



C L A S S

Discovering Our Church Family

TEACHING GUIDE

C L A S S



B E L O N G

Class 101: Discovering Our Church Family – TEACHING GUIDE

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Table of Contents

WELCOME	7
SESSION ONE: Our Purpose	11
The Reason for Everything	12
God's Five Purposes for Your Life on Earth	25
Why You Need the Church	47
What Does It Mean to Be a Christian?	51
Baptism: How You Identify with God's Family	68
The Lord's Supper: Communion with God's Family	79
SESSION TWO: Our Strategy	85
Our Motto	87
Our Purpose Statement	89
Circles of Commitment	92
Development Diamond	95
Our S.A.D.D.L.E.B.A.C.K. Values	88
Our Faith Statement	111
The Essentials We Believe	113
SESSION THREE: Our Story	119
Our History	122
SESSION FOUR: Our Saddleback Family	133
What Is the Church?	135
Why Become a Member?	150
Our Model for Membership: The First Church	155
What Are My Next Steps?	164
APPENDIX	169
Answer Key	170
The Saddleback Story	172

FORMATTING KEY:

TEACHING SCRIPT

(material for the teacher to say)

TEACHING TIP

(material for the teacher to keep in mind)

PARTICIPANT NOTES

(material in the participant's guide)

TEACHING TIP

Welcome to teaching the most important class in the church! Here are two or three tips for you as you begin.

- The class is filled with great information about who we are and what we believe as a church—but that is not the most important part of the class. The most important part is the commitment that those in the class make together at the end. Keeping that commitment in mind as you teach will cause you to teach in a different way: instead of teaching information, you'll find yourself teaching towards a commitment. Think of it like a wedding ceremony—the pastor may do some teaching about marriage in the ceremony, but it is teaching that is pointing to the commitment the couple will make.
- The material that the class participants have is in black in this teaching guide, and the material in blue is for you to teach.
- The teaching material is from Pastor Rick Warren. We've kept it with his personal references as a model for you, knowing that you'll often need to change those references to fit yourself and your church. The material for teaching is in spoken style, so the grammar won't be edited as a book.
- As you go through this class you'll notice that sometimes Rick moves through the material quickly, and at other times he stops to take longer on a point and tell a story. This pacing is very intentional, because it's one of the things that makes a long class more interesting. As a teacher, this means that you'll need to resist the temptation to add a story to every point and instead move through a section sometimes more quickly.

Welcome to Class 101—Discovering Saddleback Family or Discovering Church Membership. It's a class that I wrote well over 30 years ago. We've taught it every month for 33 years.

I'm very, very excited to have you here. What a great crowd we have today. I'm just so excited because of one particular thing. You cannot fulfill God's purpose for your life by yourself. You have to do it in community. You have to do it in relationship. I cannot be all that God wants me to be by myself; you can't be all God wants you to be by yourself. We need each other, and God created a family, a flock, a group, an army, a church. And God says, "I want to use you for your purposes and my purposes in your life in ways you've never imagined."

If you have your notebook let's open it up to the very first page. I want you to see the table of contents. Notice that today we have four different sessions, major sessions. Session one we're going to look at The Reason for Everything. We're going to look at God's five purposes for your life on Earth and why you need a church family to fulfill those five purposes. And we're going to look at the purpose of the church and how that is to help people fulfill God's purposes for their lives.

Then in session two and three we're going to look at Saddleback Church specifically: our history, our future, our faith, our purposes, what we call our circles of commitment, our goals, our faith statement, what we believe. That's going to be a great session.

Then in session four we're going to talk about the benefit of being a member of Saddleback Church. Our model for membership—the first church. We're going to look at what does it mean to be a member. We're going to look at our membership covenant.

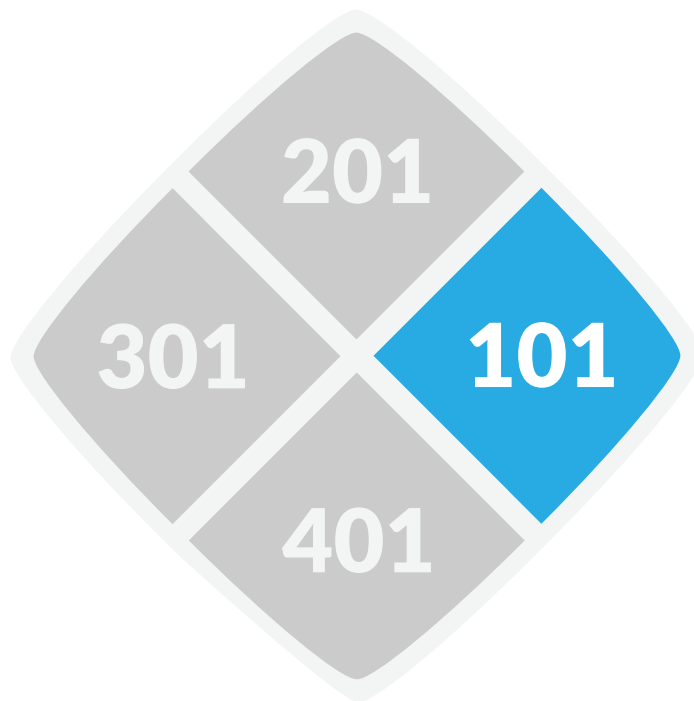
After this class, I and some of the pastors will be baptizing. If you haven't been baptized the way Jesus was, I highly encourage you to do that. It'll be a wonderful experience for all of us together.

TEACHING TIP:

At Saddleback, we've had people begin their relationship with Christ in practically every 101 Class for over 30 years. A number of years ago we began to baptize after each Class 101, based on the model of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-40. *"Look! There's some water! Why can't I be baptized?"* (Acts 8:36 NLT).

Welcome

Class 101: Discovering Our Church Family is the first of Saddleback's foundational classes. You were designed to be a part of a church family, and that's exactly what Saddleback is intended to be—your family. A healthy family has common beliefs, purposes, and commitment. That's why we want to share with you what we believe and where we're going.



YOU ARE HERE

TEACHING TIP:

We're going to give you some approximate timing for each of the sections of this class. Don't see them as unchangeable; we just provide them so you have a sense of where you might need to adjust your teaching to fit the class into about 3.5 hours.

This intro section usually takes just 4 minutes.

The basis for this class is Ephesians 2:19 in The Living Bible.

*You are members of God's very own family . . .
and you belong in God's household with every
other Christian.*

EPHESIANS 2:19 (TLB)

Circle "member," "family," "belong," "household." These are four key truths. Out of this verse we gather some very important keys about the Bible and what the Bible says about the church.

The key truths are these:

1. The church is a family. It says “God’s household.” It doesn’t say the church is like a family. It says the church is a family. It’s a spiritual family. In fact, your spiritual family is going to outlast your physical family. The Bible says there isn’t marriage in heaven but there are Christians in heaven. So we’re all going to be related in heaven—together—and this family will outlast the blood family that you have here on Earth.
2. God expects me to be a member of a family. Notice he says, “*You are a member of God’s very own family.*” That says it’s God’s will. It’s not optional. Every Christian needs a church family. A Christian without a church family is like a person who says, “I want to play NFL football, but I don’t want to be a part of any team” or “I want to be in the army but not serve in any platoon” or “I want to be a bee, but I don’t want to be a part of the hive” or “I want to play an instrument but not be in an orchestra.” The fact is, we need each other to be strong in our Christian faith.
3. A Christian without a church family is an orphan. It says, “*You belong in God’s household with every other member of the church.*” God has given us at least 30 instructions in the New Testament that you can’t fulfill unless you choose to be a part of a local church.

The Bible says if you’re a Christian, it means you’re a part of the body of Christ. You could be the hand, the ear, the eyes, the nose, the liver. What would you say if the liver said, “I think for one week I’ll be a part of this body over here and the next week I’ll be a part of that body over there and the week after that I’ll be a part of this body over here”? Pretty soon what’s going to happen is an unconnected liver shrivels up and dies. You need to be a part of a local church family.

What’s the difference between being a Christian and being a member of a church family? The difference is the word “commitment.” I become a Christian by committing my life to Christ. I become a member of a church by committing myself to other Christians. I say, “That’s going to be my church home where I’m going to give and be given to, where I’m going to serve and be served, where I’ll love and be loved.”

In this class we will discuss what we believe, how we operate, and the history of our church. We will discover the five purposes God has designed for us to live out in our lives, discuss why we need a church family, explore what Saddleback Church believes, and learn what it means to be a member.

TEACHING TIP:

This is one of those sections that you'll want to move through more quickly—maybe taking longer on one of the points, but not all of them. It's tempting since it's at the beginning of the class to take too much time in this section. If you move quickly here at the beginning, it gives everyone in the class hope that you will finish in good time!

These 10 points usually take about 15 minutes to teach.

SESSION ONE

Our Purpose

THE REASON FOR EVERYTHING

1. Everything starts with God!

The Lord has made everything for his own purpose.

PROVERBS 16:4 (GW)

Circle that. God has made everything for his purpose.

And the Bible says in Colossians 1:16:

Everything, absolutely everything . . . got started in him and finds its purpose in him.

COLOSSIANS 1:16 (THE MESSAGE)

So everything starts with God.

Write by this verse—write the words “by” and “for.” You were made by God and you were made for God. Until you understand that, life isn’t going to make sense.

If I were to hold up an invention right now and show you something you’ve never seen before and say, “Tell me the purpose of this invention”—it could be all kinds of crazy contraptions, you would have no idea what the purpose of an invention you’d never seen was. The only way you would know the purpose of that invention was two ways. One, talk to the creator, the inventor who made it. Or two, read the owner’s manual.

That’s the only way you’ll ever know God’s purpose for your life. Talk to the creator—God who made you. And read the owner’s manual—the Bible.

You can’t discover your purpose on your own. There’s a lot of people today who say if you want to know your purpose look within. Like “trust the force, Luke.” There’s only one problem with that—it doesn’t work. If you could know your purpose in life by looking within, everybody would know it. I looked within and just saw a bunch of confusion.

You can't tell you what your purpose in life is because you didn't make you. Only the person who designed you, the Creator who designed you, can tell you what you're designed to do. You don't know your design. You don't know your purpose unless you look to God. Otherwise you're just guessing. Or you're just making up a purpose. Everything starts with God.

*For everything comes from God alone. Everything lives by his power, and everything is for his glory.
To him be glory evermore.*

ROMANS 11:36 (TLB)

That explains where you find your purpose. It's in God, it's through God, it's by God, it's with God, it's to God, it's for God, it's all about God.

The second thing you need to know in life—very important—is this . . .

2. God is love.

God is love. The Bible doesn't say God *has* love. The Bible says God *is* love. It is his nature, it is his character, it is who he is.

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God . . . Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

1 JOHN 4:7-8 (NIV)

Love is the essence of God's nature. It's who he is. In fact, the only reason there's any love in the universe is because God is love. The only reason you have the ability to love other people, and the only reason you have the ability to be loved by other people, is because you were made in God's image. If God hadn't made you in his image, you couldn't. Cows don't love. Ants don't love. Snails don't love. Human beings love. The reason we love

is we are made in God's image. God made us to love us, God made us to love him back. And God made us to love each other. It's all about love.

The reason you're here on this planet, the first reason of all of the reasons, is to learn how to love. To learn to love God, to learn to love others, and even to learn to love yourself.

That's why God put you on Earth. Why doesn't God just create us and take us to heaven in the first place? Why does he put us here on Earth for these years? Why doesn't he just make us and take us to heaven? Because these are things God wants us to learn, and the number one thing God wants us to learn is how to love.

Love is only love if you've got a choice. If you're forced to love somebody, it's not love. If I'm forced to love you, then that's not real love. Love is a choice.

So God gives me the choice to love him or to reject him. To follow him, obey him, trust him, love him, or to do none of those things. God says my eternity will be dependent upon my choice.

This is going to shock you. God doesn't send anybody to hell. You choose to go there. Why? By rejecting God. By saying, "I don't want to love God, I don't want to trust God, I don't want to follow God, I don't want to know God. I want to be God!"

You've got to do almost the impossible to go to hell. You have to reject the love of God and say, "No, I want to be God." God says, "Okay, have it your way." Why would anybody want to live with God forever if they want to reject him their entire life here on Earth? That doesn't make sense.

If I have two doors and one said Heaven and the other said Hell and I say, "I don't want to go God's way" and I walk out the door, who do I blame? Me! Not God.

God loves you so much he did everything possible to keep you from being separated from him. He sent his Son to Earth. He died on a cross for you. If you want to know how much God loves you, you look at the cross. He says, "This is how much I love you; I love you so much it hurts."

God will never love you any more than he does right now. He will never love you any less than he does right now. You can't make God stop loving you. You can try, but you will fail. Because God's love isn't based on what

you do. God's love is based on who he is. God is the only person in the entire universe who truly loves you unconditionally. He loves you on your good days and on your bad days. When you think you deserve it and you think you don't deserve it. When you feel it and when you don't feel it. Your feelings really don't matter. God's love for you is constant.

The Bible says God is love. If I had a whole bunch of love, love isn't worth a whole lot unless I bestow it on something—on a pet, on a person, on something. Love is meant to be given away. The Bible says that the whole reason you exist and the whole reason God's family, the church, exists is God made us to love us. You were made to be loved by God. And everything in your life, every breath you take, God is saying, "I love you, I love you, I love you." The number one goal in your life is to learn to love him back.

The third thing I want you to write down is this . . .

3. God wanted a family to demonstrate his love.

God wanted a family to demonstrate his love.

The Bible says in Ephesians 3:14-15:

*When I think of the wisdom and scope of his plan,
I fall down on my knees and pray to the Father of
all the great family of God—some of them already
in heaven and some down here on earth.*

EPHESIANS 3:14-15 (TLB)

God says, “I wanted a family.” And it all starts with God. God is love and God wanted a family in order to love.

When my kids were little I used to go in at night and sit by their bed and watch them breathe. I’d watch their little chest rise and lower, rise and lower, rise and lower. I got so much pleasure just watching my babies breathe. Why? Because I am their father. My kids didn’t have to be doing something good for me to love them. I just loved them because I was their father.

And that’s the way God feels toward you every moment of your life. You say, “What about when I sin?” When you sin, God is there going, “Come on! Get up! I know you can keep going! I believe in you. I’m helping you. I forgive you. You stumbled, but I’m still with you.”

There’s never a moment in your life God will ever stop loving you. God wanted family to demonstrate his love. What is that family?

4. God's family is the Church!

The church is just another word for God's family. The word "church" in Greek literally means those who are called out.

1 Timothy 3:15 says:

*God's family is the church of the living God,
the pillar and foundation of the truth.*

1 TIMOTHY 3:15 (GW)

The fact is your physical family on Earth, it's going to change. Most families don't last. In fact, no family lasts. We were born, we grow up, we move out, there are marriages, there are divorces, there are deaths. No physical family lasts. But God's family is going to last forever. And that's the one that is even more important than your physical family. Because it's going to last forever.

That's the fifth thing I want you to know . . .

5. God's family will last forever, outlasting everything else in creation.

The Bible says it like this:

*[God] has planted eternity in the human heart,
but even so, people cannot see the whole scope
of God's work from beginning to end.*

ECCLESIASTES 3:11 (NLT)

We can't see how far in the future God is going to take us because it goes on forever and ever and ever. In fact, we can't even imagine that. The Bible says in Titus 1:2:

*[We have] the hope of life forever, which God promised
to us before time began. And God cannot lie.*

TITUS 1:2 (NCV)

So the church is God's family, and God's family will last forever.

The church is more important than your job. Sorry! Your job isn't going to last. But God's family is going to last forever.

6. Although God created us last, he thought of us first. He planned the universe for his family.

When you read the story in Genesis, it says God created this and God created that, and then it says on the last day God created man—obviously, human beings. Then on the seventh day he rested. We were created last, but God thought of us first. And he planned the entire universe for us.

Here's what the Bible says:

*I am your Creator. You were in my care
even before you were born.*

ISAIAH 44:2 (CEV)

Did you know that? Did you know that God had thought of you even before you took your first breath? You were in God's care before you were born.

The Bible says in James 1:18:

*He chose to give birth to us by giving us
his true word. And we, out of all creation,
became his prized possession.*

JAMES 1:18 (NLT)

That's a huge idea. That's the big picture.

And the seventh thing I want you to know is that . . .

7. God didn't reveal his plan until he sent Jesus.

The only reason we know his plan is because his Son came to Earth and not only died on the cross but he revealed his plan.

What I'm about to tell you right now, the people in the Old Testament—Moses didn't know this plan, David didn't know this plan, Abraham didn't know this plan, Noah didn't know this plan. But Jesus came to explain the whole reason for everything and the whole purpose of the universe and God's plan to create a family.

The Bible says it this way, Ephesians 3:9-11:

And God gave me the work of telling all people about the plan for his secret, which has been hidden in him since the beginning of time. He is the One who created everything. His purpose was that through the church all the rulers and powers in the heavenly world will now know God's wisdom, which has so many forms. This agrees with the purpose God had since the beginning of time, and he carried out his plan through Christ Jesus our Lord.

EPHESIANS 3:9-11 (NCV)

This is very important: Jesus didn't just reveal the plan. He is the plan.

8. Jesus makes the whole plan possible.

This whole plan that God has for building a family and for eternity, it happens because Jesus made it possible.

The Bible says that:

It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for . . . part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.

EPHESIANS 1:11-12 (THE MESSAGE)

Everybody's trying to find themselves today. Everybody's asking the question, "Who am I, Where am I going, Where am I from, What is my purpose, Does my life have meaning, Is there any significance about it?" They're looking and asking the questions of identity. The Bible says that it is in Christ we find out who we are and what we are living for.

A lot of times people go out and try to find their identity. They buy a shirt that has a brand on it—so that they can identify with the brand. Why do people put little stickers on their car? Why do people buy things with little logos on their dresses or shirts? Because they're looking for identity. Something to give them value and identity. The Bible says it's in Christ that we find that. That's what I'm talking about, this overall purpose.

The next verse:

[Jesus] died for us so that . . . we can live with him forever.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:10 (NLT)

And Ephesians 1:10 says this:

This is the plan: At the right time [God] will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.

EPHESIANS 1:10 (NLT)

One day this testing period that we're going through here on Earth is going to end. In fact, we already know that the universe is going to end someday.

Scientists have already affirmed this. A hundred years ago everybody thought the universe was eternal. That it always existed and it was always going to exist. Scientists now know that's not true. Scientists know that there was a beginning to the universe and there is going to be an end. We're winding down. It's called the second law of thermodynamics. That energy is going to its simplest form.

It started on a specific day. Scientists call it the Big Bang. That's fine. I don't care if that's what they want to call it. The Big Bang of the universe. Wherever you've got a big bang, you've got a big banger. It just didn't happen. Big bangs don't just happen. Something happened. God started the universe, and one day the universe is going to end. Heaven isn't going to end because heaven isn't part of this universe. God is eternal. God is outside of the universe.

We don't know when that's going to happen. Nobody does. If someone tells you, "I know when that's going to happen, that Jesus Christ is going to back and it's going to be the end of this time in the universe." Nobody knows that. Jesus said, "I don't even know the time, only the Father which is in heaven," so you can stop trying to figure it out.

But I can tell you this:

9. The time is getting closer.

It's 2,000 years closer than it was when Jesus came, that's for sure. You say, "When is it going to happen?" I haven't the slightest idea. Jesus said no man knows when this is going to happen.

But the Bible says this in Romans 8:19, 21:

All creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. The creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.

ROMANS 8:19, 21 (NLT)

And in 1 Corinthians 2:9:

No mere man has ever seen, heard, or even imagined what wonderful things God has ready for those who love the Lord.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9 (TLB)

On that day there will be no more sorrow, no more suffering, no more sickness, no more sadness, no more trials, no more temptations, no more testings, no more problems, no more pressures. We move into the next phase, those who have chosen to become a part of God's family.

As I said, God isn't going to force anybody to be in his family. Love is a choice. So God's not going to force anybody to love him and accept his Son.

But in the meantime, what are we supposed to do?

10. In the meantime we can practice for eternity.

We can practice for eternity. What does God want us to do while history is moving toward its conclusion? God wants us to practice on Earth what we're going to do in heaven forever. That's what we're going to talk about right now.

First look at this verse, Titus 2:12-13:

We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God, while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed.

TITUS 2:12-13 (NLT)

That's the big picture. What I just shared with you, those 10 statements, that's the big picture that explains why everything exists in the universe.

God created it all; he created the universe just to create this galaxy, just to create this planet, just so it could sustain carbon life form—you and me—just so he could create the human race, just so he could make us in his image, just so he could love you, just so you could choose to love him back, just so he could take you to be with him forever in eternity.

This is the testing time.

How do we do that test? How do we practice what God wants us to do forever? Through his family. That's why you need to be connected to a church. Because God has five purposes for your life, and the church is designed to help you meet the five purposes God has for your life.

Let's look at those five purposes.

The five purposes for the church are identical to the five purposes for your life. The church, your spiritual family, is simply there to help you fulfill the five things God wants you to practice while you're here on Earth. Does that make sense? God says I'm going to put other people in your life to help you practice the five things you are to do for eternity.

GOD'S FIVE PURPOSES FOR YOUR LIFE ON EARTH

TEACHING TIP:

This first point takes seven minutes.

The first purpose of your life . . .

1. God planned me for **HIS PLEASURE**.

If you've read *The Purpose Driven Life* you know that's the first purpose of your life.

The Bible says in Revelation 4:11:

For you created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created.

REVELATION 4:11 (NLT96)

The Bible says in Psalms 149:4:

The LORD takes pleasure in his people.

PSALM 149:4 (GNT)

How many of you are parents? How many of you take pleasure in your kids? Most of the time. God takes pleasure in you all of the time. He's not happy with everything you do, he doesn't approve of everything you do, it's not advising everything you do, but he still loves you. The Bible says this, that God created us for his pleasure.

Notice this verse in Ephesians 1:

*Long before he laid down earth's foundations,
he had us in mind, had settled on us as
the focus of his love.*

EPHESIANS 1:4 (THE MESSAGE)

God made you to love you.

Someone asked Jesus the question, “Lord, what’s the most important thing to do with my life? What’s the most important command in all of the Bible?” And Jesus gives what’s called the Great Commandment. It’s two parts. He says, “I’m going to tell you what’s the most important thing to do with your life. It’s only two things. If you get this, you get everything in the Bible. This is the Bible summarized. This is the Old and New Testament, the whole Bible summarized in two sentences.” Jesus says here’s what you’re supposed to do with your life.

One . . .

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.”

MATTHEW 22:37–38 (NIV)

Circle “first and greatest”—this is the first and greatest commandment. God planned us for his pleasure, and he wants us to love him; he wants us to learn to love him back. Love God and learn to love others.

Jesus is saying that life is all about relationships. I want you to get this.

As a pastor I have been at the bedside of thousands of people as they die. When they took their last breath. I’ve seen a lot of people take their last breath and move into eternity whether at home or the hospital or whatever. Every one of those times, I’ve never heard anybody say, in their dying moments, “I’m about to die. Would you please bring me my bowling trophy? I want to look at it one more time. Please bring me my high school or college graduation certificate; I want to look at it one more time. Please bring me that nice watch that they gave me for 20 years of service in the company.”

No. When people are dying, you know what they say? They want the people who they love and who love them the most around them. That’s what they want. Not things. Not achievements. Everybody eventually realizes that what life is all about is relationships. I just want you to learn it sooner than your last second.

One day you’re going to figure that out. When you die all you’ve done isn’t going to matter, and all you’ve studied isn’t going to matter, and all the things you created aren’t going to matter. What’s going to matter to you most are the loving relationships in your life. If you can figure that out now, life will

be a lot more successful, a lot more fulfilled, a lot more meaningful. It's all about learning to love God and learning to love other people.

The next verse. God says this:

*I don't want your sacrifices—I want your love;
I don't want your offerings—I want you to
know me.*

HOSEA 6:6 (TLB)

Circle the words “love” and “know.” That is the first purpose of your life. To know God and to love God. To know God and to love God.

Write down . . .

The first purpose of life is **KNOWING AND LOVING GOD** .

There's a word for this. Knowing and loving God, there's a word in the Bible for this. And you know what that word is?

The Bible calls this **WORSHIP** .

The Bible says in 1 Timothy 6:21:

*Some . . . people have missed the most important thing
in life—they don't know God.*

1 TIMOTHY 6:21 (TLB)

And in Matthew 6:32:

*“People who don't know God
are always worrying . . .”*

MATTHEW 6:32 (CEV)

Worship is simply loving God, knowing and loving God. Every time you're getting to know God and every time you're getting to love God, that's called worship. Worship is the first purpose of your life—getting to know and love God.

TEACHING TIP:

Below is one of many examples throughout these notes of a personal illustration from Rick Warren as he teaches. Your experience is obviously not the same as his, but we've left these in the notes as a reminder that this is a good moment to give a personal example of how the truth impacts your life. You may not do what Rick describes here, so what is it that you do on a regular basis to connect with God relationally?

Because of that, here's what I recommend you do. And I have done this every day for years and years and years. When I get up in the morning, before I even get out of bed, I talk to God about the first purpose of life. I get up and I sit on the edge of my bed, my feet don't even touch the ground until I've prayed this prayer. I say this, "God, there's going to be a lot of stuff that happens today—good stuff, bad stuff, stuff I don't even know yet. But today, God, I want to learn to know you better and learn to love you more." I say that at the beginning of every day. Because that's the first purpose of life. Today I want to get to know you a little bit better and I want to love you a little bit more. Because at the end of the day it doesn't matter how many things have gone wrong in my life. If that day I learn to know God a little bit better and learn to love him a little bit more, that day was a success no matter what else happened. Because God kept me on Earth for that purpose.

On the other hand, if at the end of the day it doesn't matter how many awards I won, how many accomplishments I've done, how many sales I've sold, how much money I've made, how famous I've become, if at the end of the day I don't know God a little bit better and love him a little bit more, I've just wasted that day. Because God did not put you on this planet to mark things off your to-do list. He put you here to learn to love him and to learn to love other people.

So this first test is knowing and loving God. You were created for God's pleasure. The Bible calls that worship.

The second purpose of my life—God has five purposes is this—God didn't just plan me for his pleasure . . .

TEACHING TIP:

This second point takes about six minutes.

2. God formed me for HIS FAMILY .

Ephesians 1:5 says it like this:

[God's] unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure.

EPHESIANS 1:5 (NLT96)

There's that word "pleasure" again. God enjoys adopting us. Circle the word "adopt"—adopt us into his family.

Everybody is created by God on the whole planet, everybody is loved by God on the whole planet. But not everybody is in the family of God. There's only two ways you can get into a family. One, be born into it. Or two, be adopted into it. The Bible uses both of those phrases of what it means to be spiritually matured and brought into the family of God. The Bible calls it being born again. And the Bible calls it being adopted. You're born again to the family of God, and you are adopted into the family of God. Both ways. God formed me for his family.

1 Peter 1:3 says:

[God] has given us the privilege of being born again so that we are now members of God's own family.

