercy ministry, we often think of people getting small gifts that are simply what we have left. Instead, Jesus displays it as giving people Himself, which was more than they would ever need. As part of the DNA of Christ Covenant Church, we need to view mercy ministry the way the Lord Jesus did; as a part of serving those around us giving them a sign that the Kingdom of God is here.

Mercy as Ministry

- ***Love the LORD your God***
 - We cannot serve others without knowing and loving our Savior.
 - Love our neighbor
- ***Christ is our model***
 - All creation is subject to Him
 - He is the true High Priest who can give mercy
 - He is the great Deacon
- ***Mercy Ministry within Christ Covenant***
 - Are there those among us who need mercy?
 - What gifts, talents, resources, connections, etc do we have to share with others?
- ***Mercy Ministry within Hernando/Desoto***
 - What are the resources in the city/county? Churches? Government? Do we now where to point people for physical assistance? Do we know our county?
 - What are others doing that will help in Hernando?
- ***Mercy Ministry through Community Groups***
 - Liason with Diaconate
 - Mercy Ministry is for all; it is not optional

“Mercy to the full range of human needs is such an essential mark of being a Christian that it can be used as a test of true faith. Mercy is not optional or an addition to being a Christian. Rather, a life poured out in deeds of mercy is the inevitable sign of true faith.” – Tim Keller

Mercy – How Shall We Then Administer Mercy

“I fear there are some Christians among you to whom Christ can say no such thing [‘Come thou blessed . . . Inherit the kingdom’]. Your haughty dwelling rises in the midst of thousands who have scarce a fire to warm themselves at, and have but little clothing to keep out the biting frost; and yet you do not visit them. Ah! my dear friend! I am concerned for the poor, but more for you. I know not what Christ will say to you in the great day . . . I fear there are many hearing me who may know [now] well that they are not Christians, because they do not love to give. To give largely and liberally, not grudging at all, requires a new heart; an old heart would rather part with its life-blood than its money. Oh my friends! enjoy your money; make the most of it; give none away; enjoy it quickly for I can tell you, you will be beggars throughout eternity.” (Robert Murray M’Cheyne)

Six Issues that have to be worked out in Mercy Ministry (Dr. Keller)

- ***The poor vs. the POOR***
 - The poor could be understood as the “working poor.”
 - We don’t have to wait until things are “really bad”
 - We should love our neighbor as ourselves
- ***Priority vs. Leftovers***
 - Mercy is one of the priorities of the church like Evangelism or Worship
 - We must bear one another’s burdens
 - Giving needs to be sacrificial
- ***Justice vs. Mercy***
 - We must give freely and then require personal responsibility
 - Err on the side of grace
 - What about those who are “stuck” (inner city kids, the physically handicapped, etc)
- ***Living vs. Commuting***
 - Be smart about having people “there”
 - Be smart about who gives resources from “outside.”
- ***Respect vs. Pity***
 - The rhetoric is that the poor are helpless
 - Not do-gooders, but friends
 - Expect to learn and be changed rather than teach be change others
 - They are smart and know their community; listen

“To say that evangelism can be done without also doing social concern is to forget that our goal is not individual ‘decisions,’ but the bringing of all life and creation under the lordship of Christ, the kingdom of God.” – Tim Keller

Missions – Directed Passion for Christ

Jesus loves the church. And as His bride the church is called to demonstrate our love for Him. One way to demonstrate our love for Him is by living out our mission to make Him known here, there, and everywhere. But how do we choose where to direct our limited resources? The need is great. Where will we invest our time, talents, and treasure? As part of the DNA of Christ Covenant Church, we have determined that our Mission must be accompanied by strategic thinking – in submission to the Lordship of Christ.