1 PETER 1:3 (TLB)

We'll talk about that a little bit later. How you can be born again.

The next verse, 1 Timothy 3:15:

*That family is the church of the living God,
the support and foundation of the truth.*

1 TIMOTHY 3:15 (NCV)

God says, "I have brought you into my family." The moment you're born again, you automatically become a part of God's family, the universal family of all his believers. But you don't become a part of a specific church like Saddleback or any other churches until you choose to become a part.

Let me say it this way: When I was born physically I automatically became part of the human race. I didn't have a choice in that one. I became a part of the human race, the moment I was born. But I didn't become a part of any family until somebody chose to take me home from the hospital. Either my birth parents or adoptive parents or somebody else. Then I became a part of family because of a choice.

The moment you become a Christian you become a part of the family of God. But you're not part of any local church family, like Saddleback or any other good churches around here, until you choose to join.

Let me just say this up front. We're not in competition with any other church. We're all on the same team. We're just different parts of the same family. My sister has a family, my brother had a family, my parents had a family, my kids have families. We're all connected, but we're all in separate families.

You're not a part of the Saddleback family until you chose to become a part of it, become a member of this family.

The Bible says the family is the church.

Look at the next verse, 1 Peter 2:17. Here's the first responsibility. It says:

Love your spiritual family.

1 PETER 2:17 (THE MESSAGE)

Circle the word "love." That's your first responsibility.

Two of the things you're going to do when you get to heaven is you're going to love God and you're going to love other Christians. You're going to do both of those in heaven. You're going to love God and you love other Christians. What are you going to do here on Earth? God wants you to

practice loving other Christians so that when you get to heaven you don't look stupid. You're not a duffus. You know how to love. In fact, teaching you how to love in a church family will teach you how to better love your physical family. How to love your husband, how to love your wife, how to love your boyfriend, how to love your girlfriend, how to love your friends. God wants you to love God and love other people. God formed me for his family.

So the second purpose of life is learning to love others. God wants me to love other people. He wants me first off to learn to love him, and second, he wants me to learn to love others.

There's a word for this. Just like the word for loving God is called worship. The word for loving other people in the Bible is the word "fellowship." Fellowship simply means learning to love others in my spiritual family. That's fellowship.

The first purpose is learning to love God—that's worship.

The second purpose of life is **TO LOVE OTHERS**.

The Bible calls this **FELLOWSHIP**.

The two go together—loving God, loving others. This is called the Great Commandment.

Look at Romans 12:5. It says this:

We belong to each other, and each needs all the others.

ROMANS 12:5 (TLB)

Underline that phrase "each needs all the others."

We're later going to look at one of the metaphors, illustrations, examples of the church. The Bible calls the church "the body of Christ." When Jesus was here on Earth physically, he walked around and did all kinds of things. Now Jesus is not here physically, but he's here spiritually in the church, and that's called the body of Christ. We are to do the same things today that Jesus did physically. We are now the hands of Jesus. We are the feet of Jesus. We are the heart of Jesus. We are the mouth of Jesus today in the world.

The Bible says that God wants us to learn to love other people the way Jesus does. That's called fellowship. We belong to each other, and God says we need each other.

Why do we need each other? Because a part of the body detached has no purpose. Let's say you're a hand of a body. If you're a detached hand you can't do anything. You can only do things if you're attached to an arm. If you're an eyeball, an eyeball detached from an eye socket is worthless. It can't see anything. It can only see if it's attached to the body. And the ear can't hear unless it's attached to the body. The tongue can't speak unless it's attached to the body.

You can't do what you were made to do without being attached to the body. Sorry, but you just can't. You can't do it on your own. God wired us to be connected to each other. God formed me for his family. We belong to each other, and we need each other.

There's a third purpose God has for your life. God not only planned me for his pleasure and formed me for his family, number three:

TEACHING TIP:

This third point takes 10 minutes.

3. God created me **TO BECOME LIKE CHRIST** .

God created me to become like Christ. Jesus is the model of the kind of character God wants you to develop.

Every little child that is born, the parents don't want him to stay a baby. A baby is incredibly cute. And two-year olds are particularly cute. If I weren't a pastor I would teach two-year olds in preschool. They call that the terrible twos. No. It's the terrific twos. These little people. They're learning to say no to things. No! And you just have to laugh at them. You know you can make them do it.

By the way, anybody who doesn't believe in original sin has never been a parent. You don't have to teach your kids to lie. You don't have to teach your kids to talk back. You don't have to teach your kids to be selfish. Why? Because we're all born with a sin nature. Everything is broken. We're all fallen. Everybody has blown it. The day I took my first breath I started making my own choices about me instead of you. So the third purpose of life is God wants me to become like Christ. He wants me to grow up.

A little child is cute. But a little child that don't grow up is not cute. That's a tragedy. God wants you to grow up, and he wants you to mature.

What does maturity look like? Look at Jesus Christ. He's an example of a mature, godly man. That's an example of mature, godly woman. God wants us to become like Christ.

Here's what the Bible says in Romans 8:29:

From the very beginning God decided that those who came to him—and all along he knew who would—should become like his Son.

ROMANS 8:29 (TLB)

That's God's goal from the very beginning. He wants you to become like Jesus.

We look at this Son and see . . . God's original purpose in everything created.

COLOSSIANS 1:15 (THE MESSAGE)

It's a tragedy when people don't grow up, but God says he wants us to grow up and become like his Son. What is God's original purpose? For you to grow in character. This is not Plan B. It's Plan A.

What I'm going to teach you, not just today but in all the next years that you're here at Saddleback, is how God even uses the bad things in your life to make you like Christ. How God uses the pain in your life. God never wastes a hurt. All of the things that I hate that happened to me, all the things that I resent, all the things that I'm ashamed of, even the stupid things that I've done myself, God will use even that. Because God is bigger than your problems, and his goal is to make you like Jesus Christ. He wants you to develop like him.

What does it mean to become like Jesus? First, let me tell you what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that you are going to become a god. No. No. You are not going to be a god. There are some cults that teach that you will become a god. The new age movement teaches you are a god. *You're not a god!* Yeah, if you're God, why don't you stop all the problems in the world? You can't even stop the problems in your own life. You are not a god. You're not even a mini-me god. Always remember this: God is God, and I'm not.

But God wants you to become godly. That means grow in character—love, joy, peace, patience, in gentleness, in goodness, in faith, in integrity, and wisdom. All the attributes of God. God wants his children to grow up. Like Father, like son; like Father, like daughter.

If you ever get under stress, it's because you're pretending to be God at that moment. When you act like God, you worry. That's a sign. Worry is a sign that you've forgotten God is God and you're not.

So we see God's purpose in everything. And he wants you to grow up to be like him.

You might write this down: God is more interested in what I become than what I do. God is more interested in what I become than what I do. God is far more interested in your character than in your career. Why? Because you're not taking your career to heaven—you are taking your character. You're not taking your career. You are not taking your car. You are not taking your clothes. You are taking your character—what you have become while you are here on Earth. So what you become is far more important in life than what you do.

There might be a dozen or two dozen different jobs God would say, "Any of those are fine with me. Go ahead and do any of those. Which one would you like to do? Go ahead and take that job."

God is more interested not in what you're working on but what is working in you. The work he's doing inside of you.

God even uses tough times to make you like Jesus. How does he do that? The way God builds character in your life is by putting you in the exact opposite situation.

For instance, God wants to teach you how to learn to love. How does God teach you how to learn to love? Real simple—put you around some unlovely people. *Don't look at them.* Be cool! God will put you in a small group, and you're going to think, "There's some people I don't like." Exactly! That's the point. If you get along with everybody perfectly in your small group, you need to get in a different group. Because you're not going to learn to love. If everybody's like you—cool—you're not learning love. But if there are some people in your group that I call EGR people, then you're going to have to learn to love. EGR means Extra Grace Required.

Extra Grace Required people—they may talk too much, they're a little bossy, or they're a little insecure. Or when they talk they spit on you. They don't have a proper understanding of social space. They can be an irritation. In every small group there are some EGRs. Extra Grace Required people. If you're in a group, you know who that person is. If you can't figure out who that person is, I hate to tell you this—it's you. If you don't know who it is, it's you. But we love you and we need you. We need you because you teach us how to learn to love and we teach you how to learn to love. God teaches you to love by putting you around unlovely people.

How does God teach you joy? In the middle of grief. Joy is not happiness. Happiness depends on happenings. I go to Disneyland and I'm happy. I come out and I see how much I spent—I'm not happy. Happiness is circumstantial. Joy is inside. It's gut level, it's internal. God teaches you joy in the middle of pain.

How does God teach you peace? It's easy to be peaceful when everything's going along in your life. You're sitting out by a campfire fishing with some buddies. (It doesn't get any better than this.) It's easy to be at peace there when you've got a day off and everything is good. No. God teaches you peace in the middle of chaos. When everything is going wrong in your life. The phone rings and the beans are boiling over and somebody knocks at the door. And it's all happening at once. God teaches you peace in the middle of total chaos.

God wants you to learn patience because God is patient. How does God teach you to be like Christ in being patient? Department of Motor Vehicles.

The IRS. Waiting in line. Traffic jams. It's easy to be patient when you don't have to wait. But God teaches you patience by putting you in God's waiting room, the most uncomfortable room to be in in the world. Have you ever been in a hurry and God wasn't? You're in God's waiting room.

One time I was having hard time with being patient. I had a lot of trials in my life. I said, "God give me patience." And my trials, instead of getting better, got worse. I said, "God, give me patience!" And the trials got worse. *God! I need patience!* And the problems even got more worse. Finally after about six months, I realized, "I'm a lot more patient than I was six months ago." God's third purpose is to create you to become like Christ.

The Bible says in Philippians 2:5:

*In your lives you must think and act like
Christ Jesus.*

PHILIPPIANS 2:5 (NCV)

How do I do that? By learning his Word. We'll talk about that.

We have a series of classes. Class 101 is just the first class at Saddleback. There's a Class 201, Discovering Spiritual Maturity. Class 301, Discovering My Ministry. Class 401, Discovering My Life Mission. In those classes you're going to learn more and more of what it means to be like Christ. This is the overview class. I must learn to think and act like Jesus, and that's the fruit of the Spirit.

Then the Bible says this, how does it happen?

*As the Spirit of the Lord works within us,
we become more and more like him.*

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18 (TLB)

Circle the words "more and more." What that means is there's so such thing as instant maturity. There's no pill you can take that will make you instantly holy. There's no seminar, no conference, no book, no video, no small group that will make you instantly spiritually mature. It is sequential, it is progressive, it is the rest of your life.

Here at Saddleback, we have thought this thing out. We have a detailed plan to move you through the stages and steps of spiritual growth. We do this intentionally. The classes—101, 201, 301, 401—are a part of that

process. Because we've already thought through how to get you from here to *here*—to full maturity in Christ. That's the goal of our church.

A lot of churches, they believe in this, but they don't have a plan. They don't have a process, they don't have a system. We have one here at Saddleback. You're in the introductory class for this.

You become more and more like Jesus.

The third purpose of life is GROWING TO MATURITY.

The Bible calls this DISCIPLESHIP.

The word for growing to spiritual maturity is called discipleship. The word "disciple" is simply the Greek word for "learner." That's all it means to be a disciple. It means I'm a learner. It means I'm learning, I'm growing, I'm becoming more and more like I want to be.

A disciple is not some spooky word. Everybody say: "I'm a disciple." What does it mean? It means I'm a learner. I want to learn. I want to grow. I don't want to stay stuck where I am. I want to be better a year from today than I am now. That's a disciple. We're learners of Christ. We're followers of Christ. We're disciples of Christ.

The Bible says this:

"[Some people have] such shallow soil of character that when the emotions wear off and some difficulty arrives, there is nothing to show for it."

MARK 4:17 (THE MESSAGE)

God wants you to have deep roots. God wants you to grow up. That's growing to spiritual maturity.

There's a fourth purpose in my life. First we said we want to bring honor to God—that's worship, we want to learn to love God—that's worship. We want to learn to love others in the family of God—that's fellowship. We want to learn to grow in God—that's discipleship. And four . . .

The fourth purpose of your life is:

TEACHING TIP:

This fourth point takes 11 minutes.

4. God “shaped” me TO SERVE HIM.

God shaped me to serve him.

This is such an important class we have an entire class on it that I wrote. It's called Class 301. We spend four hours in that class teaching you how to discover, develop, and deploy your personal shape.

There are five things that make you *you*—spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality, experiences. All of the things God has intentionally put in your life to make you *you*. You're not one in a million; you're one in 10 billion. There's nobody like you. God never makes a clone of anything. Man makes clones, but God doesn't. God only makes originals. Every snowflake is original; every human being is original. Even identical twins have thousands of ways that they're different. So you're an original. God broke the mold when he made you. And God shaped you to serve him.

The Bible says this:

*You shaped me first inside, then out; you formed
me in my mother's womb.*

PSALM 139:13 (THE MESSAGE)

Let me just give you how God shaped you.

S means:

SPIRITUAL GIFTS .

Spiritual gifts. You're going to ask yourself in Class 301, "What am I gifted to do?" When you became a believer, God gave you certain abilities that you didn't have before you became a believer. That's called your spiritual gifts. As you discover what those gifts are, you become more and more like God wants you to be.

H is:

HEART .

Heart is my passions. Gifts is what am I gifted to do, Heart is what do I love to do. There's some things that excite you, turns your crank, and other things you couldn't care less about. Some things you're really interested in, and some things you're bored to tears with.

Where do you get your interests? Ever thought about that? Some people are interested in collecting, and other people couldn't care less about collecting. Some people are interested in sports, some people couldn't care less about sports. We all have different hobbies, we all have different interests. How do you think you got your interests? God gave them to you. God gave you the interests you would have for your hobbies that you like to do. If God gave us all a different heart so we all like to do different things, so everything in the world gets to be done.

What if God made us all to like accounting? We'd have a whole world of accountants but nobody doing anything else. What if God made us all to be cooks? Nothing else would get done. God gives all different interests so everything in the world gets done. Heart is my passion.

A is my:

A BILITIES .

My Abilities. Some of you are good at math, and some of you are not good at math. Some of you are good at music, and others of you couldn't carry a tune in a bucket. Some of you are good at mechanical things, and some of us have no mechanical abilities. I'm one of them. I'm just not good with my hands. I'm just not. I'm pretty uncoordinated with my hands. But God gave me some other abilities to make up for the areas I'm weak in.

Nobody gets all of the abilities. That's why we need each other. I have abilities you don't have. But you have abilities I don't have. The Bible says like the pieces of puzzle, we all form the body of Christ, we all form the family of God, we all form what God wants done in the world. We have different things so everything in the world gets done. We have different abilities.

P is your:

P ERSONALITY .

I don't know if you've figured this out but nobody has the same personality as you do. We're all very unique. Some of you like to work alone, and some of you hate to work alone. You only like to work in a group. That is your personality. Some of you like routine. You like to do the same thing over and over. You love doing the routine you're doing. Some of you hate routine. You want to do it different every day. Some of you like visual things. And some of you are very abstract, and some of you are very concrete. Some of you like to get up early in the morning. Some of you don't believe in God before 11 a.m.

Let me give you an example of this. How many of you are morning larks? You like to get up early. You're morning larks. How many of you are night owls? At midnight you're going strong. Morning larks always marry night owls. This is God's sense of humor. God loves to put opposites together and watch the sparks fly. Before you get married, opposites attract. After you get married, opposites attack. The reason why is: what attracted you to your husband or your wife is that they were different from you. If they had been just like you, you wouldn't have been interested in them. "She is

so different from me.” And you’re attracted to that. But after you’ve lived with them for about six months you are going, “Could you be a little more like me?” What was so fascinating is now irritating. This is part of making you like Christ.

Actually, the greater your differences, the more potential for power in your marriage. Most people, if they’re really different, they give up and they blow up and they separate. Or they clam up. What God wants you to do is grow up. The number one growth tool in your life is your wife—or your husband. It’s the person who’s closest to you. The closest person in your life is the number one growth tool.

Which, by the way, shows a lot about the kind of friends you choose. Your closest friend should be somebody who is helping you grow spiritually. You need to be friends with everybody. A lot of people. You’ve got to love everybody and you tell everybody about Jesus. But your closest friends should be those who are helping you grow spiritually. Otherwise they’re pulling you down.

If I stand here on the edge of the stage and I try to lift you up and you try to pull me down, which is it easier to do? It’s easier to pull me down. So you need to make sure your best friends are people who are committed to the same goals you have. That is, I want to become like Christ. And I want live out my SHAPE to serve God.

So that’s my Personality.

41

Then the **E** is my:

E XPERIENCES .

All of your experiences in life. God knows every one of them before you were born. And he will use even the bad ones in your life for good.

God uses all kinds of experiences. He uses educational experiences, he uses job experiences, he uses family experiences, he uses spiritual experiences, he uses church experiences, he uses personal experiences, he uses financial experiences. But you know what the number one experience God uses in your life to shape you, to make you grow up? Painful experiences. The very thing that we hate the most in life, God says, “I will use that for good if you’ll give them to me.”

Pain does not automatically make you better. It can make you bitter. The difference between better and bitter is the letter I. I get to choose. I get to choose whether that experience of pain in my life makes me a better person or makes me a bitter person. That's your choice. That's called discipleship—growing up.

How will he use my experiences? He'll draw you closer to him. He'll draw you closer to others.

When I share my experiences with you, that creates competition; when I share my weakness with you, that creates community. If I get up here and say, "Let me tell you all the things I'm good at," you'd get bored real quick. But if I said, "Let me tell you all the stuff I've struggled with," you would be intensely interested. The reason why is because we often grow out of other people's weaknesses even more than their strengths. Because if I tell you all the things I've struggled with, you go, "Wow! If God can use Rick as messed up as he is, then maybe God could use me. Maybe God could use me, too." Sharing your experiences with others is called ministry.

This is the fourth purpose.

The Bible says:

*God has made us what we are. In Christ Jesus,
God made us to do good works, which God
planned in advance for us to live our lives doing.*

EPHESIANS 2:10 (NCV)

Circle the phrase "do good works."

What are those good works that God planned for you to do with your life? The works that God planned for you to do with your life are called Ministry.

The fourth purpose of life is **TO SERVE GOD BY SERVING OTHERS**.

The Bible calls this **MINISTRY**.

That's the fourth purpose of life. To serve God by serving others. Why do I serve God by serving others? Because you can't see God. God is invisible. You can't see him here on Earth. One day you're going to see him. But you can't see him here on Earth. So the only way I can serve God is by serving the other people in my life. And God says, "When you serve other people in my name, that counts as if you're serving me."

There's a passage in Matthew 25 where Jesus said:

"I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you visited me." [And the Bible says we'll say] 'Lord when did we do that? We didn't see you sick or hungry.' And he'll say, "In as much as you have done it to the least of these my brothers and sisters you've done it to me."

Every time you help somebody else in love, Jesus says, "It's like you did it to me." That's what the Bible calls this Ministry.

You are not only a disciple, you're not only member of God's family, you are a minister. You are not a pastor, you're a minister. I'm a pastor. Not everybody's called to be a pastor. But everybody's called to be a minister, which means service. The word in the Bible, the word "ministry" and the word "service" are the same word. In the Bible the word "minister" and "servant" are the same word. So I could say I'm a servant. Or I could say I'm a minister. Let's all say, "I'm a minister." You are. You are a minister.

Anytime you serve somebody else in order to show love for God, that's called ministry. It could be washing the dishes, it could be picking up the clothes, it could be taking somebody for a ride, it could be babysitting, it can be handing some work, it could be doing overtime for somebody else. That becomes a ministry when you do it for the right motivation.

Menial work becomes meaningful work when you do it with the right motivation. When you do it to honor God, menial work becomes meaningful work.

I could take out the garbage and it be a ministry. I could change a diaper and it could be ministry. I could do anything and it could be a ministry if I'm doing it for the right motivation of loving God and loving other people.

There's a fifth purpose of your life and it is this:

TEACHING TIP:

This fifth point takes eight minutes.

5. God made me **FOR A MISSION** .

God made me for a mission.

In John 17:18, Jesus says this:

*"In the same way that you gave me a mission
in the world, I give them a mission in the world."*

JOHN 17:18 (THE MESSAGE)

Circle the word "mission" and the word "world."

You have a ministry in the church, and you have a mission in the world. Your mission in the world is what God wants you to do with your life. As I've been saying, we have a class for each of these purposes. Class 201, how to grow to maturity. Class 301, Your SHAPE for Service. How to find my ministry. And for this purpose, Class 401 is a class on how to fulfill my mission in life. The Bible says God has a mission for you in the world.

Look at these verses; 2 Corinthians 5:18, 20 says this:

Through Christ, God made peace between us and himself, and God gave us the work of telling everyone about the peace we can have with him . . . So we have been sent to speak for Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:18, 20 (NCV)

The most important thing is that I complete my mission, the work that the Lord Jesus gave me—to tell people the Good News about God’s grace.

ACTS 20:24 (NCV)

Circle that—“the most important thing.”

Then Colossians 4:5 says this:

Make the most of your chances to tell others the Good News.

COLOSSIANS 4:5 (TLB)

Make the most to tell others. That’s my mission in the world.

By the way, where do we get these words like Colossians and Ephesians and Philippians? Those were cities in Europe. When Paul the apostle went and started churches, in the church at Philippi then he wrote a letter back to them called the letter to the Philippians. And it’s in the Bible. When he went to start a church in a city called Colossae, which was in Greece, then he wrote a book called the Colossians. A letter, and sent it to them. If Paul had come to a church in Orange County, he could have written a letter called 1 and 2 Californians.

The fifth purpose of life is TO TELL OTHERS ABOUT HIM .

To tell others about him. Once I’m in God’s family, once I know the purpose of life, I’m supposed to share them with others. The stuff I just taught you, you’re supposed to pass on.

There’s a word for this. The word for telling others the purposes of life and telling others the Good News and telling others that God loves them and

that Jesus died for them and there's a plan and purpose for their life, telling them all the Good News that I just told you.

The Bible calls this **EVANGELISM**.

You've heard the word "evangelist," but that's a different word. You may have heard the word "evangelical," but that's a different word. Evangelism is simply the Greek word that means "share Good News." You might write that down. Evangelism simply means share good news.

I am called to do evangelism, share good news. Evangelist is a gift that is a kind of reaching and teaching sharing one-on-one. Some people are called to be that, but not everybody is called to be an evangelist. But we're all called to do evangelism. To share the Good News with other people.

So anytime you hear people talk about evangelism it just means sharing Good News.

Here's the big key. Here's the big key to these five purposes. I want you to write this down.

The Big Key

I can't fulfill God's purposes **BY MYSELF**.

I just can't do it. That's why I need a church family. That's why I need to not just go to a church. I need to belong to a church. Church isn't something you attend. Church is something you belong to. I can't fulfill God's purposes by myself.

The big takeaway here is you can't fulfill God's purposes by yourself. You need to be part of God's family.

On the next page, let's look at the benefit of being a part of God's family.

WHY YOU NEED THE CHURCH

The Purpose of the Church Is to Help People Fulfill God's Purposes for Their Lives

Romans 12:5 says this:

Since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.

ROMANS 12:5 (NLT96)

I said this earlier and I'll say it again. The purpose of the church is to help people fulfill God's purposes for their lives.

So the first purpose of life is I'm planned for God's pleasure, I'm to learn to love God. What's the word for that? What's the word for loving God with all my heart? Worship.

What's the word for loving my neighbor as myself? Fellowship.

What's the word for growing up to spiritual maturity? Discipleship.

And what's the word for serving other people, helping other people in love and in Jesus' name? Ministry.

You're a disciple, you're a minister, you're a member. You are all of these things.

Then the word for sharing my mission in life, telling others the Good News, passing on what I learn is called evangelism. And that just means sharing Good News. Sharing Good News.

The purpose of a church is to help people fulfill God's five purposes for their lives.

Having a church will do five things . . .

Having a church family will help you:

- Center your life around God (**worship**)
- Connect with other believers (**fellowship**)
- Cultivate spiritual maturity (**discipleship**)
- Contribute something back (**ministry**)
- Communicate God's message (**mission**)

I just explained to you why you need to be a part of a church family. To center my life around God, to connect with other believers, to cultivate spiritual maturity, to contribute something back, to communicate God's message.

One of the big questions we all have to face when it comes to purpose is on the next page.

What's Driving Your Life?

If you would look up the word “drive” in a dictionary, you would find that the word drive means to guide, to control, or to direct.

For instance, if I drive a nail into wood with a hammer, I guide, control, direct the nail into the wood. If I drive a car, I guide, control, direct the car down the street. If I drive a golf ball with a driver I hopefully guide, control, direct the ball down the fairway.

Everybody's life is driven by something. A lot of people are driven by guilt. A lot of people are driven by fear. A lot of people are driven by past memories and regrets. A lot of people are driven by the need for approval. A lot of people in life are driven by insecurity. A lot of people are driven by money. A lot of people are driven by the desire for fame or power. And a lot of people in life are driven by the desire to just have fun. Everybody's life is driven by something.

God wants you to be purpose driven. Driven by the five things he put you here on Earth to do. He wants your life to be guided, controlled, and directed by worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism.

Let me say it another way, a simple way. God wants me to know and love God. He wants me to love his family. He wants me to grow in him. He wants me to serve him. And he wants me to share him.

Let me say it again. Know him, love his family, grow in him, serve him, share him. That's what life is all about. What's driving your life?

The Bible says this:

This world is fading away, along with everything it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will live forever.

1 JOHN 2:17 (NLT96)

Psalm 33:11 says this:

[God's] plans endure forever; his purposes last eternally.

PSALM 33:11 (GNT)

Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, 30:

*“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion?
Come to me . . . and you’ll recover your life . . . and
you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”*

MATTHEW 11:28, 30 (THE MESSAGE)

Jesus didn’t come to give us religion. The only thing Jesus thinks about religion is he’s totally against it. You say, *What?* Religion is man’s attempt to get to God. Jesus is God’s action to get to man. Jesus did not come to give us a religion. He came to give us a relationship.

Religion is a list of rules, regulations and restrictions and rituals that people think God wants them to do in order to make God smile. And everybody has their different lists, so they have different religions. Jesus didn’t say, “I’ve come that you might have religion.”

Jesus said: “*I came that you might have life. And have it to the fullest*” (John 10:10).

Jesus said, “I want you to know me, I want you to love me, I want you to have a relationship with me.” You could grow up in the church your entire life and never have a relationship with God. Many people do. You could be a very religious person and never have a relationship with God. Many people do. But God says, “I came for a relationship, a purpose—that you would know me, love me and love my family, belong to my family, that you would grow in me, serve me, and you would share me.”

That’s what life is all about. It’s not rocket science. We get distracted by all these other things. But what really matters is loving God, belonging to his family, growing in God, serving God, sharing God.

The Bible says that Jesus came to make this all possible. He died on the cross for our sins so we don’t have to pay for our sins.

And the Bible says, Acts 10:35:

It makes no difference who you are or where you’re from—if you want God and are ready to do as he says, the door is open.

ACTS 10:35 (THE MESSAGE)

TEACHING TIP:

This section and prayer of commitment should take about eight minutes.

I don't care what religious background you have. Your background may be Catholic, it may be Buddhist, it may be Muslim, it may be Mormon, it may be Baptist, it may be Methodist, it may be Hindu, it may be no background, it may be. Maybe you were raised in an agnostic or atheist home. It doesn't really matter what your background is. The Bible says if you are ready, if you want God and you're ready to do what he says, the door is open.

On the next page let's look at how God has opened that door.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

Most people live their entire lives without ever knowing "WHY?" They exist year after year with no idea of why they live or God's purpose for their lives. The most basic question a person asks is, "What is the meaning of life?"

Everyone wants to be happy. People try many ways.

- Some look for happiness by **acquiring possessions**.

Get, get! Get all you can, can all you get, sit on the can, and spoil the rest! That's the philosophy of many people. "I'll be happy if I just get more things."

- Some look for happiness by **experiencing pleasure**.

They'll try this drug or that pill or that experience or that trip—looking for pleasure to be the meaning of life.

- Some look for happiness by **gaining prestige and power**.

They think, “If I’m just liked, if I’m just famous, if I’m popular then I’ll be happy in life.”

But real happiness comes from understanding my purpose in life.

That’s where real happiness in life comes from. Understanding your purpose in life. Why are you here?

Why Am I Here?

The Bible teaches very clearly that you were put on this earth for two reasons:

1. God created me to **LOVE** me.

*The LORD appeared to us in the past saying:
“I have loved you with an everlasting love.”*

JEREMIAH 31:3 (NIV)

You were created to be loved by God.

Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be his through our union with Christ. . . . Because of his love God had already decided that through Jesus Christ he would make us his children—this was God’s pleasure and purpose.

EPHESIANS 1:4–5 (GNT)

2. We were created to **ENJOY** a personal relationship with God and to **MANAGE** all of the rest of God's creation. This makes us special.

So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female, blessed them, and said, "Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals."

GENESIS 1:27-28 (GNT)

[God] richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

1 TIMOTHY 6:17 (NIV)

God said, "I am putting human beings over all the rest of creation, and you are to manage the rest of the world." He gave that responsibility to Adam and Eve and then on to us. The benefit is that when we manage it as God's representative, we get to enjoy it.

[Jesus said,] "I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness!"

JOHN 10:10 (GNT)

If Jesus came to give us life, it means we're not really living until we know Jesus. In fact, you're not living, you're just existing until you know Christ because you were made to love God and be loved by him, to know him and be known by him.

When we know and love God, it produces all kinds of positive benefits in our lives. It provides a clear conscience. It provides purpose in life, power and strength, life and peace, confidence, fulfillment. He gives us help with our weaknesses. He gives us security. He gives us freedom. These are all benefits of having a relationship to Christ. I'm not talking about a religion. I'm talking about a personal relationship with Christ.

3. When we know and love God and live in harmony with his purpose for our lives, it produces tremendous benefits in our lives.


Clear Conscience Romans 8:1	Life and Peace Romans 8:6	Help with Weakness Romans 8:26
Purpose Romans 8:28	Confidence Romans 8:31	Security Romans 8:39
Power and Strength Philippians 4:13	Fulfillment Philippians 4:19	Freedom John 8:32, 36

This is the kind of lifestyle that God intends for us to live. Why then aren't most people really happy? **What's the problem?**

What's the Problem?

1. People have a natural desire to **BE THE BOSS** and to ignore God's principles for living.

You can see this all the time in our society around us. You hear phrases like,



If it feels good,
do it — regardless of
what God says
about it.

Look out for #1.
Do your own thing.

It's my life,
and I'll do what
I please!

In other words, "It's my life and I'll do what I please," or as the great theologian Frank Sinatra sang, "I did it my way." We want to be our own boss. We don't want God to be our boss. We want to be our own boss.

2. The Bible calls this attitude **SIN** .

In the word “sin,” circle the middle letter. The center of sin is “I.” I want to do my own thing. I want to be my own boss. I want to live my own life the way I want to regardless of God. The Bible says we’ve all had this problem.

*All of us like sheep have gone astray; each of us
has turned to his own way.* **ISAIAH 53:6 (MEV)**

*If we say that we have no sin, we are only fooling
ourselves and refusing to accept the truth.* **1 JOHN 1:8 (TLB)**

Sin breaks our close relationship with God. It causes us to fear God and try to live our lives outside of his will.

It’s amazing how most people are afraid of God. If you’re standing around talking with a bunch of friends at work and you bring up God, all of a sudden they freeze up. They get nervous. It’s because people are afraid of God. Why? Because they want to be their own boss and they know that the relationship between them and God is broken. They may not understand it, but they feel it.

Isaiah 59 says:

*The trouble is that your sins have cut you off
from God.* **ISAIAH 59:2 (TLB)**

*Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God’s
glorious ideal.* **ROMANS 3:23 (TLB)**

When it says “all,” does that include Billy Graham? Yes. The pope? Yes. Everybody in this room? Yes. We have all sinned. There’s no perfect person in the world.

When our relationship with God is not right, it causes problems in every area of our lives—marriage, career, relationships, finances, etc.

“WHEN PEOPLE
HAVE PROBLEMS,
THEY OFTEN TRY
MANY DIFFERENT WAYS
OF COPING BEFORE
TURNING TO GOD.”

When people have problems, they often try many different ways of coping before turning to God. When we have this relationship that we were meant to have with God and it's broken, when we feel this emptiness inside, we don't always know that what we're yearning for is God. So instead of looking to God to fill this emptiness, we try all kinds of things. Alcohol, drugs, an affair, therapy, thrills—they're trying to fill the emptiness in their heart when really what they're longing for and they don't know it is a relationship with God. That's why you were made, and nothing will ever satisfy that except a relationship with God.

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

PROVERBS 16:25 (NIV84)

Even when we know that our deepest need is God, we often try wrong ways of getting to know him.

It doesn't matter what you believe, just be sincere.

My mother was a Christian so . . .

I'll give up all my bad habits.

I'll work real hard and earn it.

I'll be religious and go to church.

Even when we know our deepest need is God, we often try the wrong ways of getting to know him:

"My mother was a Christian so I must be a Christian." That's what I call salvation by heritage. That's not very logical. For instance, what if I said, "My mother was married therefore I'm married"? I'm not automatically married just because my mother was married. I'm only married if I make the choice to get married, whether my mother ever married or not. So you're not saved by heritage.

"It doesn't matter what you believe, just be sincere." The problem with that is you can be sincerely wrong. I could sincerely think something is water but it's arsenic and I'd be sincerely dead. I read about a guy in an airplane who sincerely flew into a mountain and killed himself. He was sincere. He thought he was higher, but he wasn't. You can be sincerely wrong.

I grew up in a little town in Northern California where 600 people followed a man sincerely to Guyana, and later 900 were killed in that Guyana tragedy. His name was Jim Jones. I had friends who I went to school with who died in Guyana. They followed a man they thought was sincerely right. But he was sincerely wrong.

It takes more than sincerity to get to heaven.

"I'll just give up all my bad habits." That's what I call salvation by subtraction. "I don't do this and I don't do that. I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't cuss, I don't chew, I don't run around with girls that do." I figure if being a Christian is a matter of just don't that everybody who's dead qualifies as a Christian, because they don't do anything.

No, the Christian life involves far more than just a bunch of don'ts.

"I'll work real hard and earn it." That's salvation by service.

"I'll be religious and go to church."

Here is the myth that most people have. They think in their mind that God has a scale and on one side are my bad works, all the bad things I've done, and all the other side are all the good things. If somehow I manage to do more good in my life than bad, then God's going to let me into heaven.

That's just not true. In the first place, the Bible says heaven is a perfect place. Only perfect people get to go there. If God let imperfect people into heaven, then it wouldn't be perfect anymore. You say, "If only perfect people get to go to heaven, then I don't stand a chance." You're right. You don't and neither do I. So God had to come up with Plan B whereby we could get in on somebody else's ticket who was perfect. His name is Jesus Christ.

God doesn't grade on a curve. God says to come to a perfect place you have to be perfect. So if you could live a perfect life and were to never sin and you were to come to God and he said, "Why should I let you into my perfect place?" you'd say, "Because I've never blown it." He'd say, "You deserve it. Come on in." But you missed that chance a long time ago. And so did I. So we need Plan B. Plan B was God saying, "I'll come to Earth in the form of a human being, and I'll be called Jesus Christ. I will live a perfect life, and I'll let people see what God is really like in human form. Then I'll die on the cross and pay for their sins so, if you trust in me, you can come into heaven on my ticket." It sounds like a good deal.

What's the Solution?

Look at what Jesus said:

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

JOHN 14:6 (NIV)

Notice Jesus didn't say, "I might be the way . . . I point the way . . . I teach the way . . . I'm looking for the way." He said, "I'm it!" Then he said, "I'm the Truth." I studied all the major religions before I really went into the ministry. One of the things that I discovered was that all the major religions point to truth. In Japan, where I served as missionary for a while, it's called "The Four Noble Truths." Buddhism says truth is found through an eight-fold path and if you strive all your life, you may eventually discover the truth. But Buddha at the end of his life in a famous statement said, "I'm still searching for the truth." The Hindu scripture says truth is very illusive and you'll probably never find it. It's like a butterfly and just about the time you grab it, it'll fly off. Others say truth must be searched for by purifying yourself by chanting and maybe you just might get to the truth. Mohammed said, "I'm a prophet and I point toward the truth."

Jesus says, "I am the Truth." Not, "I point to it . . . I teach it . . ." But "I am the Truth." He's either who he says he is or he's the biggest liar who ever lived. He said, "I am the Truth. I am the Way. I am the only way to heaven." God, himself, came to Earth as a human being to bring us back to himself. If any other way would have worked, Jesus Christ would not have had to come. The Way is not a religion, the Way is not a path, the Way is a person. God wants you to know him personally.

God himself came to earth as a human being to bring us back to himself. If any other way would have worked, Jesus Christ would not have had to come. The way is in the person of Jesus Christ.

“JESUS HAS ALREADY
TAKEN CARE OF YOUR
SIN PROBLEM.”

*The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is
eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

ROMANS 6:23 (NIV84)

What does it mean to be a Christian? It means to put your faith in Christ. There are so many myths about what it means to be a Christian.

I was sitting with a guy on the plane one day who said, “I’m an American, therefore I’m a Christian.” America’s a Christian nation.

Another guy said, “I joined the church, so I’m a Christian.” If you join the Lions Club, does that make you a lion?

People say, “I was born in the church.” If you were born in a car, does that make you a spare tire?

People say, “I got baptized.” You could be baptized in the ocean ‘til every fish knows you by your first name, but that’s not going to get you to heaven.

It takes more than just knowing about God and Jesus. People say, “I believe about God.” So does the Devil. He knows there’s a God, but you’re not going to find him in heaven. It’s not just believing the facts about God. Faith means to believe in Christ and what he did for you.

God did this for us because he loves us and wants us to know him.

God demonstrated his love for us in that while we were still separated from God by sin, Christ died for us.

ROMANS 5:8 (AP)

God is on the one side, and all the people are on the other side, and Christ Jesus is between them to bring them together by giving his life for all mankind. God has already done his part to restore our relationship to him. He took the initiative. He came to Earth. Now he waits for each of us to individually accept what he's done.

Review: Heaven is a perfect place. We're imperfect. There's not a chance in a zillion you're ever going to get to go there on your own good works. You'll never be good enough. So God came to Earth in the person of Jesus Christ—that's why we celebrate Christmas and Easter. He died on the cross to pay for my sins, and he says, "If you'll accept me, you can come into heaven on my ticket. Not only that, you can begin to experience real life here on Earth right now."

God is on one side and all the people on the other side, and Christ Jesus, himself man, is between them to bring them together, by giving his life for all mankind.

1 TIMOTHY 2:5 (TLB)

God has already done his part to restore our relationship to him. He took the initiative. Now he waits for each of us to individually accept what he has done for us.

What Does God Want Me to Do?

Four things:

Here's what it means to be a Christian. You may be a church member. You may have known about God all your life. You may have wondered, "Am I really a Christian?" Maybe you've had doubts about it. You can know for sure tonight. I don't want any of you to leave here tonight without knowing for sure that you've settled this issue.

1. **ADMIT** that God has not been first place in your life and ask him to forgive your sins.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from every wrong.

1 JOHN 1:9 (AP)

2. **BELIEVE** that Jesus died to pay for your sins and that he rose again on Easter and is alive today.

I believe that Jesus Christ died to pay for my sins and that he rose on Easter and is alive today.

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is your Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

ROMANS 10:9 (NIV84)

Circle the word "will." It doesn't say you might be. It doesn't say you can hope to be. It says you will.

Many Christians go through all their life wondering, "Have I really given my life to Christ? Am I really going to go to heaven?" They doubt their salvation over and over. You need to settle it right now. If you call on the name of the Lord he says, "I will." God will not lie. It doesn't matter how you feel. Feelings come and go. I stood one day in front of a bunch of people and said two words to Kay that changed my life: "I do." At the time

I had no idea what I was doing. The rest of my life I'm working out the implications of those two words, "I do." As Kay and I were driving off on our honeymoon I said, "I don't feel married." She said, "It doesn't matter whether you feel it or not. You're married!"

There are some days I don't feel saved. Does that ever happen to you? There are some days I don't feel like a Christian. Feelings come and go. What matters is God says, "I will save you if you do what I say and invite me into your heart."

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name [Jesus] . . . by which we must be saved.

ACTS 4:12 (NIV)

3. **ACCEPT** God's free gift of salvation. Don't try to earn it.

Don't try to earn it.

For it is by grace you are saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

EPHESIANS 2:8–9 (NIV84)

Can you imagine, if you could earn your way to heaven, what a cruddy place heaven would be? If you could earn your way to heaven, everybody up there would be bragging on how they got there. "I got here because I helped a little old lady across the street!" "I got here because I was like Mother Teresa." No, you don't get there on your own effort. You get there just by accepting God's free gift.

Our relationship to God is not restored by anything we do, but on the basis of what Jesus already did for us!

4. **INVITE** Jesus Christ to come into your life and be the director (Lord) of your life.

Have you seen these stores that say, “Under new management”? I think every new Christian should wear that sign for a month. That’s what it means to be a Christian. I’m under new management. No longer am I calling the shots in my life. Jesus Christ is the manager of my life. He’s the CEO. He’s the president, the boss-man. He’s the director of my life.

“To all who received him, he gave the right to become children of God. All they needed to do was to trust him to save them. All those who believe this are reborn!—not a physical rebirth resulting from human passion or plan—but from the will of God.”

JOHN 1:12–13 (TLB)

Circle “receive” and “believe.” What does it mean to be a Christian? You must believe and receive.

Let’s say you’re without Jesus Christ, headed for hell. Over here you’re a child of God headed to heaven. How do you get from one to the other? You walk across a bridge. And who’s the bridge over troubled waters? Jesus Christ. And how do you get across the bridge? You must believe and receive.

If I were to ask you tonight, “How far are you along that bridge?” some of you would say, “I believe in Jesus Christ. I just don’t know if I’ve ever received him into my life.” I’d say, “Congratulations. You’re halfway there! What you need to do is invite him into your life.” How do you do that? Jesus says,

[Jesus says,] “Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in.”

REVELATION 3:20 (HCSB)

You can take these steps by praying a simple prayer of commitment to God.

If you’ve never settled this issue or if you’ve always had doubts, “Am I really a Christian? Do I know for sure I’m going to heaven?” You can know for sure tonight by doing what Christ has said to do, by praying this prayer and meaning it in your heart:



PRAYER OF COMMITMENT



Dear Jesus,

Thank you for making me and loving me, even when I've ignored you and gone my own way. I realize I need you in my life, and I'm sorry for my sins. I ask you to forgive me. Thank you for dying on the cross for me. Please help me to understand it more. As much as I know how, I want to follow you from now on. Please come into my life and make me a new person inside. I accept your gift of salvation. Please help me grow now as a Christian.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

The Bible says:

*Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will
be saved.*

ROMANS 10:13 (GW)

Did you call on the name of the Lord? God says if you call on the name of the Lord you'll be saved. Will God lie? Then are you saved? Yes, if you meant that in your heart. It's not how you feel; it's what is real. And what is real is a commitment to Christ. You don't understand it all. The day you were born, did

you understand everything about the world? When you are “spiritually reborn,” you don’t understand all about the Christian life. You can’t expect a baby Christian to get up and be running a spiritual marathon. You have to grow as a Christian. That’s what this church is all about. We’re here to help you grow. But the starting point is the commitment you’ve made or remade tonight.

The Bible says that there are two symbols we need to be involved in to remind us of the decision we’ve made: baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

TEACHING TIP:

This section should take 12 minutes.

BAPTISM: HOW YOU IDENTIFY WITH GOD'S FAMILY

What is the Meaning of Baptism?

Baptism does three things.

1. It illustrates Christ's **DEATH, BURIAL,** and resurrection.

Look at these verses:

Christ died for our sins . . . he was buried . . . and . . . he rose again.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-4 (KJV)

When we are lowered into the water, it is like the burial of Jesus; when we are raised up out of the water, it is like the resurrection of Jesus.

ROMANS 6:4 (THE MESSAGE)

For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ.

COLOSSIANS 2:12 (GNT)

At Saddleback we baptize the way they did in the Bible—putting people all the way under the water. It is a symbol of a burial and resurrection. Just like Jesus Christ died and was buried in the ground for three days and then rose again.

2. It illustrates my **NEW LIFE** as a Christian.

When someone becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 (TLB/NLT)

In the Bible, there was no such thing as a person claiming to be a Christian and not be baptized. It was automatic. You were baptized as soon as you gave your life to Christ. It was a picture of the new life you had been given by Jesus.

Look at Galatians 3:27:

Your baptism in Christ was not just washing you up for a fresh start. It also involved dressing you in an adult faith wardrobe— Christ’s life, the fulfillment of God’s original promise.

GALATIANS 3:27 (THE MESSAGE)

Baptism doesn’t make you a believer—it shows that **you already believe**. Baptism does not “save” you, only your faith in Christ does that. Baptism is like a wedding ring—it’s the outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart.

It’s a picture of putting off the old way of living and putting on a new way of life in Jesus. Off with the old, on with the new. Buried with Christ in baptism, and raised to walk a brand-new life.

3. It demonstrates my **INCORPORATION** into Christ’s body, the church.

No one baptizes themselves; that would miss the point. It’s a public witness of your faith, and also an open statement that you believe together and belong together with God’s family.

We each used to independently call our own shots, but then we entered into a large and integrated life in which [Christ] has the final say in everything. (This is what we proclaimed in word and action when we were baptized.) Each of us is now a part of his resurrection body.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:13 (THE MESSAGE)

Why Should I Be Baptized?

1. To follow the example set by **JESUS CHRIST**.

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth . . . and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

MARK 1:9 (NIV)

Why was Jesus baptized? In order to save him? No, he didn't need to be saved. He was perfect. Baptism doesn't save you. It is a symbol of obedience, and it's an example that we are to do what he has done.

2. Because Christ **COMMANDED** it.

Christ commands that every Christian be baptized.

“Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

MATTHEW 28:19–20 (GNT)

In these verses there are the three things the church is commanded to do: Make disciples—help people come to know Christ—baptize them; and help them grow up. Many people think, “I’ll be baptized after I’ve grown up. After I know about the Christian life, then I’ll be baptized.” No, it’s right after you make the decision to follow Christ. Notice the order: You make the disciples, then you baptize them, then you spend the rest of your life growing as a Christian.

3. It shows that I really am a **BELIEVER** .

The Bible says:

Many of the [people] who heard Paul believed and were baptized.

ACTS 18:8 (NIV)

Baptism doesn't make you a Christian. It just shows that you are a Christian. A wedding ring doesn't make me married; it is a symbol of a commitment that I made that made me married. One day I made a commitment to my wife before God and a bunch of people and I said "I do" and I gave my life to her in front of God for the rest of my life. That commitment is what makes me married, not the ring. If I were to lose this ring, I'd still be married. What this is, is an outward symbol of an inward commitment.

That's what baptism is. Baptism doesn't make you a Christian. It's just an outward symbol of an inward commitment. It is your commitment to Christ that saves you. Baptism just says to the world, "I'm not ashamed to tell the whole world what's happened to me. I've given my life to Christ." A little boy asked me one time, "Pastor Rick, when can I get advertised?" I like that. That's what baptism is. Baptism is an advertisement for Jesus. It's saying, "I'm not ashamed of Jesus Christ." Jesus once said, "If you're ashamed of me in front of the world, then I'll be ashamed of you in front of my Father in heaven." I know some people who won't get baptized because they don't want to get their hair wet. Are you that ashamed of Jesus Christ?

The Bible says,

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.

1 JOHN 2:3 (NIV84)

How do you prove you're a Christian? You obey his commands. One of his first commands is, "Be baptized."

Why Be Baptized By Immersion?

There are some churches that sprinkle a little water on your forehead. Some pour a little water. Some dip a little bit. Other churches put you all the way under the water. Why do we believe and practice at Saddleback that you should be baptized by immersion? Four reasons.

1. Because **JESUS** was baptized that way.

We want to do it the way they did it in the Bible. It says:

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water.

MATTHEW 3:16 (NIV)

He went down to the Jordan River. John the Baptist baptized him in the river. He set the example.

2. Every baptism in the **BIBLE** was by immersion.

Two examples:

Then both Philip and the [man] went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water . . .

ACTS 8:38-39 (NIV)

Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water.

JOHN 3:23 (NIV)

3. The word “baptize” means to **SUBMERSE INTO** water.

The Greek word *baptizo* means “to immerse and dip under water.”

4. Baptism is the best symbol of a burial and resurrection!

You go under the water as a symbol of burial, and come up out of the water as a symbol of resurrection.

The founders from different denominations agree with the statement above.

MARTIN LUTHER: “I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed, as the word imports and the mystery signifies.”

JOHN CALVIN: “The word ‘baptize’ signifies to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church.”

JOHN WESLEY: “We are buried with him, alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion.”

THE NEW CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA: “The biblical form of baptism was unquestionably immersion. In the Catholic church, immersion seems to have prevailed until the twelfth century.”

They all agree, whether they do it or not, that this is the way they did it in the Bible. An article in the Times talks about how Catholics are now going back to baptizing by immersion. It says, “Many Catholics are returning to full immersion baptism of church history and its greater symbolism.” Why? It says, “Catholic churches have realized ‘This brings out far more clearly the true meaning of baptism of being buried with Christ and entering into a new life.’” Even the Catholics who, for centuries, just sprinkled, are saying, “We’re going back to baptism by immersion.”

The number one background in our church are people who are former Catholics. We have many people on our staff who have been re baptized. When those of you who were baptized as children or babies, I’m sure that was very significant for your parents, but you don’t even remember it. So it didn’t mean anything to you. We’ve had many people say, when they got older and they accepted Christ, “I want to be baptized the way Jesus commanded, the way Jesus talked about.” We’re not talking about the baptism of confirmation but a baptism of confession. “I want the world to know I’m a follower of Christ.” You can’t do that until after you are a follower of Christ.

Who Should Be Baptized?

Every person who has **BELIEVED** in Christ.

*Many of them believed his message
and were baptized.*

ACTS 2:41 (GNT)

Simon believed in Christ and was baptized.

ACTS 8:13 (NLV)

*But when they believed Philip as he preached the
good news . . . and the name of Jesus Christ,
they were baptized, both men and women.*

ACTS 8:12 (NIV)

At Saddleback, we wait until our children are old enough to **believe** and understand the true meaning of baptism before we baptize them.

Some churches practice a “baptism of confirmation” for children. This ceremony is intended to be a covenant between the parents and God on the behalf of the child. The parents promise to raise their child in the faith until the child is old enough to make his own personal confession of Christ. This custom began about 300 years after the Bible was completed. **This is different from the baptism talked about in the Bible**, which was only for those old enough to believe. The purpose is to publicly confess your personal commitment to Christ.

At Saddleback, it is a membership requirement that every member must have been baptized the way Jesus demonstrated, even though many of us were “confirmed” as children.

Why do we do that?

1. Jesus commanded the church to do it. He said, “Go baptize.”
2. It’s a symbol that your body is a member of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13).

“OVER 50,000
PEOPLE HAVE BEEN
BAPTIZED AT
SADDLEBACK CHURCH!”

When Should I Be Baptized?

“AS SOON AS YOU
HAVE BELIEVED!”

As soon as you become a believer. Or as soon as you realize its importance. Maybe you’ve been a believer for a while but you didn’t realize how important it was. Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commandments.”

Those who believed . . . were baptized . . . that day!”

ACTS 2:41 (NLV)

Then Philip spoke. Starting with that passage, Philip told the official the Good News about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water. The official said to Philip, “Look, there’s some water. What can keep me from being baptized?” The official ordered the carriage to stop. He and Philip stepped into the water, and Philip baptized him.

ACTS 8:35–38 (GW)

There’s nothing special about the water. The water in the pool is not holy, neither are the Jacuzzis or the pools or the ocean we’ve used. What is holy is the faith of the people. It’s not where you’re baptized. It’s why you’re baptized—to publicly say, “I am an adult follower of Christ.” There’s no reason to delay. After you’ve decided to receive Christ, you ought to be baptized.

There is no reason to delay. As soon as you have decided to receive Christ into your life, you can and should be baptized. If you wait until you are “perfect,” you’ll never feel “good enough!”

Practical Questions

1. Can my family be baptized together?

Yes! If each family member fully understands the meaning of baptism, and each one has personally placed his/her trust in Christ for salvation, we encourage families to be baptized at the same time. It is a wonderful expression of commitment.

Young children who wish to be baptized can attend a baptism class held regularly throughout the year through Saddleback Kids.

However, it is important to remember that baptism is a *personal* statement of faith, not a family tradition. It is usually not wise to delay your baptism while waiting on other family members to accept Christ, particularly children. This puts an undue pressure on them, and delays *your* obedience.

2. What should I wear when I am baptized?

We have baptism T-shirts you can wear over your swimsuit or any clothes you feel comfortable in. We also provide changing rooms, towels, and shorts you can use.

3. Will I have to say anything?

No. At the beginning of the service, one of our pastors will briefly explain the meaning of baptism. You will wait at the edge of the pool for your turn to be baptized. A pastor will introduce you, briefly lower you just under the water, and then you can leave the pool, dry off, and watch the others. We encourage you to invite all your relatives and friends to attend your baptism! You will be given a photo and certificate of your baptism.

4. Special needs?

All of our pastors can perform a private baptism in special circumstances.

We would be happy to do that for you. For instance, if you're petrified of water—and there are folks that absolutely have phobias about water. We do private baptisms. We are understanding and sympathetic. We've had folks who've had cancer treatments and are wearing a wig or toupee and they're afraid that's going to fall off, or if you've had a surgery or anything that would cause you to be embarrassed, all you need to do is call the pastors and arrange a private baptism.