Criteria for Evaluation of Gospel Opportunities

- ***Praying***
- ***Giving joyfully***
 - Living well within our means in order to have more to give
 - Seeing money as one of many things to give
 - Recognizing that some will have the gift of giving, and some the gift of going
 - Celebrating the bounty of God by meeting the needs of our community
- ***Selecting opportunities for service that maximize stewardship***
 - There versus here
 - Indigenous vs. Westerners
 - Training versus buildings
 - Tools versus Toys
 - Low Overhead
- ***Seeking to develop people who will carry the vision of Christ in living missional lives***
 - Relationships over risky investments
 - Leadership over Management
 - Things above over things below
- ***Developing specific goals for ministry endeavors that reflect missional, incarnational, transformational service***
 - Reducing Racism
 - Reducing cyclical poverty
 - Increasing literacy rates
 - Establishing Justice

The ministries we will seek to encourage through support are:

- Prayer
- Evangelism
- Church Planting
- Pastor Training
- Ministry to the Poor

Missions – I have a confession to make . . .

Confessions are often misunderstood in modern church circles. It is not uncommon for anything considered traditional to be looked upon with a jaundiced eye. To the contrary, many of the things we have inherited are valuable because they stand the test of time – they reflect eternal truth. As part of the DNA of Christ Covenant Church, a missional confession has been drafted to “start a tradition” of shared values based on the eternal truth that God is at work –and because He is gracious, we are invited to join Him.

A Missional Confession Christ Covenant Church

“To glorify God alone, by living in Christ-centered community,
and missionally engaging the world.”

- **Being Faithful to our Calling and Trusting God**

Leader: As God’s children, called by Him into the Christian Community of Christ Covenant Church in Hernando Mississippi through the saving and sanctifying grace of Jesus Christ, and being led by the Holy Spirit, we seek to heed our Lord’s command to go into all the nations making disciples, baptizing them into name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Men and Boys: We confess that though we are few in number, the spirit is present and faith is alive in our midst and that our Lord has taught that if we even the tiniest faith as a mustard seed, we shall be able believe to do great things in His name;

Women and Girls: Lord, forgive us for failing to rely on your promises and trusting fully in your teachings

- **Praying**

Leader: Our God offers us communion with him through prayer, Inviting us to cast all our cares on Him and instructing us that if we would pray in accordance with His will, he will grant us the desires of our hearts.

Boys and Girls: We confess, O Lord, that we often pray out of selfishness, not seeking your Holy will and that we failed to pray earnestly for your name to be glorified among all nations and peoples, an

Men and Women : Lord we now so pray that your Holy Spirit would guide us and direct us in how we might witness to your saving and sanctifying grace among the nations.



"Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't."

— John Piper

- **Giving joyfully**

Leader: In addition to spiritual blessing in Christ, Our God has blessed us exceeding and abundantly in material ways, giving us all far more than we need and has called us to be stewards of our spiritual and material blessings.

Men and Women: We confess, O Lord, our greed in wanting ever more, and failure to live as true stewards of your manifold blessings

Boys and Girls: Lord grant us a heart for stewardship that we may live within our means, giving freely and joyfully that others may know the good news that we know. Grant us wisdom that we may use our resources wisely and productively.

- **Long Term Impact and maximizing Stewardship**

Leader: Our God has been patient with us, rebellious sinners. He is slow to anger, abounding in mercy and steadfast love. He has chosen His people for salvation despite their rejection of him and he has granted us spiritual gifts to exercise in this life to advance His the knowledge of His glory, and mercy and love.

Women and Girls: Lord we confess that we are an impatient people, rushing to and fro, distracted by things that lead us away from you. We have not been patient with others, though you have been patient with us. We have been judgmental and critical of others, murdering them in our hearts, though you have been merciful with us, pardoning us of our sins and granting us life and adopting us as your Children. And we have not diligently sought to use our spiritual gifts in your service.

Men and Boys: Lord grant us opportunities to exercise patients among those who do not know your grace, living in relationship that reflects the eternal communion to which You have called us, being merciful, and forgiving, and loving. Change our hearts to reflect the heart of Christ. Reveal to us our gifts and callings for service in Your name. Make us encouragers. Anoint us with your Holy Spirit and give us the power to do your will.

- **Specific Goals for Ministry**

Leader: Our God call us to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with Him. The life of our Lord Jesus, as God Incarnate, provides for believers the living example of God's will for our service.