Another question is, “Is it okay to be baptized more than once?” I often have an instance like a wife who was baptized when she gave her life to Christ but now her husband has become a Christian and she wants to be baptized again with him. Sure you can. There’s no law that says you can only be baptized once. If you are in the Holy Land and you want to be baptized in the Jordan River as a reaffirmation of your faith, go ahead. There’s nothing wrong with that. It’s not like it’s a sin to do it again.

That’s only one of the two symbols of salvation. The other is the Lord’s Supper.

TEACHING TIP:

This teaching on the Lord's Supper should take about seven minutes.

THE LORD'S SUPPER: COMMUNION WITH GOD'S FAMILY

Jesus never asked his disciples to remember his birth. But he did instruct them to remember his death and resurrection. He gave the church two visible symbols (called *ordinances*) as reminders of his death. These two ordinances are baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is an object lesson that represents a great spiritual truth for believers.

What is the Lord's Supper?

To find the answer to what is the Lord's Supper, let's read, one verse at a time, 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 (NIV).

1. It is a **SIMPLE ACT** .

*The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed,
took bread.*

VERSE 23

The Bible says that the very first communion, the Lord Jesus, on the night that he was betrayed, took bread and broke it. He didn't have some big elaborate ceremony, wearing special costumes and vestments and burning incense and doing all kinds of fancy rituals. The Lord's Supper is a very simple act. He took bread and he took wine and he gave it to the people. It's not some big elaborate ritual. When we take the Lord's Supper at Saddleback, we don't turn it into a big ritual. We just observe the elements.

2. It is a **REMINDER** .

*And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,
“This is my body, which is for you; do this
in remembrance of me.”*

VERSE 24

The whole purpose of the Lord's Supper is for us to remember what Jesus did on the cross.

3. It is a **SYMBOL** .

In the same way . . . he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood . . . drink it, in remembrance of me.”

VERSE 25

When Jesus said, “This bread is my body and this cup is my blood,” he didn't mean that literally. When he said this, he hadn't even gone to the cross yet. He hadn't died yet. Obviously, he's talking about a symbol, not his actual blood. He hadn't even gone to the cross yet.

If I were to pull my wallet out of my pocket and show you pictures and say, “This is my wife,” you wouldn't think my wife was photographic paper with chemicals on it. You know what I'm talking about. It represents my wife.

Jesus once said, “*I am the door.*” Does that mean he's a piece of wood? He said, “*I am the bread of life.*” Does that mean he's a loaf? No. He's giving symbolism.

He says, “*This is my body, which is for you.*” It's a symbol.

4. It is a **STATEMENT OF FAITH** .

*For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

VERSE 26

When you take of the Lord's Supper, you're preaching a sermon. There's a forward look and a backward look. We look forward to the fact that Jesus is coming back and he says do this until he comes back. And we look back at the cross. Jesus didn't stay dead. He's coming back again.

Who Should Take the Lord's Supper?

Only those who are already **BELIEVERS** (Mark 14:22–26).

When Jesus offered communion—the Lord's Supper—he didn't offer it to the 5,000 where he fed the loaves and fish. He only offered the Lord's Supper to his disciples whom he knew were true believers. He didn't offer the Lord's Supper to the crowds.

We take the Lord's Supper when primarily it's just believers. We have authorized all the small group leaders in our church to serve the Lord's Supper in homes anytime they want to in small groups. That's the way they did it in the New Testament. Acts 2, you don't have one example of them taking the Lord's Supper in the large Sunday meeting. In fact, it says they took and broke bread from house to house. So the Lord's Supper was taken in the small groups in homes. We authorize our small groups, if they want to take the Lord's Supper every week they can.

A few times a year we take communion on Sunday morning. We usually do it on weekends when we know there's not going to be a whole bunch of visitors, like the Sunday after New Year's Eve. We figure all the unbelievers are home with hangovers. While they drink to forget, we drink to remember. And we remember what Jesus did for us. As we're taking communion, we always invite those who are not believers to believe—we give them the opportunity to recognize what the Lord's Supper means.

The Bible says,

For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body [of the Lord] eats and drinks judgment on himself.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:29 (BSB)

So it's for believers.

How Do I Prepare Myself for the Lord's Supper?

So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:27-28 (NIV)

Anytime we take the Lord's Supper here at this church we always have a time of prayer and self-examination before. We say, "God, is there anything in my life that's between me and you that I need to confess and get rid of before I take communion?" The Bible says that we are to examine our self every time we take the Lord's Supper.

We do these four things.

You prepare yourself through:

- **Self-Examination** (1 Corinthians 11:27)
- **Confessing My Sins** (1 John 1:9)
- **Recommitment** (Romans 12:1)
- **Restoring Relationships** (Matthew 5:23-24)

The Bible says if you've got something against another person—you're bitter and angry and resentful—you shouldn't take the Lord's Supper. In fact, it says you shouldn't even give an offering. It says go get it right with that person first and then come and worship.

When and How Often Should We Observe the Lord's Supper?

The Bible doesn't say. The Bible doesn't give a rule about how often. Anytime you hear a rule like, "You ought to take the Lord's Supper every Sunday," it's a man-made rule. It's not in the Bible. Or "You ought to take it once a month." It's a man-made rule. It's not in the Bible

Jesus never said when or how often believers should observe the Lord's Supper. He instituted it on a Thursday night. In the Bible, Christians observed the communion in small groups in homes.

Those are the two symbols—baptism and the Lord's Supper. Because Jesus died, you have forgiveness. Because Jesus is resurrected, you have new life.



SESSION TWO

Our Strategy

TEACHING TIP

From here to the concentric circles is about seven minutes.

In this session I'd like you to turn to the page that has the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

All of Saddleback Church's philosophy, strategy, and purposes are found in these two verses. These are the two fundamental pillars of Saddleback Church—the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. They are two statements of Jesus Christ.

If you understand the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, you're going to understand why we do everything we do in our church family.

The Great Commandment is a statement Jesus made when one day a guy comes up to him and said, "Lord, what is the most important thing in the Bible to do? Can you summarize the Bible for me?" And Jesus said, "Yes I can: All the law and all the prophets can be summed up in two statements." We looked at it briefly earlier; let's take a closer look now.

OUR MOTTO

The Great Commandment

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart . . . soul and . . . mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

MATTHEW 22:37-40 (NIV)

We see two of God’s purposes for our lives in the Great Commandment.

Circle “first and greatest.” Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Remember we said that that loving God with all our mind, heart, soul, and strength, the word for that is called “worship.” Worship is expressing my love to God.

Love your neighbor as yourself—that is called fellowship. It’s loving your neighbor as yourself. It’s almost like ministry because anytime you serve somebody, you’re loving them.

The Great Commission has three purposes in it.

The Great Commission

Jesus said it in Matthew 28:19-20 right before he went back to heaven:

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

MATTHEW 28:19-20 (NIV)

Notice there are three commands in the Great Commission: go and make disciples, baptize them, and teach them.

We get the five purposes of the church from these two verses—two from the Great Commandment and three from the Great Commission. Love God with all your heart—that’s worship. Love your neighbor as yourself—that’s ministry or fellowship. Then go and make disciples—that’s evangelism. Baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—that’s bring them into the fellowship of the body of Christ. Then teach them to do everything I’ve commanded you teach them to obey—that’s discipleship.

When I started Saddleback Church many years ago I said, “Lord, would you give me a single sentence that we all can remember that will help us memorize what is the purpose of our church?”

This is the slogan that God gave me:

Our Motto

A Great Commitment . . .

. . . to the Great **COMMANDMENT**

and the Great **COMMISSION** . . .

. . . will grow a Great Church!

Our Purpose Statement

That's it. A great commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will grow a great church.

The entire history of Saddleback Church is summed up in that statement right there. Five purposes from the two statements of Jesus. A great commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will grow a great church.

If you turn to the next page you'll see how we took these five purposes and we put them in a process. And we take them in order.

When you were born, you went through developmental stages of growth. We all grow at different sizes, we all grow at different rates, and none of us look alike. But everybody in this room went through the exact same growth development stages. Every baby has to learn to breathe before it learns to eat. No baby learns that backward. Every baby has to learn to eat before it learns to walk. Babies learn to walk before they learn to talk. We all grow at different rates but we all go through the exact same developmental stages.

The same is true spiritually in spiritual growth. You've got to first know Christ before you can love Christ. And you've got to love Christ before you can love his family. And you've got to love his family before you can grow in him, before you can serve him, and before you can share him.

So what we do at Saddleback is we take the five purposes and we don't just say we do these five things, we do them in order.

And here's our purpose statement. The purpose of Saddleback Church family:



TO BRING PEOPLE TO
JESUS AND **MEMBERSHIP**
IN HIS FAMILY,

DEVELOP THEM TO
CHRIST-LIKE **MATURITY**,

AND EQUIP THEM FOR
THEIR **MINISTRY** IN
THE CHURCH

AND THEIR LIFE **MISSION**
IN THE WORLD,

IN ORDER TO **MAGNIFY**
GOD'S NAME.



Notice: We have these five statements and we do them in order.

First we bring people to Jesus. That is evangelism. Then into membership in his family. That's fellowship. Then we help people grow to maturity. That's discipleship. Then we help everybody find their ministry. That's service. Then we help everybody do their mission. That goes back out into the world.

So we bring people in, we build them up, we teach them how, and we send them out. We bring them in, we build them up, we teach them how, we send them out.

We are in the disciple-development business. Jesus said, "Go and make disciples." You want to know what Saddleback is all about? We're not about getting bigger. We're about producing disciples. That's learners. People who are followers of Christ. We bring people who may have no religious background, bring them in, build them up, teach them how, send them out.

First we teach them to know Christ. Then to love Christ. Then to love his family. Then to grow in Christ. Then to serve Christ. Then to share Christ. All for the glory of God. Honoring him with our lives. Magnifying him.

TEACHING TIP

This section is seven minutes.

CIRCLES OF COMMITMENT

Saddleback circles of commitment and the life development diamond are two little models you need to understand—two diagrams we use to explain how we fulfill God's five purposes in your life.

Stages of Spiritual Growth

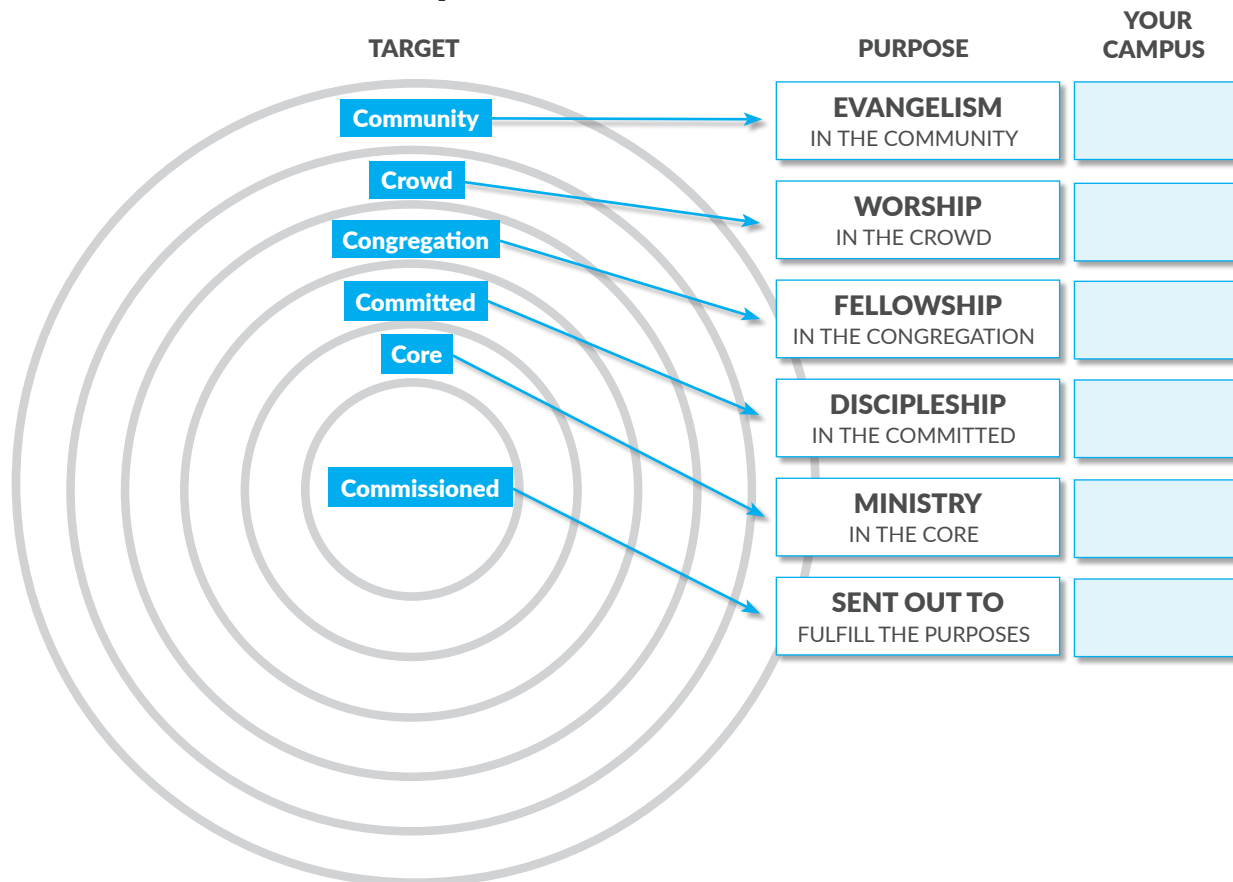
The Bible explains that spiritual growth is a journey:

1. People live at different stages of commitment and spiritual maturity.
2. We only grow by making commitments.

The Purpose Driven strategy moves people from the outer fringe of our church to the center by encouraging personal spiritual growth through a series of classes and covenants.

Let's examine the numbers in each of the stages represented in the chart below.

Fill in the name of this campus here:



If you look at the circles that are there on your page, the center circle represents the most committed people in our church. Each circle as it gets larger and larger is less and less committed until you get out in the community, which has no commitment at all.

Let me explain what these circles represent.

The Community, the big circle on the outside, we say that the community is everybody within driving distance of our church. Our church is in cities all around the world now, so we've got a pretty big community. We have 15 Saddleback campuses here in Orange County. We've got global churches. Saddleback global, so our community is big in different areas. We've got a church in Berlin; our community is within driving distance of that church. Saddleback Buenos Aires, the community is around that.

But the Community represents people who don't know Jesus and don't come to church. What we want to do is we want to share Christ with them. We want to share Christ with them so that they can know Christ. That's our goal, so that they can know Christ.

So in that box write "knowing Christ" and in the one right below it write "loving Christ." Knowing Christ in the community—we share Jesus with them so they can get to know him. Then once they get to know him, they start coming to the Crowd. They've heard about him, have been invited to come to the Crowd.

The Crowd is the circle of people who show up on Sundays. We call that "Crowd" for obvious reasons. It's a crowd of people.

We started the crowd with 100 people at Saddleback Church. Now it has thousands and thousands. The crowd are what we call occasional attenders. Weekend worship attenders. If you come on Sunday, if you come to a Sunday service, you're a part of the crowd.

Our goal in the crowd is to help you know and love Christ. Loving Christ through worship. Remember, that's the worship service.

Then we want to move people from the Crowd into the Congregation. Which is moving people from attender to member. If you're an attender you're in the crowd; if you're a member you're in the congregation.

The congregation are people who have taken Class 101, become members of Saddleback Church, signed our membership covenant. It is a group that loves each other like family.

Once you become a member of Saddleback my next goal as your pastor is to help you grow to the deeper and deeper levels of maturity. We have a class called Class

201 or Growing in Maturity. That class is a class that helps us learn the habits for spiritual growth. And when you take that class and you sign the covenant, the maturity covenant, you're part of what we call the Committed. There are three basic habits we teach in that course.

Then once you're in the committed, our goal is to move you to the next level of maturity and development, which is what we call the Core. That is, the people who are serving in ministry.

Here at Saddleback Church we have about 19,000 people who have a volunteer ministry. What does that mean? They're serving in some area helping the community through Saddleback Church.

There are all kinds of ministries. Ministries to prison and ministries to women and ministries to children and music ministry. We have ministries to reach out to different hobby groups. We have ministries to the Core. We have ministries to people who are going through grief. We have Celebrate Recovery, a ministry for people who deal with habits and hurts and hang-ups and addictions.

We have over 400 different kinds of ministries. When you're serving in one of those ministries, you're part of the Core because you're serving Christ.

Then ultimately we want to move you into the Commissioned, which is where you know your life mission. And you're fulfilling your life mission in what we call "going" for Christ. Those are the people who have taken class number four, Discovering My Mission, and have gone on a PEACE trip. I'll explain PEACE briefly later. We've had now well over 16,000 of our people at Saddleback Church go to some nation around the world to help fulfill their mission.

So we move people from the outside in. Does that make sense? Everybody got that? We start in the Community—you're not coming to Saddleback. Then you start coming on Sunday—you're now part of the Crowd. Then you take Class one or 101 and you're in the Congregation. You're a member. Then you take the next class, class two and learn the habits for growth. You're in the Committed. Then you take class number three, Discovering My Shape for Ministry—you're in the Core and you start serving. Then you take class four, which is the Commissioned, and you go out into the world to do your life mission.

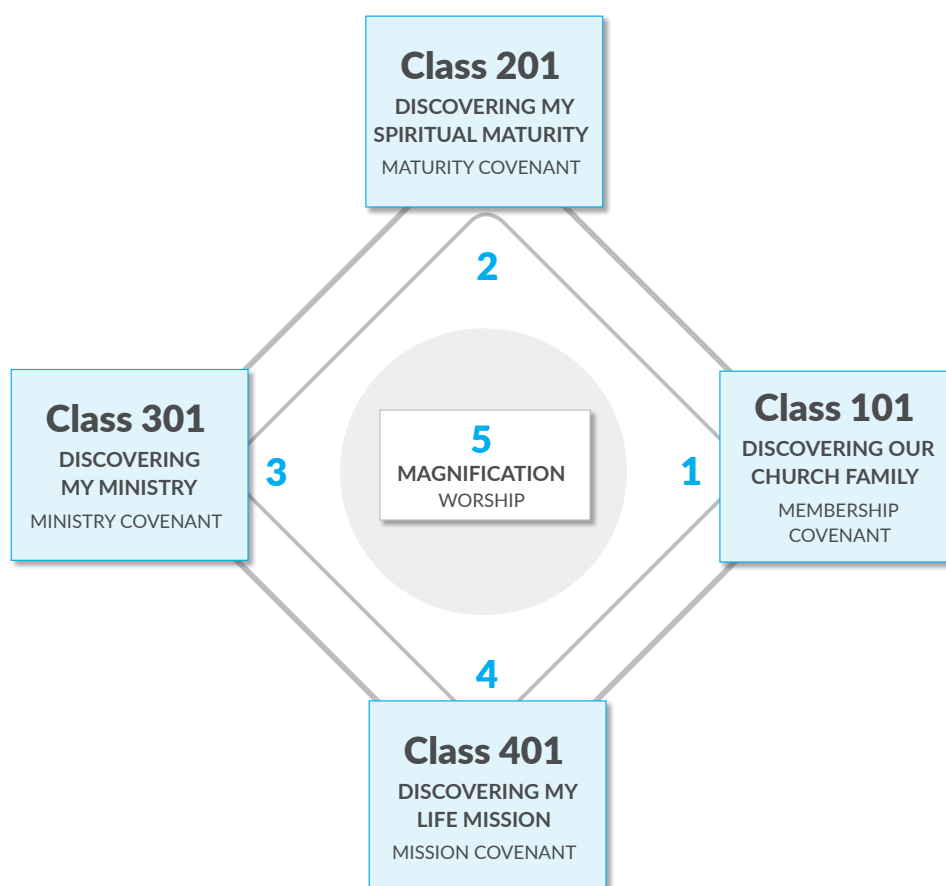
DEVELOPMENT DIAMOND

I want to show you a little easier description of this.

If you think of Saddleback's railroad track to maturity. We use a little diamond where we have four points of a diamond—one, two, three, four—representing four classes that we offer. Class 101—Discovering My Membership; class two—Discovering Spiritual Maturity; class three—Discovering My Ministry; and class four—Discovering My Life Mission. As you move around this diamond, it's like a path to grow to spiritual maturity.

You are already at the first base. So turn to the person next to you and say, "Congratulations! You made it to first base."

Of course, here in America we play baseball and we say if you get everyone all the way around the bases, that's a grand slam—the term we use. I want you to be a grand slam disciple. You get no credit for runners that are left on first base. You can't just stay here, you've got to go on to second base and you've got to go on to third and on around.



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OUR S.A.D.D.L.E.B.A.C.K. VALUES

TEACHING TIP

From here through all of the values is about 22 minutes.

In all of our years that Saddleback has been growing, we had many things change, many things are different as the church has grown each year. But some things never change. That's what I want to talk about in this session. Our values never change, our beliefs never change. Our faith statement never changes. Our purposes never change.

At Saddleback Church there are some things we have in common with every other Bible believing church. Notice in your notes, our common values are: We're Christ-centered, we're biblically based, we're God-glorifying, we're Spirit-led, we're prayer-powered, we're mission-minded, and we're doing God's five purposes of worship, fellowship, discipleship, service, and evangelism. These are common to all churches. If you went to any good Bible-believing church you would see these things.

As I said before, we're not in competition with any other church. We believe that all churches who preach the Word of God are good and they're godly and we want them all to grow.

We have 10 unique values that we really emphasize. We say these are the things we believe that our church is to be our thumbprint. To help you remember them, I use a little acrostic: S.A.D.D.L.E.B.A.C.K. Saddleback.

Our Common Foundation

“CHRIST-CENTERED . . .
BIBLE-BASED . . .
GOD-GLORIFYING . . .
SPIRIT-LED . . .
PRAYER-POWERED . . .
MISSION-MINDED AND
DOING GOD’S FIVE
PURPOSES OF WORSHIP,
FELLOWSHIP, DISCIPLESHIP,
SERVICE, AND EVANGELISM.”

Our Distinctive Values

The S in Saddleback stands for our first value and it is this:

S **ECOND-CHANCE GRACE PLACE**

Ephesians 4:32 says:

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

EPHESIANS 4:32 (NIV/NLT)

SADDLEBACK

Saddleback is a place to get a fresh start. It's a place to start over. It's a place to be born again. God has shown us so much grace, so much mercy, we believe in cutting other people slack. To whom has been forgiven much we are much forgiving of others. Because God has shown us so much mercy, we show mercy to other people.

We've often joked about putting up a sign that says, "No perfect people need apply." Because we don't want any perfect people in this church. You don't belong here. This is the church for people who know they don't have it together, for people who are on the grow, for people who are honest. By the way, if you ever find a perfect church, please don't join it. Because the moment you join it, it won't be perfect anymore! There are no perfect churches just like there are no perfect people.

We have testimonies of people and our testimonies aren't, "Thank God I'm perfect now that I've been saved." If you've been around Saddleback you know that our stories are, "Here's what I'm struggling with, I'm still struggling with it, please help me." My favorite ministry in this church, of course, is Celebrate Recovery. We believe in giving everybody a second chance. Our support groups and our HIV/AIDS ministry and our grief recovery and all the different areas—separated men, separated women—things like that. This is the church for people who admit they don't have it all together. It's a second-chance grace place.

As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

COLOSSIANS 3:12 (NIV)

So warmly welcome each other into the church, just as Christ has warmly welcomed you; then God will be glorified.

ROMANS 15:7 (TLB)

The A in Saddleback stands for:

A LL-NATION CONGREGATION

All-nation congregation. All you have to do is look around at Saddleback and realize we're an all-nation congregation. We're multiethnic. We're multinational. We're interracial. We're multigenerational. We have every culture, every language, every age group, every economic status.

It wasn't always that way. When I first started Saddleback Church, I was 25 years old, white, young, urban professional. The church looked like me: young, white, urban professional.

But now our church speaks 67 languages. I love that. We have hundreds and hundreds of interracial couples. And we have people from every nation on earth. As you know through the PEACE Plan we have gone to every nation on earth. We're an all-nation congregation. We say, "We want the church to look like heaven." In heaven it's going to be every size, every shape, every economic status, every color, every language because God created them all.

The Bible says:

*"My house will be called a house of prayer
for all nations."*

MARK 11:17 (GW)

*All nations will remember the LORD. From every
part of the world they will turn to him; all races
will worship him.*

PSALM 22:27 (GNT)

How do we do this? Look at 1 Peter 2:17:

*Show respect for all people. Love your brothers
and sisters in God's family.*

1 PETER 2:17 (ERV)

You cannot be a racist and a follower of Jesus Christ. I say that as clear as I can say it. Because you can't walk in opposite directions at the same time. It's just impossible.

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SADDLEBACK CHURCH

So if you come and join Saddleback Church, you make a commitment to love everybody in this church. Everybody raise their hand and say, "I promise." You promised to love everybody in this church family because they are your brothers and sisters. They may be a brother from another mother, but they're a brother. We're all in the same family. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. We're an all-nation congregation.

D – The first D in Saddleback stands for:

D OABLE DISCIPLESHIP

The Bible says:

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only,
deceiving yourselves.*

JAMES 1:22 (ESV)

The Bible wasn't given to increase your knowledge; it was given to change your life. So in this church we always look at, "What are we going to do about it?"

If you are aware, you will notice that in almost every one of my sermons and in the message notes which I hand out, the reason I do that is because number one, you forget 95 percent of what you hear within 72 hours if you don't write it down. That's a depressing fact for a pastor. That means that on Sunday, what you hear me teach on Sunday you will forget almost all of it by Wednesday, unless you write it down. Which is why we pass out notes.

But if you look at the notes there is almost always a verb in every point. There are action steps. Why? Because the Bible says "*Be doers of the word not hearers only.*" We practice a doable faith.

A lot of churches they just practice a knowable faith. That is "I want to know more, know more, know more, get all facts and facts and facts." We get really big heads, little hands, little feet, little heart. What happens is you just feed the head, feed the head, and never act on it—then you get a distorted body with a big head and a tiny body. We've amputated the hands and legs from the body of Christ and all that's left is a big mouth. Today the church is known more for what it's against than what it's for.

I intend to change that. I think the church should be known for what it's for not what it's against. That make sense?

So we practice at Saddleback a doable faith. That's why we pass out outlines and in almost every one I give you a homework assignment—here's something to do. Almost every week I'm saying tear off the tab, tear off the flap, fill out a card. I'm always giving you an action step.

Because the Bible says knowledge without action makes you prideful. In fact the Bible says knowledge without action causes greater judgment in your life.

If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

JAMES 4:17 (NIV)

And I don't want my teaching to cause you to be judged more.

You only believe the parts of the Bible you do. You may say you believe it, but if you don't do it, you don't actually believe it. The Bible says to read the Word of God on a daily basis. Do you believe that? Yes. Do you do it? No. Then you don't believe it.

The Bible says share the Good News with other people. Do you believe that? Yes. Do you do it? No. Then you don't believe it.

The Bible says forgive your enemies. Do you believe that? Yes. Do you do it? No. Then you don't believe it.

You only believe the parts of the Bible you actually do.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

MATTHEW 7:21 (NIV)

“Teach them to do everything I have commanded you.”

MATTHEW 28:20 (GW)

So Saddleback is S—Second-chance grace place; A—an All-nation congregation; and D—the third value is Doable faith. We practice doing the Word of God.

The second D in Saddleback is for our fourth value, which is:

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K**D ELIBERATE PATHWAY TO GROWTH**

This means we have a strategy for helping you grow spiritually. A step-by-step, systematic, sequential strategy. We show you how to do it. It's a series of circles, a series of moving around the baseball diamond. We bring people in, we build them up to maturity, we teach them for ministry, we send them out for a mission. We bring them in, build them up, teach them how, send them out. Bring them in, build them up, teach them how, send them out.

*Let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ
and go on to maturity.*

HEBREWS 6:1 (BSB)

*Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the
safe path.*

PROVERBS 4:26 (NLT)

*As the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become
more and more like him.*

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18 (TLB)

We have a plan for helping you grow. And it is a systematic deliberate pathway to growth. It begins right here in Class 101. Then you go on to 201, 301, and 401. It's a deliberate pathway. Most churches don't have this. They haven't thought through "How do you take a person to grow through the stages of growth?"

L LOVE IN ACTION

The Bible says in 1 John 3:16-18:

This is how we know what love is: Christ gave his life for us. We too, then, ought to give our lives for others! If we are rich and see others in need, yet close our hearts against them, how can we claim that we love God? My children, our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action.

1 JOHN 3:16-18 (GNT)

Did you know the Bible says God expects you to lay down your life for other Christians? That's love in action.

Circle the word "action."

We do this through what we call the PEACE Plan. We talk about PEACE in Class 401, it's about meeting the world's greatest needs. P.E.A.C.E. We need to

Plant Churches to promote reconciliation, to

Equip Leaders, to

Assist the Poor, to

Care for the Sick, and to

Educate the next generation.

We have personal PEACE plan, local PEACE plan, global PEACE plan.

Since we've opened the PEACE center here on our Saddleback campus, we've fed over 100,000 people in Orange County free groceries. Can you imagine that? That's an amazing thing. We have free legal aid. And we have a clinic and we have people helping people with immigration and we have tutoring and English as a second language and financial recovery. In a lot of ways we're trying to show love in action. And we do this in the community for free. That's one of our values.

SADDLEBACK

E MPOWERED MEMBERS

That is we say every member is a minister. A lot of churches are like a football game. Twenty-two people on the field desperately in need of rest; 22,000 people in the stands desperately in need of exercise. What we have in a lot of churches are a few people doing all the ministry.

Do you know why Saddleback is one of the largest churches in the world? Because we believe every member is a minister. And we have well over 20,000 people involved in over 400 different ministries to the community here at Saddleback. It's a way to give back, it's a way to contribute. It's a way to make a difference.

All of you together are the one body of Christ, and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:27 (TLB)

The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you." In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:21-22 (NLT)

Everybody has a shape and everybody is shaped to serve God. It's our goal to help people find a ministry that best fits you. That's empower members.

B in Saddleback stands for:

B OLD FAITH

Bold faith. The history of Saddleback, which I'll tell you in a little bit, we have taken many, many risks over the years. We're not afraid to step out. We're not afraid to take risks. We're not afraid to believe God in faith. Kay calls it dangerous surrender.

The Bible says:

Glory be to God, who by his mighty power at work within us is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of—infininitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes.

EPHESIANS 3:20 (TLB)

Did you know that God says to you, "Think of the biggest dream of what I could do in your life—I can beat that; I can do bigger than whatever you dream I might do"? I don't know about you, but I'm a pretty big dreamer. I've had some pretty big dreams in my life. God says, "Rick, you think of the biggest dream you could think of, and I can top that. I can beat that." That's bold faith.

The Bible says in Matthew 9:29:

"According to your faith will it be done to you."

MATTHEW 9:29 (BSB)

I love this verse because God says, "You get to choose how much I bless your life. You get to choose how much I use you. You get to choose how much good happens in your life. You get to choose how many people you bless." "According to your faith it will be done unto you." Much faith, much blessing. Little faith, little blessing. No faith, no blessing. You cannot please God without faith.

So we emphasize taking risks in this church. We're always saying, "Let's go." I said, "Let's be the first church in 2,000 years to go to every nation in the world." We did.

Years ago we said, "Let's be the first church in Southern California to buy 120 acres for a church at Orange County prices." Right! I can't tell you how many firsts this church has done, how many actual world records we set because we believed.

It's not that we're better than any other church. We're not. We're not any better than any other church. I'm not smarter. I'm not more talented. I'm more handsome—but I'm not more smart! So what is it?

There are a lot of things in your life you don't have control over. You didn't choose who your parents were. You didn't choose when you were born. You didn't choose where you would be born. You didn't choose how many gifts you'd get. You didn't choose your natural talents. I didn't either. Those are sovereign factors that God chose for my life and yours. And God wants you to be you and not anybody else.

But there is one thing that you do have complete control over. And I have complete control over it and our church has had complete control over it and it is this. We choose how much we believe God. And that's our choice. The reason why God has made Saddleback a history-making world-class one of the largest churches in the world is because he looked down and found a group of very ordinary people. We're not better than anybody else. But he found a group of people who were willing to believe God for just a little bit more than other people were willing to believe him for. And that's our choice. It's our choice. Anybody can do that.

But we have chosen. We've said let's go to the final frontier. Let's reach the 3,000 tribes that don't have a Bible, a believer, or a body of Christ. These are choices we made, and God says, "The people who choose to believe me, I'll bless them."

"Everything is possible for one who believes."

MARK 9:23 (NIV)

"But that's not a big enough job for my servant—just to recover the tribes of Jacob, merely to round up the strays of Israel. I'm setting you up as a light for the nations so that my salvation becomes global!"

ISAIAH 49:6 (THE MESSAGE)

We have bold faith.

A AUTHENTIC FELLOWSHIP

We say the church isn't a place where you attend; it's a family you belong to. And we emphasize this in our small groups. That's where you get to know people. Saddleback has more small groups than any church in America. Nobody even comes close. We have over 7,000 small groups. In fact, we're the only church in America that has more people in Bible study than in worship on the weekend.

Last weekend there were maybe 28,000 people at Saddleback. We're always trying to hide our size. So instead of building one giant building, we have eight locations and about 22 different services.

Why do we do that? Why do I do four services every weekend? Because I don't want to have a big crowd. There are more members of Saddleback than there are citizens of Lake Forest, the city we're in. There are 120,000 names on the role of Saddleback; there are 90,000 people who live in the city. This church is bigger than the city. But we're trying to hide it. That's why we don't build a giant stadium. We have gone to a stadium for church a few times. We went to Angel stadium for our 30th anniversary and filled it twice. Sixty thousand seats! But we hide that. We have more people meeting in the 7,000 small groups that meet during the week than we do on the weekends. We do that intentionally.

You don't build relationships in a crowd. You build relationships in a small group. We're all about relationships. We're not about size. We're about authentic relationships.

The Bible says this:

Let us consider how to spur one another on to love and good deeds. Let us not neglect meeting together . . . but let us encourage one another, and all the more.

HEBREWS 10:24-25 (BSB)

You're not going to really feel a part of Saddleback Church until you're in a small group. Because that is the cell of the body of Christ. Small groups. When you get in a small group, then you're going to feel connected.

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Because we're a family we learn from each other—passing things on from one person to the next, from one generation to the next.

What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

2 TIMOTHY 2:2 (ESV)

“Just ask the previous generation. Pay attention to the experience of our ancestors. For we were born but yesterday and know nothing. Our days on earth are as fleeting as a shadow. But those who came before us will teach you. They will teach you the wisdom of old.”

JOB 8:8–10 (NLT)

As the church has grown, I memorized every name of the members of this church up to the first 3,000 people. Then my brain fried. I can't remember the names of my kids now anymore. But I want to know your name. So please. If you see me at Chili's or Coco's or Claim Jumper's or In-N-Out or any of my “offices,” if you see me there or at Trader Joe's or my favorite Costco. If you see me there, come up and say, “Hey Rick! I'm a member. I'm in the family. I'm a part of Saddleback.” And tell me your name. It's not going to embarrass me. In fact, I like it. I like getting to talk to you like that. So just know that I love you. I'm praying for all of our church family all the time. We believe in authentic relationships.

c REATIVE OUTREACH

Creative outreach. You were created to create. You were made in God's image, and you're most like your creator when you're creative.

I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ. When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law. When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ. When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:19-23 (NLT)

The Bible says you can't put new wine in old wineskins.

"And no one puts new wine into old wineskins."

MARK 2:22 (NLT)

We're always trying to think of new ways to share the Good News.

The Bible says to use every available means to reach people for Jesus—and we've done that. We've used holidays like Easter and Christmas, but also Labor Day and Halloween, to let people know the Good News of Christ's love. When faxes were the thing we had something called the Fax of Life; when the internet came along Saddleback was the first church on the internet—and now we use apps on our phones to reach people. We've cancelled church for a weekend just to take that time to do something nice for our neighbors.

Creative outreach.

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K ID AND FAMILY FOCUSED

Kid- and family-focused. We're all about helping families. We start with the young ones and we've grown them. We put a lot of emphasis on building families and building children.

By the way, whether you ever get married or not, if you're a single adult or if you are an elderly adult. Maybe you're widowed and your kids have moved out. Let me just say this: No matter who you are or what age you are, you need kids in your life. Kids teach us to be unselfish.

So today figure out some way to have kids in your life. Maybe you could volunteer at one of the services to work in one of the children's programs. We have them during the week. You need kids in your life. They will teach you things that God wants to teach you.

The Bible says:

"Be careful. Don't think these little children are worth nothing. I tell you that they have angels in heaven who are always with my Father in heaven."

MATTHEW 18:10 (NCV)

"Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

MATTHEW 18:3 (NIV)

Figure out a way to be a big brother or a big sister or a mentor or adoption or work in the children's program here at Saddleback.

That was our value statement. On the next page is our faith statement. We make three statements about this. I want you to write these down.

TEACHING TIP

This section on our faith statement is 10 minutes.

OUR FAITH STATEMENT

Our Beliefs

In essential beliefs—we have **UNITY** .

Let me explain this. In essential beliefs we have unity. That means here at Saddleback, on the things that really matter in the Bible, we are all in agreement. God's love for us all, our need for Jesus, the church as Christ's body. The Bible says,

There is one body and one Spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all.

EPHESIANS 4:4-6 (NIV)

So in the essentials we have unity.

In nonessential beliefs—we allow **LIBERTY** .

In the nonessential beliefs we allow liberty. We allow liberty. There are some things that Christians disagree over. Have you noticed this? If it's not something that relates to your salvation, we allow that disagreement. We don't insist everybody believe the same.

Here's what the Bible says, Romans 14:

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters . . . Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls . . . So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God . . . So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God.

ROMANS 14:1, 4, 12, 22 (NIV84)

The Bible says in nonessential beliefs we have liberty.

For instance, alcohol. We have people at Saddleback Church who drink alcohol, and we have people who don't drink alcohol. The Bible doesn't make a case for total abstinence. The Bible does say you should never get drunk. That's very, very clear. "Be not drunk with wine but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

The Bible says that leaders—in the book of Proverbs—should never drink hard liquor. That's very clear. But it doesn't say you should never have any alcohol. It just doesn't say that. We know that Jesus drank wine because in those days all the water was polluted. They didn't have safe water.

By the way, why don't we serve wine in our Communion? I'll tell you why. Because one of the largest ministries in our church is Celebrate Recovery. We've got over 17,000 people go through Celebrate Recovery. Many of those, not the majority of them, but many of them are struggling with an addiction like dependency like alcohol. Let's say somebody has come to Saddleback, gotten their life straightened out, and has been clean and sober for five or six years. Then they come to Communion and drink a little bit of alcohol and that taste causes them to stumble. That would be a sin, wouldn't it?

In all our beliefs—we show **CHARITY** .

What matters most is that we love each other in the family of God.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 13:2-3:

*If I . . . hold in my mind not only all human knowledge
but the very secrets of God, and if I also have that
absolute faith which can move mountains, but have
no love, I amount to nothing at all.*

1 CORINTHIANS 13:2-3 (PHILLIPS)

So based on that let me go through real quickly what we call our statement of faith. These are the essentials that we all agree on here at Saddleback Church.

THE ESSENTIALS WE BELIEVE

About God

God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He has eternally existed in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and are one God.

Genesis 1:1, 26, 27; 3:22; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19;
1 Peter 1:2; 2 Corinthians 13:14

How can God be three and yet one? The person who denies the Trinity will lose his soul. The person who tries to understand the Trinity will lose his mind. It's just something that is bigger than we can fully understand. I do know this I'm a father and I'm a son and I'm husband. But I'm just one person. Does that make sense? God is Father, God is Son, and God is Holy Spirit—three in one.

By the way, not believing in the Trinity is a characteristic of all cults. If you want to know if something is true Christian or they're a cult, all cults do not believe in the Trinity. They deny God as Father, God as Son, and God as Holy Spirit, three in one. And they don't believe those things.

Orthodox Christians—whether you're a Protestant or you're Catholic or you're Charismatic or you're Evangelical Baptist, Methodist or Lutheran, Presbyterian or Calvary Chapel or Vineyard or independent—every true Christian believes in the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. That's the key.

About Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is co-equal with the Father and Holy Spirit. Jesus lived a sinless human life and offered himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate his power over sin and death. He ascended to heaven's glory and will return again someday to earth to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Matthew 1:22, 23; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-5; 14:10-30;
Hebrews 4:14, 15; 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4; Romans 1:3, 4;
Acts 1:9-11; 1 Timothy 6:14, 15; Titus 2:13

About the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is co-equal with the Father and the Son of God. He is present in the world to make men aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He also lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. He gives every believer a spiritual gift when they are saved. As Christians, we seek to live under his control daily.

2 Corinthians 3:17; John 16:7-13; 14:16, 17; Acts 1:8;
1 Corinthians 2:12; 3:16; Ephesians 1:13;
Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:18

About the Bible

The Bible is God's Word to us. Human authors, under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit, wrote it. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because God inspired it, it is the truth without any mixture of error.

2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Timothy 1:13;
Psalm 119:105, 160; 12:6; Proverbs 30:5

The truth of the Bible will set you free.

About Human Beings

People are made in the spiritual image of God, to be like him in character. People are the supreme object of God's creation. Although every person has tremendous potential for good, all of us are marred by an attitude of disobedience toward God called "sin." This attitude separates people from God and causes many problems in life.

Genesis 1:27; Psalm 8:3–6; Isaiah 53:6;
Romans 3:23; Isaiah 59:1, 2

About Salvation

Salvation is God's free gift to us but we must accept it. We can never make up for our sin by self-improvement or good works. Only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness can anyone be saved from sin's penalty. When we turn from our self-ruled life and turn to Jesus in faith, we are saved. Eternal life begins the moment one receives Jesus Christ into his life by faith.

Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8, 9; John 14:6; 1:12;
Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26; Romans 5:1

About Eternal Security

In other words, can you lose your salvation? We believe this:

Because God gives us eternal life through Jesus Christ, the true believer is secure in that salvation for eternity. If you have been genuinely saved, you cannot "lose" it. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian. It is the grace and keeping power of God that gives us this security.

John 10:29; 2 Timothy 1:12;
Hebrews 7:25; 10:10, 14; 1 Peter 1:3–5

If I was saved by what I did, then obviously the moment I stopped doing it I'd lose my salvation. But I'm not saved by what I did. I'm saved by what Jesus did on the cross. What Jesus did on the cross can't be undone. If you were saved and then you could lose your salvation, Jesus would have to come back and die for you again. To say that you could lose what God has given you is to say you don't trust God. Jesus said it like this: "They are in my hand and no man can pluck them out." Once you put your hand in God's hand, he's not letting go.

I once took my kids on a vacation to the Grand Canyon. They were little; we walked up to the edge. And Joshua, I was holding his hand, he was a little boy at the time, he kept struggling to let go, let go because he wanted to run off on his own. He wanted to let go of my hand, but I wasn't about to let go of his. Because I'm his father and I love him.

There are times in your life when you're going to want to let go of God's hand and say, "God, I don't want to be a Christian right now. It's inconvenient. It's not popular. God, I'd like to just let go." God says, "You may want to let go of my hand, but I'm not letting go of yours."

You were born into the family of God. To get out of the family of God you'd have to be unborn. That's an impossibility. The Bible says that when you are saved, your name is written in the book of life. Can you imagine an angel up there every time you sinned erasing your name? Out . . . in. Out . . . back in!

What happens when a Christian sins? You don't lose your salvation; you lose your joy. And you lose rewards in heaven, but you don't lose your salvation. You lose your joy.

Let's say Joshua decided to become an international terrorist and drug dealer. Our relationship is still there; our fellowship is broken.

When you sin your fellowship with God is broken. But your relationship is still there. I don't care what Josh does; he'll always be my son. He cannot not be my son. Once he's in my family, I may not like what he does, I may be grieved by what he does, he may have to go to prison for what he does, but he's still my son.

The Bible says that you are in the hand of God. It says no man can pluck them out. You say, "You could jump out." How big is God's hand? You think you could get over to the edge of God's hand and jump out? You can't. Once you're in, you're in. But you can lose rewards in heaven, and you certainly lose the joy here on earth.

How about eternity?

About Eternity

People were created to exist forever. We will either exist eternally separated from God by sin, or eternally with God through forgiveness and salvation. To be eternally separated from God is hell. To be eternally in union with him is eternal life. Heaven and hell are real places of eternal existence.

John 3:16; John 14:17; Romans 6:23;
Romans 8:17–18; Revelation 20:15;
1 Corinthians 2:7–9

Now take a look with me at this video, taking us through some of the story of Saddleback, and how that story has built our faith.

TEACHING TIP

The content for this video is in the Appendix of this document. For those who will be teaching the history of your own church, here are some things you'll see in this example of Rick telling the story that will help you.

- Most importantly—stories are more important than statistics. You could give people pie charts and bar charts of the growth of your church and ministries, but it will not motivate most people. We get lost in the data. Statistics are best for evaluation, stories are best for motivation. So the history of your church should be built around the stories of your turning points of faith.
- In those stories you'll see that Rick brings out two major things. First, the faith that it took for the church to be where it is today. So you tell stories about faith. Second, the values that the church is built on. The value of sacrifice is seen often in this history. Also the value of reaching our community. Values are more caught than taught, and they are often caught by the stories that we tell.

- Detail is also important in the stories that you tell. Yes, you can drown in too much detail. But too little detail leaves the story feeling like a line drawing instead of a clear, full-color picture. Possibly the most important detail is the names of some of those who made sacrifices and steps of faith.
- The video that we use is Rick telling the stories you see in the appendix, but at the different places where these events happened. It's an "on the road" video—with Rick in the car telling where we are going next, and then him standing, for instance, at Laguna Hills High School to talk about the launch of the church.



SESSION THREE

Our Story

TEACHING TIP

This section on our history is 40 minutes.



1980 First Public Service

THE SADDLEBACK VISION

From Pastor Rick's Sermon

March 30, 1980

It is the dream of a place where the hurting, the hopeless, the discouraged, the depressed, the frustrated and confused can find love, acceptance, guidance and encouragement.

It is the dream of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with the hundreds of thousands of residents in south Orange County.

It is the dream of 20,000 members growing together in spiritual maturity through Bible studies, seminars, retreats and fellowship—loving, laughing and learning together, understanding God's wonderful plan and living life to its greatest potential.

It is the dream of sending out hundreds of career missionaries and church workers all around the world and sending out our members by the thousands on short-term mission projects to every continent. It is the dream of starting at least one new daughter church a year.

It is the dream of 50 acres of land, on which will be built a regional church of southern Orange County—with beautiful yet efficient facilities . . . including a worship center seating thousands, a counseling and prayer center, classrooms for Bible study and training lay ministers, and family recreational facilities. All of this will be designed to minister to the total person—spiritually, emotionally, physically, and socially—and set in a peaceful, inspiring garden setting with bright flowers, beautiful trees, and pools of still water, sparkling fountains and flowing streams.

I stand before you today and state in confident assurance that these dreams will be realized. Why?

BECAUSE THEY ARE INSPIRED BY GOD!



THE PURPOSE DRIVEN COVENANT

April 17, 2005

Today I am stepping across the line. I'm tired of waffling, and I'm finished with wavering. I've made my choice; the verdict is in and my decision is irrevocable. I'm going God's way. There is no turning back.

I will live the rest of my life serving God's purposes with God's people on God's planet for God's glory. I will use my life to celebrate his presence, cultivate his character, participate in his family, demonstrate his love and communicate his Word.

Since my past has been forgiven, and I have a purpose for living and a home awaiting in heaven, I refuse to waste any more time or energy on shallow living, petty thinking, trivial talking, thoughtless doing, useless regretting, hurtful resenting, or faithless worrying. Instead I will magnify God, grow to maturity, serve in ministry, and fulfill my mission in the membership of his family.

Because this life is preparation for the next, I will value worship over wealth, "we" over "me," character over comfort, service over status and people over possessions, position and pleasure. I know what matters most and I will give it all I've got. I will do the best I can with what I have for Jesus Christ today.

I won't be captivated by culture, manipulated by critics, motivated by praise, frustrated by problems, debilitated by temptation, or intimidated by the devil. I'll keep running my race with my eyes on the goal, not the sidelines or those running by me. When times get tough and I get tired, I won't back up, back off, back down, back out, or backslide. I'll just keep moving forward by God's grace. I'm spirit-led, purpose driven, and mission-focused, so I can not be bought, I will not be compromised, and I shall not quit until I finish the race.

I'm a trophy of God's amazing grace so I will be gracious to everyone, grateful for every day and generous with everything that God entrusts to me.

To my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I say: However, whenever, wherever, and whatever you ask me to do, my answer is yes! Wherever you lead and whatever the cost, I'm ready. Anytime. Anywhere. Any way. Whatever it takes Lord; whatever it takes! I want to be used by you in such a way that on that final day I'll hear you say, "Well done, thou good and faithful one. Come on in and let the eternal party begin!"

OUR HISTORY

(1980–1985) Saddleback Beginning

LOCATION: Laguna Hills High School (theater and gym)

DRAW: Laguna Hills and Mission Viejo

Major Developments

- We began and developed weekend services.
- We defined our purposes, values, and vision.
- We adopted the S.A.D.D.L.E.B.A.C.K. strategy.
- We developed the communication/response card.
- We developed the membership class and banquets.
- We began teaching with message outlines.
- We developed the idea of “campaigns.”
- We began training other pastors.

Blessings

- Average attendance grew from 0 to 719.
- We baptized 380 new believers.

Risks in Faith

- Saddleback started with nothing.
- The first service was financed on a credit card.
- We sponsored the start of 5 other churches (1 per year).

Tests

- Will we become a large church? (Some members opposed.)
- Growing a congregation with few resources presented challenges.
- Finding spaces to meet was difficult.
- Pastor Rick experienced his “year of discouragement” (1981).

Sacrifices

- We hand addressed, stamped, and paid for 15,000 letters to advertise the first service.
- We set up and took down the entire church every week.
- We gave away our building fund to help world missions.

Miracles

- God brought the right talent at the right time.
- There were many miracles of financial provisions.
- God displayed healing miracles—Jeff Taylor and Judy Johnson.

Lessons and Values that Shaped Saddleback

- Trust God: Where God guides, God provides.
- Never stop learning! All leaders are learners.
- Acceptance: Jesus came to save us not condemn us.
- Don't expect unbelievers to act like believers until they are.
- Every member is a minister. Every member has a responsibility.



(1986–1992) Saddleback Everywhere

LOCATION: Trabuco Hills High School

DRAW: All Saddleback Valley cities

Major Developments

- We launched our music ministry.
- We began midweek Bible study.
- We created Saturday services (MVHS, Lake Hills, El Toro High School, outdoors).
- We developed the CLASS system (101–401).
- We began using testimonies as a part of the sermon.
- We reached out with “The Fax of Life” weekly devotional.
- We became the first church on the Internet (1992).

Blessings

- Average attendance grew from 1,017 to 3,954.
- The sum total of those baptized is 2,479 from 1980 to 1992.

Risks in Faith

- We moved 6 miles from LHHS to THHS to keep growing.
- We attempted to buy over 100 acres in South Orange County.

Tests

- We waited 13 years for a permanent home for our church.
- We experienced 7 years of delays and disappointments in acquiring land.
- Providing for people’s needs during exponential growth.
- Putting up with mud, rain, and inconveniences during a year of THHS construction; more complex setup.

Sacrifices

- Volunteers leading 2, then 3, then 4 services in 2 locations.
- People parking a half mile away in order to attend.
- During our “Possess Our Land” campaign, 467 families sacrificially gave an average of \$6,700 in addition to their regular tithe in order to purchase land.

Miracles

- A last minute gift of \$250,000 from a visitor came in the day we had to close escrow (which made the deal possible).
- We traded our canyon property we purchased for \$3.5 million for better property worth \$9.5 million.

Lessons and Values that Shaped Saddleback

- Keep it simple, practical, portable, reproducible, and flexible!
- We cannot out-give God! God is faithful.
- It takes unselfish people to grow a church.
- Never give up! Keep believing what you can’t see.
- Love leaves no choice. As long as one person doesn’t know Jesus we must keep reaching out.



(1993–1995) Saddleback in a Tent

LOCATION: The Tent

DRAW: All of Orange County and some outside

Major Developments

- We launched Celebrate Recovery®.
- We launched our lay counseling ministry.
- We began expanding small groups.
- We developed the “point and play” format.
- *The Purpose Driven Church* was published.
- We expanded international pastor training.
- The toll road and Alicia extension opened.

Blessings

- Average attendance grew from 5,446 to 9,326 in 3 years.
- The sum total of those baptized reached 4,824 from 1980 to 1995.

Risks in Faith

- We spent millions on infrastructure—roads, water, electrical, grading—without any building yet.
- We started 17 Spanish-speaking churches in 1 year.

Tests

- We experienced bad weather and Marine jet noise during worship in the tent.
- 1993 Financial Crisis: Attendance jumped by 2,000 but the new attenders were not giving yet. The cost of caring for all these new people left a \$100,000 a month deficit for most of the year.

Sacrifices

- Our pastors volunteered to take no salary during the crisis.
- During our “Time to Build” campaign, members sacrificially gave an average of \$14,000 per family in addition to their regular tithe in order to build our Worship Center.

Miracles

- A surprise end of year gift of \$1,000,000 paid off the deficit.
- There were hundreds of miracles recorded during “Time to Build” when half of our church visited the other half in home visits.

Lessons and Values that Shaped Saddleback

- Use it up, wear it out, make do, or do without.
- We’re tough. We can handle more than other churches.
- Pioneers don’t complain. We can put up with anything.