Men and Women: Merciful father, we confess that we have not lived in accordance with your commands to love our enemies and to do good to those who would persecute us. Rather we have to often lived selfishly, hating our enemies, seeking revenge on those who treat us unjustly, and failing to be seekers and doers of justice and mercy.

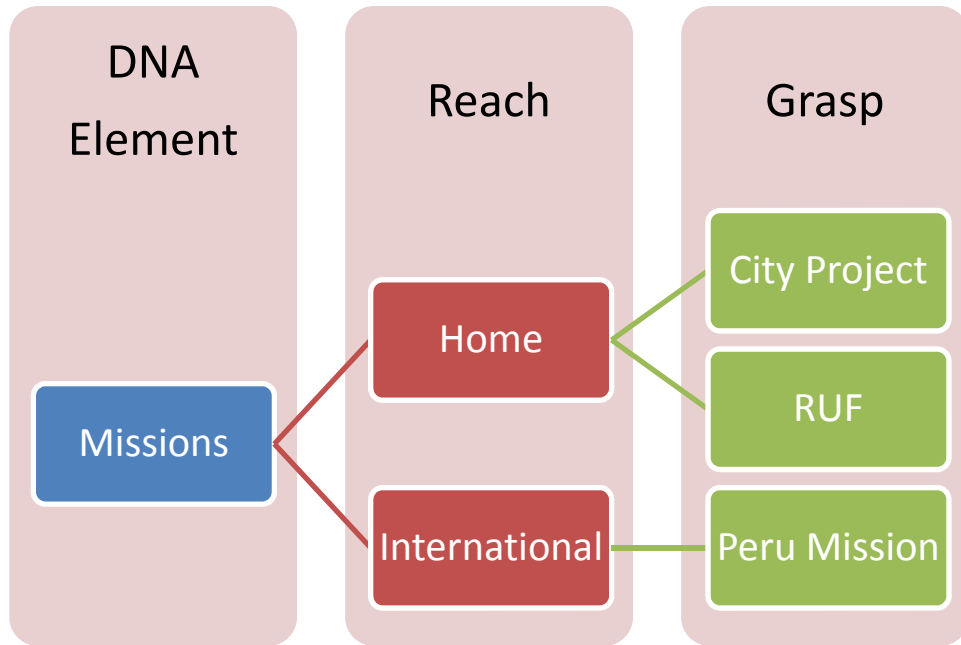
Boys and Girls: Grant to us merciful God, the deep and abiding to desire to forsake our biases, and prejudices, and fears and ill will, and hate, and malice. Make us doers of justice, vessels of mercy, and fountains of love, that we might be true witnesses to the saving grace provided in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- **Conclusion**



Missions – In the Flesh

God with us. This is the truth of the incarnation. Jesus Christ came in the flesh to demonstrate His love for sinners and to physically engage in relationships that would shape the rest of human history. Our desire in missions is to engage in relationships in the flesh. We desire to learn from our brothers and sisters around the world, and to proclaim the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ to the world in our reach. As part of the DNA of Christ Covenant Church, incarnational ministry has taken on the look of the works listed below.



Study Guide Questions/ Community Group Conversation Starters

- **Evangelism:**
 - What is the motivation for our Evangelism?
 - What should our outreach look like? What does it look like at CCC?
 - How much information does a person need to know to become a Christ-follower?
 - When was the last time you shared the gospel? Is it necessary to articulate?
- **Discipleship:**
 - How much of discipleship is intentional (structured)? How much just happens?
 - Have you ever been discipled? What did it look like?
 - Are you currently discipling anyone? Your children? What does it look like?
 - Do you think other people are integral to your growth in Christ?
- **Mercy:**
 - Who deserves mercy in my town/ sphere of influence?
 - What constitutes being poor?
 - Distinguish between mercy and justice? How do they both work in meeting the needs of the poor?
 - What would you recommend that CCC do in order to best display mercy to the people in our reach?
- **Missions:**
 - Why do we “do Missions”?
 - Name a few of the core values for evaluating Missions opportunities at CCC?
 - Fill in the blanks:
 - Pray _____
 - Give _____
 - Live _____
 - What gifts have you been given to participate in Missions?