(1996–2005) Saddleback 4.0 in Lake Forest

LOCATION: Worship Center

DRAW: All across Southern California

Major Developments

- We opened the Ministry Center.
- We opened the bridge (second entrance).
- We opened the Children's Center.
- We launched on-campus venues.
- We created 2 Summer's-End fairs for the community.
- We created 6 campaigns: "Millennial Members," "40 Days of Faith," "40 Days of Love," "40 Days of Purpose," "40 Days of Community," and PEACE.
- *The Purpose Driven® Life* was published.
- We celebrated our 25th Anniversary at Angel Stadium.
- We added a fifth and sixth service.

Blessings

- Average attendance nearly doubled from 11,192 to 20,806.
- We baptized 14,831 new believers from 1996 to 2005.

Risks in Faith

- We launched the prototype of the Global PEACE initiative.
- We expanded Purpose Driven Ministries around the world.

Tests

- Keeping up with Saddleback's explosive growth.
- We battled with the IRS on behalf of all churches—we won decisively.
- We transitioned from a small staff to a larger one.

Sacrifices

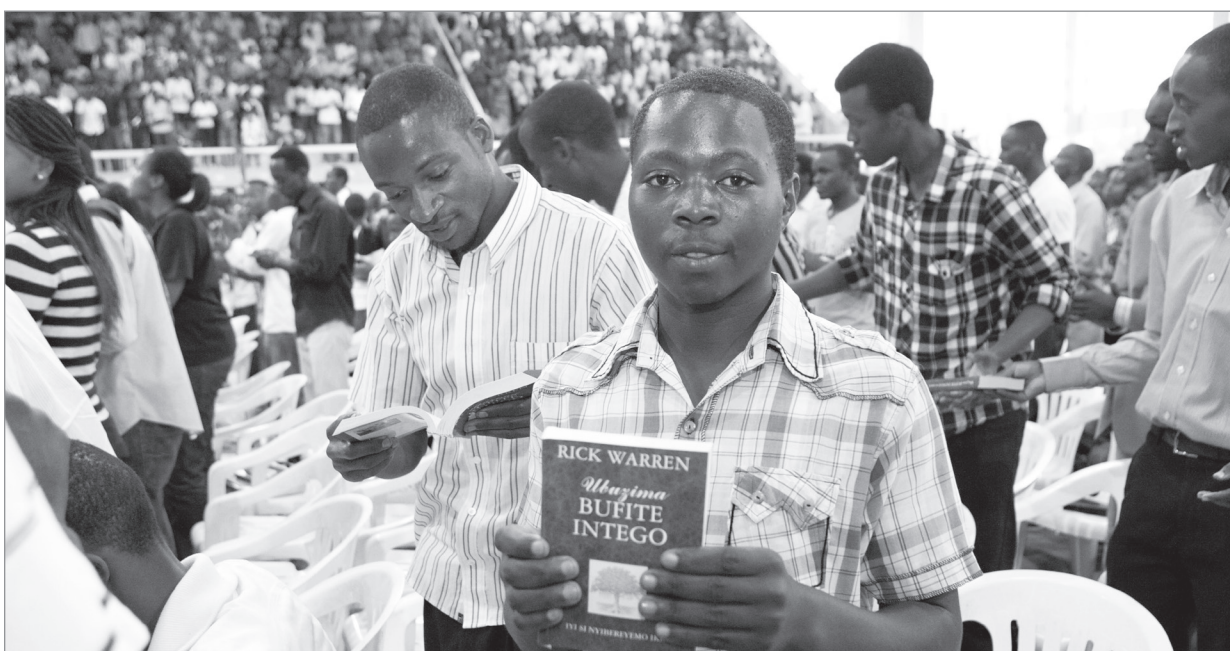
- During our “Building for Life” campaign, members and attenders sacrificially gave over \$20,000,000 in addition to regular tithes to build Phase 3 of our campus.
- During our “For the Children” campaign members and attenders sacrificially gave \$13.7 million in addition to their regular tithes to build Phase 4 of our campus.

Miracles

- Over 3,000 of our small groups participated in the Miracle of Feeding 42,000 Homeless in Orange County—3 meals a day for 40 days!
- *The Purpose Driven® Life* / 40 Days of Purpose became a global phenomena.
- We received the gift of Williams Canyon property.

Lessons and Values that Shaped Saddleback

- It’s not about you! It’s all about God.
- This life is preparation for the next. Life is a test and a trust.
- We are blessed to be a blessing.
- We must care about the whole world.



(2006–2010) Saddleback Multi-Sites

LOCATIONS: Multi-campus/Small Groups

DRAW: Everywhere!

Major Developments

- We launched 7 regional Saddleback campuses: Anaheim, San Clemente, Irvine, Rancho Capistrano, Orange, Huntington Beach, Corona.
- We restructured our staff to combine and incorporate Purpose Driven training into The PEACE Plan and coalition.
- We expanded our 4,800 small groups into 93 Southern California cities!
- We celebrated our 30th anniversary with 50,000 for Easter at Anaheim Stadium.

Risks in Faith

- Moving from a church in one location to a church in many locations.
- Giving to meet the needs of the hurting through our PEACE centers.



Miracles

- Saddleback members and attenders gave \$48 million over their regular tithes in our “Extending the Vision” campaign, part of which went to build our student center, the Refinery.

Tests

- The Great Recession of 2008 tried our growing church.
- Would we become satisfied and complacent?

Blessings

- Saddleback has more talented and mature volunteers using their SHAPE in ministry and mission than ever before, and our influence for God and for good—in our county, country, and the world—has never been greater. To God be the glory!



(2011-Now) Saddleback 6.0 Internationally

LOCATIONS: International Campuses/Small Groups

DRAW: Everywhere!

Major Developments

- We launched 14 regional Saddleback campuses: Anaheim, Aliso Viejo, Corona, Español, Irvine North & South, Laguna Woods, Los Angeles, Newport Mesa, Rancho Capistrano, San Clemente, San Diego, South Bay and Yorba Linda.
- We launched 4 international campuses: Berlin, Germany; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Hong Kong, China & Santa Rosa, Philippines.
- We opened the local PEACE center in December of 2011.
- We launched All-Africa Initiative to take Rwanda model to every country in Africa.

Miracles

- Our PEACE Teams went to every nation – 192 countries!
- We can see the end of “Finishing the Task” to reach all the unreached people groups in the world.
- 50,000th person baptized at Saddleback!

Tests

- Will Saddleback continue to serve Jesus, even through grief and loss?
- Will Saddleback 6.0 accept the challenge of “Decade of Destiny”?

Lessons and Values that Shaped Saddleback

- Second-chance grace place.
- We are an all-nation congregation.



SESSION FOUR

Our Saddleback Family

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

TEACHING TIP

This section should take about seven minutes.

“THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN BEING
A MEMBER AND
AN ATTENDER MEANS
BEING A PARTICIPATOR,
NOT JUST A SPECTATOR,
A BELONGER, NOT
JUST A BYSTANDER,
A CONTRIBUTOR, NOT
JUST A CONSUMER.”

*Let the peace of heart that comes from Christ be
always present in your hearts and lives, for this is
your responsibility and privilege as members of his
body. And always be thankful.*

COLOSSIANS 3:15 (TLB)

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

1. The church is a **FAMILY** .

Because the church is a family, that should effect how we're organized, too. Is your family organized differently than the business you work at? Sure it is—1 Peter 3:8:

You should be like one big happy family, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds.

1 PETER 3:8 (TLB)

We fulfill that one good. We are one big happy family with the emphasis on big and happy.

Galatians 6:10, Hebrews 2:10–12, 1 Peter 4:17

So we operate on the basis of **RELATIONSHIPS not **RULES** .**

When Kay and I got married over 40 years ago, we had all these rules in our marriage like how you fold the towels, you push the toothpaste from the bottom up and not from the middle. We had all these rules. Now that we've been married many years, we don't have any rules anymore. The only rule we have is always tell the truth. Why? Because the greater the relationship, the fewer rules you need. The stronger the relationship, you just trust people.

So in this church we don't have a policy manual. Our policy manual is two pages long. On page one of Saddleback's policy manual it says, "Every staff member and lay minister in this church will use his or her best judgment in every situation." That's rule number one. You turn the page and it says, Rule number two: There are no other rules. That's our policy manual. We trust people in this church.

Do people ever make mistakes? Sure they do. But I don't want to make them all myself. I want you to make some of them. So we just kind of spread the blame around. We act like a family. And in a family you don't have a rulebook for your family. You don't have a policy manual for your family. You operate on the basis of relationships.

1 Timothy 5:1-2 says:

Don't reprimand a senior member of your church, appeal to him as a father. Treat the young men as brothers, and the older women as mothers. Treat the younger women as sisters, and no more.

1 TIMOTHY 5:1-2 (PHILLIPS)

If churches would just follow that verse, they'd have so few problems. The Bible says we're to treat each other like a family. We're to treat those who have been Christians longer than us as spiritual fathers and mothers. And treat those who are about the same age as us as spiritual brothers and sisters. We are a family.

I've had a number of spiritual fathers in this church over the years. Nobody elected them. They're not a board. They're not some heavy-duty council. The Bible says you're to treat those who are more mature spiritually than you as spiritual fathers. I went to these men and said, "The Bible said I'm to treat you like a spiritual father. You're not elected, but I know you love this church and I know you love the Lord and I know you love me. I want you to know this: If you ever see me, Rick Warren, leading the church in the wrong direction, I want you to come to me and tell me. Say, 'Rick, we think you're off base. We think you're making a major mistake.' I want you to know that I will listen to you, not because somebody elected you but because we are to value those who have been Christians longer than us and are more mature than us." So I have these spiritual fathers.

I have lots of spiritual brothers in this church. I have hundreds of them. I get advice from hundreds of men in this church. I'm always listening and I value their judgment as spiritual brothers in the Lord.

I have hundreds of spiritual sisters in this church that I get advice from. Men need to see from a woman's perspective. I get advice from hundreds of spiritual sisters who come to me, write me a note, make a phone call.

The only problem is, I don't have any spiritual mothers in this church. That's because, I haven't met any women yet who admit being "older" women! So they're all still spiritual sisters. I don't have any spiritual mothers yet.

The Bible says we're to value those who have been Christians longer than us and who are spiritually mature.

How do you know who the spiritually mature are in a church? Simple. Look at their character. Look at their walk with the Lord.

Notice the character that's required of the pastor.

[A pastor] must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)

1 TIMOTHY 3:4-5 (NIV)

It's interesting that it says the pastor is to manage the church like a father and husband is to manage the family. An unmanaged family is an unloved family. And an unmanaged church is an unloved church. It says a pastor must manage the church like fathers manage the home.

One of the qualifications for being a pastor is he has to have a strong family life. Why is that? Not once in Scripture does it say that the pastor has to have a degree in business, although I took a bunch of business classes in college and minored in business. Not once does it say that a pastor has to know Greek and Hebrew, although I've had five years of Greek and four years of Hebrew. Not once does it say that a pastor has to have an earned doctor's degree, although I have an earned doctor's degree. Not once does it say you have to be a success in business to be a pastor.

But it does say you have to have a strong family life. And you must have the skills to manage a family well because the church is a family, not a business. The same skills that I am to use with my family as husband and father, I am to use as the senior pastor of this church.

How do I manage my family? As a dictator? Blow a whistle and everybody comes running in my home? Command them and tell them to do this?

The Bible says that the husband is to be the spiritual leader of his home by laying down his life for his wife and children. It says just as Christ laid down his life for the church, that I am to give my life for my wife and my children. I am to put their needs ahead of my own, that I lead by serving them and by setting an example. That's what it means to be a leader. I'm to serve them and set an example, and that's how I lead my family.

How do I lead this church? By serving them, putting your needs ahead of my own, sacrificing, and setting an example.

I have given more than 30 years of my life already for this church. Lord willing, I intend to give the rest of my life to serve this church. I do that willingly. I don't see it as a big sacrifice. When I think of what Jesus has done for me, he deserves everything I've got. When you think about what Jesus has done for you, he deserves everything you've got.

The church is a family.

2. The church is a **BODY** .

1 Corinthians 12:27, Ephesians 5:23,
Ephesians 1:22–23, Colossians 1:18, 2:19

There are many verses in Scripture that say the church is the body of Christ.

We are a body, not a business! We are an organism, not an organization!

Therefore, we function on the basis of **SPIRITUAL GIFTS**
not **ELECTED OFFICES .**

In other words, whatever you're good at, you ought to do in this church. And nobody's going to elect you to a position. It's just that whatever you're good at, you ought to do. If you're good at singing, you ought to be in the music ministry. If you're good with children, you ought to be in the children's ministry. If you're good at organizing, you ought to organize things in the church. If you're good at administration, you ought to be an administrator. If you're good with financial figures, you ought to be one of the accountants. If you're good at working with young people, you ought to work with young people. If you're good at teaching, you ought to be a teacher in this church. We don't elect anybody in this church. We are a body.

Did you elect your hand? No. Your hand is a hand because it can do hand things. It can lift up and it can put down. Your throat gets to be a throat because it can swallow. Did you elect your eye? Your eye gets to be the eye in the body of the Christ, because it's gifted at seeing. Did you vote on your nose? Your nose gets to be the nose because it smells. Granted! Sometimes your feet smell! On the other hand, sometimes your nose runs! You're built upside down!

The point is, whatever you're gifted at, that's your part in the body of Christ.

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

ROMANS 12:4-6 (NIV)

Underline “each member belongs to all the others.” When you join this church, all of a sudden, you belong to everybody else. If you don’t want to belong to everybody else, don’t join our church because this is what it means to be a member. It’s a commitment to other people. We each have different gifts according to the grace given to us. Whatever you’re good at, that’s what you ought to do in the body of Christ. We have a class that will help you discover what you’re good at: Class 301—Discovering My Ministry. We sit down with you, figure out not only what you’re good at in the body of Christ, but what you’re good at in life. Because of that class, we’ve had people change jobs and say, “I’ve been in the wrong job!” It will really help you a lot.

In an organization, “maintenance” becomes the focus. But in an organism, “ministry” is the focus.

What do I mean by that?

If you were to come to me and say, “I’ve got three hours a week to give my church. How can I be involved in ministry?” The last thing I want to do is turn you into some bureaucrat and put you on some flower committee. What’s the difference between committees and ministries? We don’t have any committees in our church, but we have hundreds of ministries. A committee discusses; a ministry acts. A committee discusses what they want other people to do. A ministry just does it.

There are too many meetings in most churches. The reason why a lot of people don’t have any ministry is because they’re always going to meetings.

Mary had a little lamb
It would have been a sheep
But it joined the local church
And died from lack of sleep.

Will Rogers once said the government taxes people to build roads and Baptists wear them out going to meetings.

At Saddleback we have a simple structure so we can maximize .

MINISTRY and minimize **MAINTENANCE** .

The more organization you have, the more you have to take care of it. I heard about a grease factory where they made grease. But then they built more machinery and started using some of the grease on their own machinery. The more successful they got, the more machinery they built. Pretty soon they were using all their grease on their own machinery and they closed the sales department.

That's what a lot of churches do. They spend all their time and energy internally taking care of their stuff and the whole world is dying around them.

So we minimize meetings to maximize ministry.

People often ask, "Do you have an organizational chart for Saddleback Church?" No, we don't. But our entire organization can be summed up in two sentences built on Ephesians 4:11-12.

[God] gave . . . some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

EPHESIANS 4:11-12 (NIV84)

As you look at that verse, who is to do the ministry of the church? The pastors and teachers, or the people? The people are to do the ministry. According to that, what are pastors and teachers supposed to do? Prepare God's people for ministry.

It's not my job to be a minister. It's my job to equip you for your ministry. I am a pastor, not a minister. I'm a minister simply because I'm a Christian. But every Christian is a minister. The Bible teaches this very clearly. One day you're going to stand before God, and he's going to ask you two questions. First he's going to say, "What did you do with my Son, Jesus Christ?" And I hope you already know the answer to that one. "I've given my life to him. I've made him my Lord and Master. I've committed my life to Christ. I've accepted him for salvation."

Then he's going to say, number two, "What did you do with what I gave you?" You have some talents. You have some abilities. You have some spiritual gifts. You have some natural inclinations, some interests. Where do you think you got those interests? God put them in your life. He didn't give you that talent and ability just to use on yourself. He meant for you to use it to help other people to make the world a better place. When you use your talent, your ability, your interest to help other people, that's called ministry. Our job as pastors and teachers is to help equip you for your ministry.

TEACHING TIP

This section should take about eight minutes. Notice that Rick tells some stories in this section that strongly promote the value of the members doing the ministry, not the pastors. You may want to tell those stories in your church history section, in which case this section could be shorter.

WHAT IS OUR STRUCTURE?

This is Saddleback's organization in two sentences.

- The people are the **MINISTERS**.
- The pastors are the **ADMINISTERS**.

Currently there are over 500 different ministries in our church founded and operated by members.

It's not my job to do the ministry. It's my job to train you for your ministry. When anybody asks me, "How many ministers do you have at Saddleback?" I say about (# of members at your campus). We have (# at your campus) members and every member is a minister.

Currently there are 500 different ministries in our church begun and operated by members. How does a ministry get started? It gets started when somebody comes up with an idea. One day a lady came to me and she said, "We need a prayer ministry." I said, "Great, You're it! We'll announce it in the bulletin, and if people show up, that's how we'll start it." Don't we vote on it? Doesn't it have to go through some red tape and approved by some board or committee? No, we don't do that around here. We just start the ministry.

Another time a lady came to me and said, "We need to set up a ministry of small groups for terminally ill cancer patients." I said, "Terrific idea! You're it! It's your idea. You've got the burden and heart for it. We'll put an announcement in the bulletin and when the people show up, if there is somebody there you think could lead it better than you, fine. Let them lead it. And you can just help."

A guy came one time and said, “I can’t sing and I can’t teach, but I do carpentry repair and I’d like to start a ministry called Home Helps. We’ll do free home repairs for widows and single women in our church so they don’t get ripped off.”

I had another guy one time who said, “I want to start a car repair ministry. We’ll do free car repair. We’ll just charge for the parts for the people in our church family. We’re a family. We take care of ourselves.”

A guy came one time and said, “I like to do backpacking. I’d like to start a backpacking ministry. We’ll take our Bibles and backpack up Saddleback Mountain and Big Bear and Idlewild and we’ll take non-Christians with us. We’ll share our faith and do Bible studies and have fellowship.” Today the backpacking ministry has over 100 people in it.

We had a guy one time said, “I’m a computer hacker. I love computers. I want to put Saddleback on the internet.” We were the first church on the internet because someone said they would do the ministry.

All of these ideas, do the pastors sit around thinking these things up? No. They come because people in the church use their gifts and abilities. So all the decisions are made by the people in each ministry. For instance, if you join the children’s ministry, you make the decisions on whether you need to buy more cribs and more diapers and where you’re going to go to kids’ camp. If you’re in the youth ministry, you make the decision where you’re going to go to youth camp and what programs you’re going to do. In this church, we don’t have one big board that tries to control everything. We let the people who do the work make the decisions.

A number of years a book came out called *In Search of Excellence*. They studied what makes a business successful. One of the things it said was it has loose-tight properties—that means there is a strong, central control that keeps the business committed to its vision, but all the day-to-day decisions are made by the actual people doing the work. Loose-tight properties.

That’s the way God designed the church to operate 2,000 years ago. That’s the way Saddleback operates. In our church the pastors are responsible to keep the church committed to the biblical vision, what the church should be doing, the five purposes, our vision, our values. We keep the church on track, doctrinally straight so it doesn’t become some cult or something. But all the ministry is done not by the pastors, but by the people.

This church outgrew me a long time ago. When the church was about four years old, I was burning out emotionally. I was still doing the vast majority of all the preaching, most of the teaching, a lot of the counseling, a lot of the prayer visits. I was trying to visit everybody in the hospital, trying to do every funeral, start every ministry, be at every meeting. I was burning out. I got up one Wednesday night and said to the people, “I can’t do this anymore. I am running out of energy. I can’t personally minister to every person

in the church. I cannot personally meet everybody's need anymore. But as I read the Bible, I'm not supposed to. It's not my job to minister to everyone personally. It's my job to equip every person in the church to minister to everybody else. I'll make you a deal. If you will do the ministry of this church, I will make sure you're well fed." And the people said, "Pastor Rick, you've got a deal!" We shook hands that night and signed a covenant, and after that Saddleback exploded with growth. Because I wasn't the bottleneck any more. People weren't looking to me to meet everybody's need.

Because of that, because we don't have any boards or committees but we let each ministry make its own decision, some people don't like that. I had a guy say to me one time, "I'm leaving the church. I want to be the chairman of the board and this church doesn't have a board." He left and found a little church where he could be a big fish with a big title in a little pond. He didn't want to minister. He just wanted to be a power player. He wanted a title. We're not into titles here. We're into ministry and we don't use a bunch of fancy titles.

I know of three men who were former chairmen of elder boards in Presbyterian churches. Since we don't have a board, obviously they're not on a board. But all three of those men happen to be lay pastors in our church. Which means they lead small groups, they do hospital visits, they care for people, they help serve communion, they minister to people, they counsel. I got those guys aside one day and asked, "Do you guys miss all the old board meetings?" They said, "You've got to be kidding! We used to sit around arguing until midnight over what color we were going to paint the church kitchen. Now we're out doing ministry, not maintenance. We're winning people to Christ and helping them grow in their faith. We're praying for people in hospitals. We discovered that fulfillment comes from ministry not from maintenance."

In this church, it's the exact opposite of almost every other church. In every other church, the pastors do all the ministry and the people do the maintenance, all the organization, all the administration, and all that stuff. In our church, the pastors do all the maintenance and let you guys do the fun stuff, the actual ministry. That's where fulfillment comes. It's very different.

People say, "How is this controlled?" It's not. Every church must decide whether it's going to structure for control or structure for growth. It can't do both. Some churches are so afraid of wildfire, they have all these rules, restrictions, regulations, and they run around stomping out every little campfire that will warm the church up.

In this church, we trust people. Go for it! Have a ministry. Are you going to make mistakes? Sure. But how do you learn? You learn by making mistakes.

3. The church is a **FLOCK** .

This is Jesus' favorite description of the church.

He called it "My little flock."

John 10:1–30, Matthew 26:31, Matthew 25:33

Therefore, it is cared for and led by **SHEPHERDS** .

Shepherds lead and feed.

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

JOHN 21:16 (NIV)

Circle "take care." That's the Greek word for "pastor." In our church we not only have the pastors on our staff but we have lay pastors because this church is too big to pay everybody to care for everybody else.

A number of years ago I heard about a guy in our church who had a heart attack. He had it on Saturday and I didn't even hear about it until Sunday after church. I did something that I don't do anymore. I made a hospital visit. I don't visit our sick members. How could I be fair? On any given week we might have 100 people in the hospital. We might have 20 or 30 weddings and maybe even a dozen funerals. How do I be fair about who gets me and who doesn't? So a number of years ago I stopped making hospital visits. They are done by lay pastors and other staff pastors in the church. This guy was a charter member of the church. He'd been here since the very beginning. So I went to visit Walt.

After church, I went over to the Saddleback hospital. I walked in up to the intensive care and said, "My name is Pastor Warren. I'm here to see Walt Stevens." The head intensive nurse looked up and said, "How many pastors does this church have?" I started laughing and said, "If you're talking about lay pastors we've got over 100." She said, "I'm sorry. Too many pastors have already seen him. You can't see him." I said, "You don't understand. I'm THE pastor." She said, "I don't care who you are. You still can't get into see him." I thought this was really funny. She walked away and I walked in anyway! I always say it's easier to get forgiveness than permission. Kay hates it when I

say that. I snuck in and Walt has all these IV's. He sits up and looks at me and says, "Pastor Rick, what are you doing here?" like "I really must be sick. The big guy is here!"

Pastor John Bisagno, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Houston with 20,000 members, told me a lady said to him, "Pastor, when are you going to come visit me?" He said, "Ma'am, you don't want to be that ill!"

I talked to Walt about 15 minutes and prayed with him there. But he didn't need me to visit him. Five lay pastors had already been to see him in the last 24 hours. I walked out of there and the tears began to roll down my face. I started crying, "That's it! That's the way God meant the church to operate." He never meant for the church to be a one-man superstar show who ministers to everybody's needs.

Fifty-eight times in the Bible it uses the phrase "one another." It says, "Love one another, care for one another, greet one another, encourage one another, pray for one another, counsel one another, share with one another, help one another." It is the mutual ministry of the body to itself.

God never meant for one man—a superstar pastor—to meet everybody's needs. But he meant for all of us to be ministers to minister to each other. We have all seen what happens when a church is built on a single personality. And that person dies or they have a moral failure and they flame out. What happens? The ministry collapses. I have been determined that since the beginning of this church that we would not build the church on a single personality. From the very beginning of the church, it's been my goal to give the ministry away.

When Kay and I started this church, we literally did every single job in the church. I wrote out the bulletin, Kay would type it up, I'd go get it printed. We stored all of the equipment in our garage, and every Sunday I would go borrow a truck and come pick up all the nursery equipment and take it down to the high school and set it all up. We'd do the service. When it was over, I'd borrow the truck again, load it all into the truck, and haul it back to my garage. I literally did everything in the church.

But as the church began to grow, we began to give the ministry away. First to 10 volunteers, then to 20 volunteers, then to 30 ministers, then to 40 lay ministers. Finally we now have 1,500 lay ministers in this church to do the ministry. And we began to add staff, not to do the ministry, but to equip those lay ministers. Finally I realized that there was one thing I was still doing I hadn't given away, that I was still the only person doing it. Sunday morning preaching. I started bringing in other preachers, teachers. Why?

For a couple of reasons. One, you need to hear God's message from more than one personality. I'm convinced about that. A lot of people join a church for about five years, then they leave because they've heard all that guy's got to say. And they go join another church. We want you to be able to spend your entire life here, so we have a team of pastors who teach so that you hear God's Word from more than just one personality. That's healthy. It's

also healthy on me. I plan to be here 40 years. If I were doing four services for the rest of my life, I'd be dead. I want to last. So both for my benefit and your benefit, I spread the preaching around.

The church spreads all the ministry around. In too many churches we have this one-man superstar. He tries to minister to everybody. If you get sick and in the hospital, then Superman Pastor comes flying in with his cape and he sprinkles pixie dust around your bed. "Here a prayer, there a prayer, everywhere a prayer, prayer." Then he flies off into the sunset. And we say, "Who was that man? And I didn't even get a chance to thank him!"

That's good for ego, but it's not good on a church.

The fact is, if I were to drop dead right now, Saddleback would keep growing because it's not built on me. We'd lose about a thousand of what I call Warren-groupies. They're people who come on the fringe; they're not members. They come because they like to hear me. We'd lose about a thousand of those people. It would still leave 27,000 attenders. Saddleback is not a perfect church. But it is a healthy church. My kids aren't perfect, but they're healthy. Saddleback is not perfect and I'm more aware of the problems than anybody else. But it is a healthy church. It's healthy because it's not built on one individual.

The church is cared for by shepherds, because it's a flock.

Three different terms are used in the New Testament to refer to the same church leaders:

"POIMEN" = PASTOR

That means the feeders are the leaders—the feeding aspect of ministry. Where Jesus says to Peter, "Take care of my sheep" that's the word poimen, it's the word pastor. Pastor means to take care of a flock.

“PRESBUTEROS” = ELDER

“Presbyterian” comes from this. Presbyterians call their leaders elders. It’s a good, legitimate term. It’s a biblical term. It refers to spiritual maturity. An elder doesn’t mean physically old. It means spiritual maturity. Timothy was the elder and chief pastor of the church at Ephesus. Paul says, “You are the elder and you’re the pastor at Ephesus. You are to appoint other elders.” Yet later in the same book it says, “Don’t let anybody look down on you because you’re a young kid.” How could he be an elder and yet a young kid at the same time? Because he’d been a follower of God since he was a child, and although he might have been 30 years old or 25, he’d been a Christian for 20-25 years. Whereas these guys who were older than him had only been a Christian for a year. It’s referring to spiritual maturity, not physical maturity.

“EPISCOPOS” = OVERSEER / BISHOP

“Episcopalian” comes from this. They call their leaders bishops. There’s nothing wrong with that; that’s a good biblical word. “Epi” in Greek means “over.” “Scopos” means “to see”—telescope, microscope, stethoscope. Episcopos means “to oversee.” Today, we call them a manager. Bishop means manager, supervisor, overseer, a manager. It’s just an old English word for manager. It refers to the managing aspects of church leadership.

What’s the difference between a pastor and an elder? An elder and a bishop? A bishop and a shepherd? A shepherd and an overseer? Nothing.

The words are used interchangeably in the New Testament. Americans are far more hung up on titles than they were in the New Testament. This is taught all through the New Testament.

To the elders among you . . . Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them.

1 PETER 5:1-2 (NIV)

So he says an elder is a shepherd is a pastor.

Then he says, "serving as overseers [episcopos]." A bishop is an elder is a pastor.

Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. When they arrived, he said to them . . . "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God."

ACTS 20:17-18, 28 (NIV)

See also Titus 1:5-7, 1 Timothy 5:17.

That's the structure of our church. It's very different from the way most churches are organized. Here's what the value of it is. In some churches when you join the church, you become a member but you're still not part of the "in" crowd, a clique of power people who make all the decisions on where you get to serve. Maybe after you've been there five or six years, they will elect you to serve in some position.

Not at Saddleback. At Saddleback you can join today and get involved tomorrow. We don't have a bureaucracy, a hierarchy that you have to jump through a bunch of hoops to get involved.

TEACHING TIP

This section is about seven minutes.

WHY BECOME A MEMBER?

1. It's an act of obedience to Christ's commands.

The difference between being a member and an attender, as I've said before, is the difference of being a bystander and a believer. The difference between being a consumer and a contributor; a spectator or a participant. The difference between getting married or just living together. It's a matter of commitment.

God expects every believer to join a local church. In fact, there are over 50 commands in the New Testament you cannot follow unless you commit to joining a local body of believers. Without a church family, you're a spiritual orphan.

The Bible says:

Be devoted to each other like a loving family.

ROMANS 12:10 (GW)

You are members of God's very own family, citizens of God's country, and you belong in God's household with every other Christian.

EPHESIANS 2:19 (TLB)

2. It's a counter-cultural choice that shows maturity.

Immaturity is the inability to make and keep commitments. Today's culture promotes immaturity everywhere: "Keep your options open . . . don't commit to a job, a marriage, a church . . . anything." Even many believers have a superficial consumer's attitude of "shopping

and hopping”—attending different churches each week without being dedicated or loyal to any specific church family. You cannot build character without making commitments.

My friends, stop thinking like children. Think like mature people and be as innocent as tiny babies.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:20 (CEV)

Christ loved the church, and he gave his life for her.

EPHESIANS 5:25 (NLT96)

Would you agree with me that today people are more skeptical and afraid of making commitments? There's no doubt about it. Is our nation becoming more committed or less committed? Less, without a doubt! So anytime you make a commitment to anything you are making a countercultural statement saying, "No, I'm not going that direction."

We only grow by our commitments. If you never make any commitments in life, you don't grow. You've got to make a commitment in business. You've got to make a commitment to buy a house. You've got to make a commitment to buy a car. You've got to make a commitment to go to school. All of these things are commitments.

Why not spiritual commitments? And you say, "This is going to be my family, where I will love and be loved, care and be cared for, serve and be served."

3. It's a necessary step in your spiritual development.

The Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians 8:5:

First they gave themselves to the Lord; and then, by God's will they gave themselves to us as well.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:5 (GNT)

You become a Christian by committing your life to Christ. You become a church member, a member of the family of God, by committing yourself to another group of people.

Let's talk specifically about what that commitment means.

At Saddleback we have a covenant that says this is what it means to be a part of our family. We want you in our family. But if you want to be a part of our family, you've got to commit to the same things that we have committed to each other. They are commitments to love and care and help each other.

I'll give us an opportunity to commit to that covenant together in a few minutes.

They helped the believers grow in love for God and each other.

ACTS 14:22 (TLB)

4. It provides spiritual protection.

The Bible tells us as pastors:

TO PASTORS:

Guard and [protect] the whole flock of God over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you overseers [and guardians]. [Care for and] shepherd the Church of God which He bought with His own blood.

ACTS 20:28 (AMP)

To members the Bible says this:

TO MEMBERS:

Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.

HEBREWS 13:17 (NLT)

That second verse literally scares me to death. It's always scared me. It's never stopped scaring me. It's not the part of being spiritual leaders. It's the part that their work is to watch over your souls and they are giving an account to God.

I don't know how to explain this to you, the burden that I feel about that verse. One day, if you choose to put yourself in this family and become a part of this flock and you say, "Rick's going to be my pastor. He's going to be my spiritual leader. This is going to be my church family." The Bible says one day I will give an account to God for how I helped you to grow spiritually. I take that responsibility quite seriously. That one day God is going to ask me how well I helped you grow and become what God wanted you to be.

If you don't join this church, I'm not responsible for you. So maybe you don't want to join! But if you do and you say, "Saddleback is going to be my home, my family, my church, and I'm going to put myself under the leadership of the pastors of this church"—and we have many—then those pastors and I will one day give an account to God for how well we helped you to grow. And how well we protected you spiritually.

If you join this church I beg you to pray for me. Because I'm not smart enough to lead churches. I'm just not. It drives me to my knees constantly. I don't think anybody's smart enough to pastor a church this big. I didn't ask God for it, but it has come. I beg you to really pray for me as I am praying for you. Because this is an important responsibility.

I always tell young pastors if God has called you to pastor a church and given you responsibility over one of the flocks of God, never resign the pastorate to become president of the United States. Because it's a more important job.

Why? Because the United States isn't going to last. But the family of God is. It's going to last forever. No nation lasts. Where's the Hittite Empire? Where's the Assyrian Empire? No empire lasts forever. If Jesus hasn't come back in a

thousand years there won't be a Microsoft. There won't be a Starbucks. There won't be a Costco. There won't be a United States. Because no nation stays the same forever. Political boundaries change all the time.

But if a thousand years from today Jesus Christ hasn't come back, there will still be a church. Because it's the reason why God created it all anyway. It's the only thing that's going to last. The family of God.

Our model for membership is on the next page.

OUR MODEL FOR MEMBERSHIP: THE FIRST CHURCH

What the First Christians Did in the Jerusalem Church

Here we have the story of the first church, which was in Jerusalem. It began on the day of Pentecost.

And every day, in the Temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach this message: “Jesus is the Messiah.”

ACTS 5:42 (NLT)

All the believers met together . . . and shared everything they had . . . They worshiped together regularly in the temple courts. They also met together in small groups in homes and fellowshiped with communion and eating together. They also shared whatever they had with joy and generosity. They praised God together and the whole city like them so every day more people were saved, and the Lord added to the number of believers in the church.

ACTS 2:44, 46–47 (NLT)

That’s our model. I have an entire seminar, an all-day seminar I teach to pastors on that one passage. But let me just summarize it for you.

Ten things we know about the New Testament church.

1. They *united* into a congregation.
2. They *shared* to meet each other's needs.
3. They *worshiped* in the Temple courts (multiple venues/campuses).
4. They met in small groups in homes for *fellowship*.
5. They celebrated *communion*.
6. They *ate together*.
7. They *gave generously* and joyfully.
8. They built a *reputation for love*.
9. They brought people to Christ *every day*.
10. *Never stopped growing!*

That's our model.

On the next page. What does it mean to be a member of Saddleback? What's the difference between a member and an attender?

TEACHING TIP

This section is 15 minutes.

What Does It Mean to Be a Member of Saddleback?

The Bible is very clear about the privileges and responsibilities of belonging to a church family. These are spelled out in our Membership Covenant, which has been signed by over 40,000 people who are now members of our Saddleback family.

Membership means I commit to love the members, serve the ministry, spread the message, support the mission, and protect the name of our church.

The Bible says:

"Don't let what you regard as good get a bad name."
(Romans 14:16).

It also says:

"We try to live in such a way that no one will be hindered from finding the Lord in the way that we act."
(2 Corinthians 6:3).

Because of that, we have what's called the Membership Covenant.

At Saddleback we never ask our members to do more than the Bible clearly teaches anyway. We only expect our members to do what the Bible expects every Christian to do. These responsibilities are spelled out in the Membership Covenant.

I want us to read this preamble, that first paragraph together aloud.

When you go to a wedding, what's the most important part of a wedding? The music? No. The vows. It isn't a wedding unless somebody says, "I do." That's the most important part of the wedding.

The most important part of this membership is the covenant. It's the "I do." It's the "I'm in."

Here's what you're saying when you say, "I do." You're saying, "I will do these five things. I will love the members and I will serve the ministry and spread the message and support the mission and protect the name of our church family. Because it's my church family now. It's our family."

The Saddleback Membership Covenant. Read this part aloud, at the top of the page.

Having received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and been baptized by full immersion, and being in agreement with Saddleback's statements, strategy, and structure, I now feel led by the Holy Spirit to unite with the Saddleback 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.

How do you do that? A couple ways:

- By acting in love towards other members

If you join this church, you're going to find out real quick it's filled with human beings. Imperfect. And you're not going to like everybody that's a member of this church. But you've got to love them! That's the commitment. And if you don't want to love the members of this church, don't join us. If you're not willing to commit to loving the other people of this church, don't join.

- By refusing to gossip and by resolving conflicts using Matthew 18:15–17

"Don't let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths but only what builds up other." What destroys churches more than anything else is gossip. Gossip is when you're neither part of the problem or part of the solution, but you're talking about it. When you share information about a problem and you're neither part of the problem nor part of the solution and you talk about it, you are gossiping. The Bible calls it sin. And you promise if you join this church to not gossip. Why do you think this church has grown to 28,000 people in 37 years? Because we've never had a church split. We've never had one group of people get mad at another group. Because we don't allow gossip. So if you hear something about somebody in the church, what do you do?

1. You go directly to that person and talk to them. You don't go talking to somebody else about somebody else. Or
2. You call one of the pastors—our phone numbers are in the book—and say, “Pastor, what’s the scoop here?” If we don’t know, we’ll help you find out. But don’t start the rumor mill that causes all kinds of stuff and problems in churches.

- By following the leaders

“If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won’t accept the church’s decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.”

MATTHEW 18:15-17 (NLT)

TEACHING TIP:

Don't feel that you have to read every verse in the covenant. Choose the ones that you sense will best meet the needs of the group you are teaching.

So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on the growth of one another's character.

ROMANS 14:19 (PHILLIPS)

Live in complete harmony with each other—each with the attitude of Christ toward the other.

ROMANS 15:5 (TLB)

Now that by your obedience to the truth you have purified yourselves and have come to have a sincere love for other believers, love one another earnestly with all your heart.

1 PETER 1:22 (GNT)

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

EPHESIANS 4:29 (NIV)

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls and will give an account for their work. Let them do this with joy and not with complaints, for this would be no advantage for you.

HEBREWS 13:17 (NET)

Read this next part with me:

2. I will share the responsibility of my church.

- By praying for its growth
- By inviting the unchurched to attend
- By warmly welcoming those who visit

The difference between being an attender and member is like being on a cruise. If you're an attender you're just along for the ride. If you're a member you're a crewmember on the cruise. Now that you join the church it's your job to reach out and bring others in. Pray for its growth, invite others, warmly welcoming those who visit.

"So, warmly welcome each other into the church just as Christ has warmly welcomed you, then God will be glorified." We have two kinds of greeters at Saddleback. There are the permanent greeters. They're all extroverts and they love to greet people. They always tend to be up here close to the doors. But we don't want anybody to get into this church without being greeted at least three times. When a visitor walks in and three people have already greeted him before he even gets into the church, he thinks, "This is the friendliest church in the whole world!" You only have to have about three people say "Hi!"

So this is a tradition at Saddleback. Everybody who takes 101 class for the next month is a greeter. Take the service you normally come to and get there about 15 minutes early and then stand out—like, in the parking lot. Don't all clump up here on the patio. We're not going to put a sign on you that says, "Hi. I'm a greeter. I have to be nice to you." Just go out and stand normally, and when people walk by, greet them.

This does two things. One, it gives you a ministry for the first 30 days as a member. Anybody can do this. Two, if you do this you'll meet some people. You'll get to know some people.

We always thank God for all of you and pray for you constantly.

1 THESSALONIANS 1:2 (NLT)

“Go out into the country lanes . . . and urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full.”

LUKE 14:23 (TLB)

So warmly welcome each other into the church, just as Christ has warmly welcomed you; then God will be glorified.

ROMANS 15:7 (TLB)

3. I will serve the ministry of my church.

- By discovering my gifts and talents
- By being equipped by my pastors to serve
- By developing a servant's heart

Take 301. Once you take 301 you will fulfill that part of the Membership Covenant. Our staff is committed to helping you make a difference with your life. That's what 301 class is all about.

Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you.

1 PETER 4:10 (PHILLIPS)

It was [God] who “gave gifts to people”; he appointed . . . others to be pastors and teachers. He did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ.

EPHESIANS 4:11–12 (GNT)

When you do things, do not let selfishness or pride be your guide. Instead, be humble and give more honor to others than to yourselves. Do not be interested only in your own life, but be interested in the lives of others. But [Christ] gave up his place with God and made himself nothing. He was born as a man and became like a servant.

PHILIPPIANS 2:3–4, 7 (NCV)

Let's read this together:

4. I will support the testimony of my church.

- By attending faithfully
- By living a growing and godly life
- By giving regularly

Take 201. In that class you will learn the basic habits for Christian growth.

*Let us not give up the habit of meeting together . . .
let us encourage one another.*

HEBREWS 10:25 (GNT)

*But whatever happens, make sure that your everyday
life is worthy of the Gospel of Christ.*

PHILIPPIANS 1:27 (PHILLIPS)

*On every Lord's Day each of you should put aside
something from what you have earned during
the week.*

1 CORINTHIANS 16:2 (TLB)

*One-tenth of all crops belongs to the LORD, including
the crops from fields and the fruit from trees. That
one-tenth is holy to the LORD.*

LEVITICUS 27:30 (NCV)

TEACHING TIP

This section is five minutes.

WHAT ARE MY NEXT STEPS?

The Purpose Driven Life Discovery Process

Congratulations! You have successfully completed the membership class. There are four questions you need to ask yourself to continue your journey on the purpose-driven life development process.

1. Have you committed your life to Jesus Christ and trusted him for salvation?

If yes, check yes and write when and where. If you don't remember when or where or you know you did it in this class, check "In this class." If you say, "I don't know if I've done this or not yet," then put a question mark out to the side. You will not be a member of Saddleback Church until you've given your life to Christ and fulfilled all these commitments. But we want you to turn this sheet in whether you join our church or not. Then if you ever do decide to join, you won't have to take the class again because we'll already have a record of your attendance.

2. Have you been baptized by immersion (under water) after you committed your life to Christ?

If yes, check yes. Write when and where. If not, you need to be baptized. And it would be my privilege to baptize you. If you have a question about it, you can put a check mark out to the side. Again, you will not be a member of Saddleback Church until you have been baptized by immersion either here or somewhere else.

3. Have you completed *Class 101: Discovering Our Church Family*? You've just done that!

Yes, you have and put today's date. You take 101 class this month, 201 next month, 301 next month, 401 after that you will get to know the other people in this group.

4. Do you desire to become a member of Saddleback Church and to abide by the Saddleback Membership Covenant?

If yes, check yes and please sign your name and date it.

We are praying the answer is yes to all four.

Please look at me, everyone. The class is almost finished, and the next few minutes are the most important part of this class. I know that you won't remember everything we've said; that's why we gave you this notebook. But I also know that you'll never forget the commitment we're going to make together in these next few moments.

I want to challenge you to make the rest of your life the best of your life. Whether you have five or 50 years left, give it to the greater movement of God. There is no greater movement than the church of God. It will far outlast anything you do. I make no apology in saying that the most significant thing you may do in life is join Saddleback Church and get involved in ministry here. This church is making an impact on the community. A hundred years from now, somebody may walk up to you in heaven and say, "You were part of that group there at Saddleback Church, and they built those buildings; 100 years later that church reached me for Christ. I'm here because of you. You started a ministry that reached me for Christ years after you died, and I'm here because of you." That's going to far outlast any deal you make in life. If I knew a more strategic place to invest my life, I'd be there, because I'm not going to waste my life. That's the importance of the commitment we're making together right now.

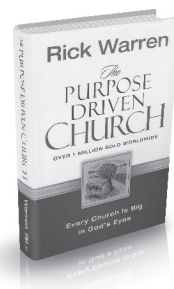
Let's pray together.

Prayer:

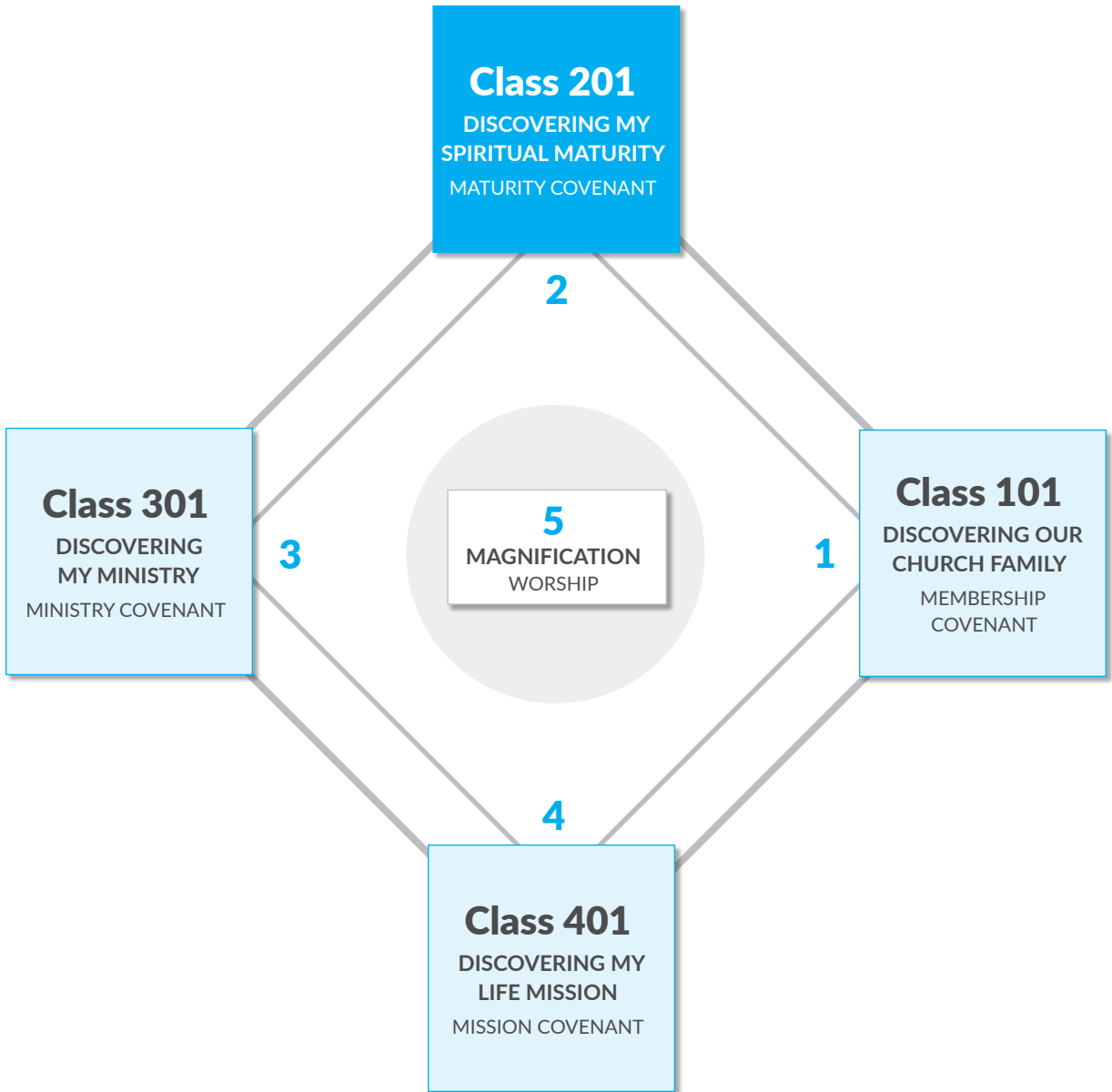
Pray this with me. Lord, I want to make the rest of my life the best of my life. I commit myself to living for your five purposes. I want to love God and love others. I want to grow and serve and share my faith. And I commit to membership in Saddleback Church, the place that you've given me to grow in and live out those purposes.

Lord, I look out on these faces and I see such potential. And I see what you're doing. How you're bringing people from every type of background to form a miracle called Saddleback Church. Lord, as I look on these faces and think about how you've grown this church from one family to thousands and thousands and how we're not just a church, but we're really a movement and that what we're doing here is being modeled by literally hundreds and thousands of other churches around the world. Thank you for letting us be a part of this. It's a privilege to be a part of this church. Help us to never get over it. Lord, when we think of all the people you could have brought to be a part of this historic church at this historic time, you chose us; we're grateful. We're going to make a difference for eternity. Lord, we look for the day that we stand in heaven and someone comes up and says, "Thank you. I'm here because of you." Lord, then it will be worth it. Help us to see the importance of the decision we're making today. How the service we have for you will outlast our career, our hobbies, even our families; that there is no greater cause than the Kingdom of God. I pray that you will put it on the hearts of those you want to be a part of this family. Burn it into their soul what a privilege and responsibility it is to be invited to be a part of what you're doing here. Lord, we don't believe this church is for everybody. We believe that you will call out of this group those that you want to be a part of this significant movement. Thank you for letting me be a part of it and be a part of the pastoring here. I ask your blessing upon these people as you use them in our church. In Jesus' name. Amen.

In this class, we've just barely scratched the surface of all that goes on at Saddleback Church. For a complete understanding of our history and our strategy read Pastor Rick's book, *The Purpose Driven Church*.



Your next step is to take *Class 201: Discovering My Spiritual Maturity*.



CLASS 101

Appendix

ANSWER KEY

SESSION ONE: OUR PURPOSE

God's Five Purposes for Your Life On Earth

1. God planned me for HIS PLEASURE.
The first purpose of life is KNOWING AND LOVING GOD.
The Bible calls this WORSHIP.
2. God formed me for HIS FAMILY.
The second purpose of life is TO LOVE OTHERS.
The Bible calls this FELLOWSHIP.
3. God created me TO BECOME LIKE CHRIST.
The third purpose of life is GROWING TO MATURITY.
The Bible calls this DISCIPLESHIP.
4. God "shaped" me TO SERVE HIM.
SPIRITUAL GIFTS
HEART
ABILITIES
PERSONALITY
EXPERIENCES
The fourth purpose of life is TO SERVE GOD BY SERVING OTHERS.
The Bible calls this MINISTRY.
5. God made me FOR A MISSION.
The fifth purpose of life is TO TELL OTHERS ABOUT HIM.
The Bible calls this EVANGELISM.

The Big Key

I can't fulfill God's purposes BY MYSELF.

What Does It Mean to Be a Christian?

Why Am I Here?

1. God created me to LOVE me.
2. We were created to ENJOY a personal relationship with God and to MANAGE all of the rest of God's creation. This makes us special.

What's the Problem?

1. People have a natural desire to BE THE BOSS and to ignore God's principles for living.
2. The Bible calls this attitude SIN.

What Does God Want Me to Do?

1. ADMIT that God has not been first place in your life and ask him to forgive your sins.
2. BELIEVE that Jesus died to pay for your sins and that he rose again on Easter and is alive today.
3. ACCEPT God's free gift of salvation. Don't try to earn it.
4. INVITE Jesus Christ to come into your life and be the director (Lord) of your life.

Baptism: How You Identify with God's Family

What is the Meaning of Baptism?

1. It illustrates Christ's DEATH, BURIAL, and resurrection.
2. It illustrates my NEW LIFE as a Christian.
3. It demonstrates my INCORPORATION into Christ's Body, the church.

Why Should I Be Baptized?

1. To follow the example set by JESUS CHRIST.
2. Because Christ COMMANDED it.
3. It shows that I really am a BELIEVER.

Why Be Baptized by Immersion?

1. Because JESUS was baptized that way.
2. Every baptism in the BIBLE was by immersion.
3. The word “baptize” means to SUBMERSE INTO water.

Who Should Be Baptized?

Every person who has BELIEVED in Christ.

The Lord's Supper: Communion with God's Family**What is the Lord's Supper?**

1. It is a SIMPLE ACT.
2. It is a REMINDER.
3. It is a SYMBOL.
4. It is a STATEMENT OF FAITH.

Who Should Take the Lord's Supper?

Only those who are already BELIEVERS (Mark 14:22–26).

**SESSION TWO:
OUR STRATEGY****Our Motto**

A Great Commitment . . . to the Great COMMANDMENT and the Great COMMISSION will grow a Great Church!

Our S.A.D.D.L.E.B.A.C.K. Values**Our Distinctive Values**

SECOND-CHANCE GRACE PLACE
ALL-NATION CONGREGATION
DOABLE DISCIPLESHIP
DELIBERATE PATHWAY TO GROWTH
LOVE IN ACTION
EMPOWERED MEMBERS
BOLD FAITH
AUTHENTIC FELLOWSHIP
CREATIVE OUTREACH

KID AND FAMILY FOCUSED**Our Faith Statement****Our Beliefs**

In essential beliefs—we have UNITY.

In nonessential beliefs—we allow LIBERTY.

In all our beliefs—we show CHARITY.

**SESSION FOUR:
OUR SADDLEBACK FAMILY****What is the Church?**

1. The church is a FAMILY.

So we operate on the basis of RELATIONSHIPS not RULES.

2. The church is a BODY.

Therefore, we function on the basis of SPIRITUAL GIFTS, not ELECTED OFFICES.

At Saddleback we have a simple structure so we can maximize MINISTRY and minimize MAINTENANCE.

What Is Our Structure?

- The people are the MINISTERS.
- The pastors are the ADMINISTERS.

Currently there are over 500 different ministries founded and operated by our members.

3. The church is a FLOCK.

Therefore, it is cared for and led by SHEPHERDS.

“POIMEN” = PASTOR

“PRESBUTEROS” = ELDER

“EPISCOPOS” = OVERSEER / BISHOP

Teacher's Appendix 1 – The Saddleback Story Script

CLASS 101 (RICK'S PART ONLY)

Rick Warren

September 20, 2015

Now, it's appropriate that we start our journey in a car, because that's how it all started. I was a seminary student in Fort Worth, Texas, with Kay. We had a four-month old baby named Amy. And I got out a map of the world and began praying. I said, "God, I'll go anywhere in the world if you'll let me live my entire life in one place." And I felt like God led us to go to a major city in the United States. So I got out a map of the United States. I circled every major city outside of the south, 'cause I figured there were plenty of churches in the south. And I said, "Okay, Lord, where do you want me to go?" And during the summer of 1979, I began to do demographic studies on the major metropolitan areas in America. And finally we narrowed it down to four areas on the West Coast.

We finally narrowed it down to Orange County. I wrote a letter to a man named Herman Wooten, who was a superintendent, or a supervisor of Baptist churches in Orange County. I was going to a Baptist seminary at the time. I said to him, I said, "I'm not asking for your support or for money, but I'm thinking and praying about coming to an area called the Saddleback Valley to start a church," because I'd discovered that the Saddleback Valley was the fastest-growing area in Orange County, and Orange County was the fastest growing county in America between 1970 and 1980. So I knew it would need lots of new churches.

Well, I wrote that letter to Mr. Wooten, and in the providence of God, somehow that man had heard about me. And he wrote me a letter, and as a seminary student, he said, "Dear Mr. Warren. I hear you're a seminary student in Fort Worth, that you're thinking about starting a church. Have you ever thought about coming to southern California and start a church? In fact, I would ask you to consider the area called the Saddleback Valley." And our letters crossed in the mail. It was like Twilight Zone. I got his letter the day after I sent mine, and he hadn't gotten mine yet.

So we knew that this was where God wanted us to come. And in October of '79, I flew out here and spent 10 days in the Saddleback Valley, memorizing all the streets, and meeting with people, county supervisors. I flew Kay out, and we prayed about it and said, "This is where we're going to move."

I'm standing here on the crest of La Paz Road in Laguna Hills that looks out back over the Saddleback Valley, primary Laguna Hills. And this is where Kay and I came and stood in October '79 when I was a seminary student, and I felt led to come out here and see if this was where God wanted us to go. And we stood here on this hill and prayed together, and God said, "This is where you're to invest your life, in the Saddleback Valley." There was no Rancho Santa Margarita. There was no Aliso Viejo. There was no Ladera Ranch or Foothill Ranch or any of the other developments. There was just Mission Viejo, which was getting started, and Laguna Hills, which was getting started. But God put it on our hearts with this view, looking out over the valley, to invest our lives here.

So in December of 1979, we packed up everything in a U-Haul truck and began the journey from Fort Worth, Texas, to southern California. We arrived here at about 4:00 in the afternoon, right in the middle of rush-hour traffic. And you got to understand, I'm a country boy. I was raised in a little town in northern California of less than 500 people. And when I saw the big crowds on the freeway, I said, "God, you got the wrong guy." But God had a plan, and where God guides, God provides.

When we arrived, we had no money, no members or anything. We pulled off an off-ramp at 4:00 in the afternoon, and we found a real estate office in Mission Viejo. And I walked in that door right there, and I met a guy named Don Dale. And I said, "My name is Rick Warren. I'm 25 years old. I'm here to start a new church. I have no members. I have no building. I have no money, but I need a place to live." And right inside that door, Don started laughing, and he said, "Well, let's see what we can do." And of course where God guides, God provides. And Don said, "Let's see what we can do."

So we got in a car, and he took us to one site. And we signed the papers on it. We said, "We'll take it." He got us the first month rent free. He got us nothing down. I don't know how he did it. And that man became the first member of the church.

It was a week later that we began Saddleback services in our home on a Friday night, and we began to meet. And that little group grew to about 15 people pretty quickly. We decided that we wanted to start Sunday services on Easter Sunday, because if anybody comes to church, what's the one Sunday of the year they come? It's going to be on Easter. So we went out, and we rented Laguna Hills High School. And we went out, and we went to a bunch of garage sales, and we bought equipment for everything. I stored it in the garage here by this apartment. And then the 15 of us, we hand-addressed and hand-stamped 15,000 letters announcing that the

church was beginning. It was a direct-mail piece, and mailed them out 10 days before Easter and invited people to come to Laguna Hills High School, which we had rented.

And the only problem was, some people misread the letter, got it a week early, and they came to a dress rehearsal service that we did. And 60 people showed up at the dress rehearsal service on Palm Sunday, and five of them got saved. Well, we didn't even know that they were going to be coming. We were just going to take the 15 people down to the high school and say, "Let's practice so on Easter it looks like we know what we're doing." So now let's go to Laguna Hills High School, and we'll show you where Saddleback held its first service.

Well, this is Laguna Hills High School, where Saddleback 1.0 held its first five years. We held the first service here on Easter Sunday 1980, and the church grew here for five years. It was a wonderful time. Let's go in and take a look at the campus.

This is the side gate to Laguna Hills High School, and for five years I stood at this gate. It was the only entrance in and out of the campus on Sundays, and so everybody who came and left had to leave here. And I would always sneak out first, and that way I got to shake hands with every single person. And that's how I memorized every name up to the first 3,000 attenders at Saddleback, because they had to come through here every week.

Well, this is where Saddleback Church began Sunday services on Easter Sunday in 1980, right here in Laguna Hills High School theater. Little theater. Seats about 350 people. I'll never forget when we stood out front over here at the gates, and all these people began coming up that I'd never seen before. And I thought, "This is going to work. This is going to work." And 205 people showed up at the first service. There weren't more than about five believers. I said, "Everybody open your Bible," and nobody had a Bible. I said, "Let's sing these songs," and nobody knew the songs. I said, "Let's pray," and everybody goes... And it was very exciting, because we had hit our target of being a church for the unchurched. And in the first 10 weeks here in this little theater, 82 people gave their lives to Christ, and Saddleback was born.

During the five years we were here in Saddleback 1.0, we call it here at Laguna Hills High School, we grew from zero to almost 800 people, about 780 people, in this little theater. And when we went to double services, we finally had to move out of here and had more than enough for two services. We moved into the gymnasium next door. Some of the major developments here in Saddleback 1.0 was the development of the philosophy of the purposes of God, the purpose-driven church idea, the idea of the little commitment card, the response card that

we've now used since the very first Sunday or the very first month of the church. A lot of the other things that we developed, like the membership class, first membership class was held here on Laguna Hills High School. The membership banquets. I started using message outlines that people could fill in. A lot of the things that we now take for granted, in fact, even the concept of the campaigns, 40 Days of Purpose and 40 Days of Peace. Well, we did campaigns all the way back in 1981 and '82. One was called I Love My Church. Another one was called I Want to Grow.

Some of the lessons that we learned here was the lesson of acceptance, that we accept people where they are and not where they need to be. We don't expect people to act like believers until they are. And that we must love people unconditionally. And so we learned about that. We learned that all leaders are learners. It was a great learning stage. There were so many things we didn't know.

One of the early ideas that came up here at Laguna Hills was every member is a minister, and Saddleback has been built ever since on that. As a result of our time here at Laguna Hills, we baptized 316 people during our five years here at Laguna Hills, and God did some great things. And when we moved out of the little theater, we moved into the gym. Let's go over and take a look at that.

Now this is the gymnasium of Laguna Hills High School, and this is where we grew to about 800 people. During those first five years, we had many different tests. Tests of our character, tests of our patience, tests of our finances. One of the big tests was will we become a big church? Some of the people wanted to keep the church small. They didn't want it to grow. They thought, "We have enough people." And of course, if they had won that battle, well, you wouldn't be a part of Saddleback today. I remember when one time the treasurer and the leading lay member of Saddleback Church came to me, and they were upset with me during this phase. And they said, "We're leaving the church." And I said, "Why?" And they said, "Because Saddleback is spending \$10,000 to buy three computers." Remember, this was the early 80s. And they said, "Three computers. Saddleback Church will never need three computers." And of course, that was the small kind of thinking that would've limited us, because today we literally have hundreds of computers on our staff, and the thing has grown very, very much.

One of the biggest risks was after we outgrew the little theater, and we moved into the gymnasium, we realized that this was going to be too small of a place for us to grow. And we needed to move again. Well, we originally started the church in Laguna Hills because our ultimate goal was to build the church in Aliso Viejo. I had heard about Aliso Viejo even before I moved here to California. And in that move, we discovered, after we moved here, that because of the economy, Aliso Viejo as a

city was delayed almost 10 years. And we didn't want to wait for the building of the beginning of that city. And on the other side of the freeway, on the east side of 5, Rancho Santa Margarita was just getting started. So we made a strategic decision and a big risk when we moved the church nine miles. After five years, we moved it from this side of the freeway, on the ocean side, over to the canyon side, and we moved nine miles to Trabuco Hills High School. We didn't know if it would work or not. But the month that we moved, we added about 1,200 new people.

Now during our seven years here at Trabuco Hills High School, what we call Saddleback 2.0, we had a number of major developments. We did the creation of the CLASS system. Class 101, 201, 301 was invented here. It's now used by tens of thousands of churches. The music ministry was launched here at Trabuco. Year-round midweek service was launched here. Our Saturday night services, which were first at Mission Viejo High School, then Lake Hills Community Church, then El Toro Baptist, and outside of many different places for Saturday night services. We developed the idea of using testimonies here in our services. We developed The Facts of Life, which was a devotional by fax machine before the internet came out. And then when the internet began, we were the first church on the internet in 1992 starting here at Trabuco Hills.

During the time we were here at Trabuco Hills High School, we baptized 2,099 people who came to Christ and accepted the Lord here. It was an amazing time. Some of the problems we had here, of course, was lack of parking. There wasn't enough parking for a church this big. Another problem was the problem of setting up and taking down every week. Imagine setting up and taking down a church for 6,000 people every week. Ellie Edwards and her team and children's ministry would come in at about 5 a.m. in the morning, and they would take the children's equipment for all of our Sunday school classes, and they would take them to all of the classrooms here. And in the classrooms, we would diagram on the board exactly how each class was organized, and take all of the chairs and all of the desks out, would vacuum the classroom and set up our Sunday School material and Sunday School beds and cribs for the babies and things like that.

And then about six or eight hours later at 1:00 in the afternoon, another team would come in. They would take out all of our equipment, store it in giant storage bins that we had, and then vacuum the classrooms again and reset it according to the way it had been diagrammed on the blackboard, so that when the teacher came in Monday morning, their class looked identical, like it had never been touched, even though thousands of people had been here on the weekend. It was an amazing time together.

Now what were some of the lessons that we learned here at Trabuco Hills High School? Well, we learned mainly flexibility. Be fast, be fluid, be flexible. That's a constant at Saddleback. The only thing we considered unchanging is the Word of God and His purposes, that everything else can change. And so Saddleback's a very flexible church, and we learned that through a culture of having to set up and take down. We learned that a church is not a building. The church is people. We learned to be simple. We learned to be reproducible. We learned that God is going to be with you no matter what happens. And in all of these years that Saddleback began to keep growing and growing, and we went from 1,000 to 2,000 to 3,000 to 4,000 to 5,000 in this gymnasium.

And next, I'm going to tell you about the story of our land and how we ended up on the Saddleback campus that we're on now, because it was a long, long journey. The story of how Saddleback Church got the beautiful piece of land that we are now located on today, 120 acres, is an amazing story of both faith and a great test of patience. Because it took us 15 years from the point that we began Saddleback to when we moved into our first building. Now in one sense, that was okay, because we wanted to prove you don't have to have a building to grow a church. So we grew Saddleback to over 10,000 people before we built our first building.

At the very first service in 1980, I stood up and said, "Folks, one day, we're going to get at least 50 acres of land, but we're not going to even look for it for five years. Because most churches build too soon, and so they build too small. And then the shoe tells the foot how big it can get, and a permanently small building makes a permanently small future." So I said, "We're going to focus on building people, not building buildings." And for five years, we didn't even look for land. And Saddleback grew and grew and grew.

On the fifth anniversary of the church, I stood up and said, "It's time to find a permanent church home. If you have background in real estate or land development or finance, and you want to help be on this task force, show up at my office tomorrow night." The next night, 11 men showed up at my office. Half of them I didn't even know. So I said, "Let's just go around the room, and you tell me why you should be on Saddleback's search team to find our permanent land." The first guy said, "My name is Tom." I said, "What do you do, Tom?" He said, "I buy all the sites for Kmart. I said, "You're on the team." The next guy said, "My name is Lyle." I said, "What do you do, Lyle?" He said, "Last year, I did 90 million in land acquisitions." You're on the team. Third guy said, "My name's Dick, and I'm the vice president of First Interstate Bank." I said, "You're on." The next guy said, "My name is Dick, too." And he said, "I do Fortune 500 real estate investment appraisals." I said, "You're on."

We went around the room. I had the most amazing group of high-powered horses you could imagine. And so I turned around, and on a chalk board, or on a white board, I wrote, "Fifty acres." I said, "Gentleman, this is our goal. We want at least 50 acres of land. Your job is to find it for Saddleback Church. Meeting is dismissed." And that was the total meeting the first night. This is what I call empowering people for their ministry.

Well, these guys went out, and they came back a week later, and they had found one of the three remaining pieces of land in the Saddleback Valley here in southern Orange County that was still owned by an individual person that we could buy a large chunk from. Most of the land had been divided up by the major land development companies. For instance, Mission Viejo had planned seven church sites of a half an acre each, thinking seven churches is all that was needed for 90,000 people. And they came back, and they had found a piece out at the end of Santa Margarita Parkway, 72 acres. And this is it right here. 72 acres owned by a family called the Borchers family.

Now, you need to realize that in 1985, there was no Rancho Santa Margarita. There was no development here. There was certainly nothing. This was a pig farm, and on the back of it, it was a motorcycle raceway up the hills for motorbikes, dirt bikes. And this property goes from all across here, all the way up to those houses in the back.

Well, we went, and we took this land, and we put it in escrow. And we put \$10,000 down on a \$7.2 million piece of property. It was 72 acres for \$7.2 million. Over the next two years, we got the zoning changed on this property, so it'd be okay for churches. We got the use permit. We got the water rights. We got our plans made. We had services on this property. We went up on this hill, and we prayed, and we marked around and had celebrations, had picnics on the property. We just thought this was the piece for us, out here at the end of Santa Margarita Parkway.

When we went out to get a loan for the property, and no one would loan us the money. I didn't blame them. It was a small church at the time, and we were going to borrow \$7.2 million for raw land, and then we still had no money for buildings. And we went all over. We went to 80 different lending institutions, and all the way back to New York City, and nobody would loan us the money. Finally after about two years, the owners of the property came to us, and they said, "We want you to start putting up \$10,000 a month, nonrefundable, in order to keep the escrow open." And I said to the people, "I'm sorry, I can't gamble our church's money like that." I said, "We'll just have to drop out of escrow, and once we get the loan, we'll come back and we'll buy it." And they said, "Fine," remembering that they'd already given us the right to change all the zoning on this property.

Well, we dropped out of escrow, and the next day, this property was bought by a land developer, and he planted a Shell Station, an Albertsons, a pharmacy, and a bunch of other things, and then built houses all up the back, which is now called the Walden Housing Development. Well, we were down. We lost two years and about \$100,000 that we had invested in this property. And we were down, doobie-doo-down-down. And that was the first big lesson for us, is that God has His plan even when you don't understand it.

After we lost the escrow on the Borchert property, it took us a full year to find another piece of property large enough for Saddleback Church. It was out here in the middle of the canyon on Live Oak Canyon Road, owned by an elderly gentleman named Mr. Edgar. It was 305 acres, 200 of it totally worthless, going straight up the mountain. But we went to Mr. Edgar, and we said, "We would like to buy the front 100 acres for \$6 million," knowing that we were going to have to pay millions of dollars in leveling just to get a level piece of property. It was all up and down the hill. Mr. Edgar told us, he said, "Well, if you'll buy the front 100 acres for 6 million, I'll give you the back 200 for free just as a tax write-off." So I said, "That's great." And we went back to the church, and we said, "Folks, we've got another piece of property. Now we gotta raise the money."

So we decided to do a three-year giving, sacrificial giving campaign, over and above our normal offerings. We called it Possess Our Land. We were going to call it Possess the Land, but the initials were PTL, and that was right in the middle of the Jimmy Swaggart and Baker scandals, and PTL in the mid-80s. So we called it Possess Our Land.

During that time, our people began to pray and began to fast, and over a 30-day period, we prayed for a special offering called Possess Our Land. And during that time, on one Sunday, our people gave \$1.5 million in cash, over a million dollars in cash, and pledged to give 2 million more over the next three years. It was an amazing miracle, considering it was only 467 families. The average giving per family was about \$14,000 a family committed. It was amazing. People sold their homes and bought smaller homes and gave the equity. People canceled vacations, and people gave their retirement plans, and people gave their wedding rings. Everybody on staff, we all gave our life savings, everything that we had. And people were giving unbelievably sacrificially. And on that Sunday after a month of praying and fasting, our people gave, as I said, over \$1 million in cash and commitments to give a total of \$3.5 million over three years.

I went the following Monday morning to meet Mr. Edgar and said, "Dr. Edgar, we have the money for the down payment, and we have 3.5 million in commitments. We're ready to buy the property." And he said, "I've changed my mind. I'm raising

the price from \$6 million to \$8 million.” And when he said that, my heart sank. Because I knew \$6 million was pretty much the maximum we could afford, that we could go after. It was really stretching in faith. It was a big risk for us. Eight million had gone from faith to presumption, and we knew it was out of our league. And so we weren’t able to buy it, and I went back, and I sat down in my office, and I thought, “God, You got a problem. What are you going to tell those people next Sunday? Because Lord, this is not my church, and that was not my money that was given. All of us have sacrificed. These people have sweat drops of blood. They’ve given everything they’ve got. You can’t get blood out of a turnip. And we’ve lost this piece of property after we’ve just scarified and spent months in planning and preparation to buy it. What are You going to do?”

And I really put it back on God, and I was down and discouraged. But again, God had a plan. And two days after this piece of property fell out, the deal fell out, a third piece of property called the Lyons property, which we’re going to go look at next, was 113 acres, and it was for \$3.5 million. We immediately went and made an offer on the property. But it was also the best deal I’d seen around, and seven different developers offered a deal on the property. Four of them offered cash. I knew we didn’t have cash, so I went and met with General Lyons. I said, “General Lyons, we’re a church. We don’t have cash. We’ve got a million, a million point two, but what would it take for you to sell it to the church?” He said, “If you can close the deal by the end of the year, we’ll sell it to the church.”

Well, by this time, it’s October, and we only have about 60 days left to finish this deal. So I went back to the people on Sunday, and I said, “Folks, we’re either going to get this property, or we lose out. This is the last major piece of property in the Saddleback Valley. What do you think we ought to do?” And of course, everybody said, “Let’s go for it, Pastor.” And our people went back, and in the last 60 days of 1987, they gave another million dollars in 60 days over and above their normal offerings, right in the middle of Christmas season, to try to close the deal on this property. It was an amazing thing.

We came up to the last business day of 1987, and we were still a little bit short. And on that day, a banker called me. And that banker called me. He didn’t even go to our church. And he said, “You know, it has been the policy of our bank to not loan money to churches, but I believe in the vision of Saddleback Church.” And he said, “I’m not only going to change the policy of our church, but I’m going to personally give a quarter of a million dollars.” And because of that gift on the last business day by a person who doesn’t even live in this area, we were able to close the deal on this piece of property. And it became home at last. That’s what we

thought. We had services out here, and we put up a sign that said, "Future Home of Saddleback Church."

Then we've discovered that after you possess the land that there are giants in the Promised Land. And the giants on this land were little birds called the gnat catcher. And all of a sudden, we were out of favor with the environmentalists. And over the next three years, the county charged us over \$100,000 a year in taxes on this land but would not let us build on it. And they came to us, and they said, "We will let you build on it under this circumstance. First, of the 113 acres, you will donate a hundred..." Let's see, what was it? "...a hundred and two acres to Orange County as open space, and you can build on about 9 or 10 acres of the property." They said, "Second, you will move 70 oak trees from the back of the property."

This property, as you see, goes up to all of these ledges up here, these ridges. "Move 70 oak trees from the back to the front of the property. You'll build an 80-foot berm here at the front of the property so that people here on San Diego Canyon Road cannot see the church, they can only see the trees. You cannot build a 7000-seat auditorium. You can build a 1000-seat auditorium and have seven services. And you will put in a charcoal filtration water system so that all the water that goes off your parking lot into this gutter, this little gutter right here, will be Evian pure."

And I said, "Wait a minute. Why does it have to be Evian pure? 500 yards right next to us is Cook's Corner, where the bikers are peeing in that gutter. Why does it have to clear from here to there?" Needless to say, we went through a battle with the county for three years. Even the Orange County Register and the LA Times came out with editorials in support of what the church was trying to do, and one of the titles called it "A Church Under Siege." And it said the audacity of what the government is trying to do to keep a church from building on property that it owns. And so we had letter-writing campaigns going to all the county supervisors. I took all the supervisors out to dinner. We were doing every political string we could. And finally, to no avail, I took the church directory, what at that time only had 18,000 names on it. And I walked in to the county supervisor of our area, and I laid that down on his desk. And I said, "Sir, there are 18,000 names in this directory, and they are members and attenders of Saddleback Church. And they're all in your district. Now you either gotta get us a place to live, for us to have a church home, or you gotta problem."

Well, within 90 days, the problem was solved. And to make a long story short, what happened is, this piece of property, while we owned it, went from \$3.5 million in value up to \$6.5 million in value, and we traded it for the piece of property that we now live on, which was worth about \$9.5 million, and we traded it even-Steven. We walked in with about \$6 million equity. To God be the glory. So the story of how we

got this land is really a story of faith and patience and lot of waiting and testing. While we were working on the land, on getting land, God was working on us. And one of the things we learned is that God's timing is perfect.

All during the time that we were trying to find land, and then buy land, and when we finally bought some then the county prevented us from building on it for two and a half years, a friend named Barry Hahn, and Valerie Hahn, his wife, were building Foothill Ranch. And there was one little piece of land connected with the Foothill Ranch project that was not really a part of the Ranch. It's the property that Saddleback now owns today. And when I went to the county supervisors and said, "You've gotta find us a piece to trade for," it was about a week later that a supervisor was at a party with Barry Hahn, and he told them about Saddleback's dilemma. And we were able to swap the piece of property in the canyon for the piece of property right here at the corner of Portola and El Toro Road and the freeway, which was not even in yet. God had a piece of property He had been holding for us that wasn't even on the map all the years we were looking for it. And when it finally came up, God had saved it just for us. God's timing is perfect.

So even after we got the land, we weren't able to move onto it because of the expense of what it would take. This property needed about \$9 million in developments, water, and sewage, and grading, and putting in roads even before we moved onto the property.

Finally, in December of 1992, we were ready to move onto our property. And so 6,000 people met here in the morning, and we walked out this way together with balloons and signs for what we called our Home At Last March. And 6,000 people marched, and I took the pulpit, and we put it on rollers. And I pushed the pulpit from Saddleback 2.0 to Saddleback 3.0. and when we got there, we had an outdoor service with 6,000 people. The LA Times and the Register called it Godstock. And it was a great blast, a lot of fun.

Now Saddleback 3.0 version was a very short period. It was only three years, from 1993 through 1995, but it was a very significant time that nobody who was here at that time will ever forget. It was the years that we were in the tent. After we moved out of Trabuco Hills High School, we moved onto this property, but there was nothing here. No trees. No plant life. It looked like what we called a moonscape. And we had leveled the entire thing, and all we had on it was a big, white tent that seated about 2,300 people in it. It was right here where the children's ministry building is now. There was a tent right there. And if you could imagine literally nothing else but dirt, a few parking lots, and a giant tent right here. And during that in-tent time, we had version 3.0.

Now what was some of the tests that we had during this time? Well, there was the 1993 financial crisis. When we moved out of Trabuco Hills High School and moved into this property, our attendance went up by 1,000 people instantly. Instantly went up by 1,000. In fact, I think it was more than that. And our offerings went up \$25,000 a week instantly. But our expenses, once we moved onto this property, went up to \$50,000 a week. On a monthly basis, we were going in the hole \$100,000 a month. And during that year of sacrifice, the Saddleback staff, first the pastors and then other staff members, said, "We will go without pay during this year, because we know that the people we've reached, when they become mature in the Lord, they'll start tithing, they'll start giving, and it'll all catch up." But it's just a period when we moved onto the property, and our expenses were so much greater than our income, that by the end of the year, we were almost \$1 million behind.

During that time, as I said, Saddleback staff and I went without salary most of the year, and others did, for many, many months. But we had a surprise miracle at the end of the year when a man called me up. And he said, "Rick, I want you to come in, and I have something for you." And it was a man who doesn't even attend this church. And I went to see him, and he handed me a check for \$1 million. And the debt that had been mounting during that year was all paid off in a miraculous gift.

There was a test on how long the county would allow us to use the portables. Now, I want you to look over here. Robert, swing the camera around. I want you to notice in 1992, December, we moved onto this property. The portables were put in for Sunday School classes, and now, let's see, well over 15 years later, some of the portables are still there. So the question of how long will the portables last were a whole lot longer than we thought they would. But they're going to be taken out with the completion of the new student zone.

The question was then, once we're on the property, what's next? What does God want us to do? During this time, there were so many sacrifices. People sacrificed to volunteer to clear this campus, to plant this campus, to help build. People sacrificed during time to build in an amazing way when people, again, were giving above and beyond. And a very small group of people gave sacrificially over a three-year period in order to build, once we were on the property, start building the next building.

One of the things that we'll always remember about the tent was the jet noise, because the El Toro Marine base was still open, and so two or three times every Sunday, the jets would just fly over the tents, and you could not hear a word. And I'd just have to stop talking, which is pretty hard for me, and I'd say, "Ladies and gentleman, there is the sound of freedom." And you would hear that sound going on and on.

During the Saddleback 3.0, we had a number of developments. We launched the Lay Counseling program. We did the first Purpose-Driven Life series. Celebrate Recovery was launched. It was the second series that we did here in the new tent. We developed the point-and-play format that Rick Muchow and I developed, where we teach and then sing, and teach and then sing. There was the opening of the toll road over here, which was in a major development. The toll road and a new emphasis on small groups.

And then after 15 years, the Purpose Driven Church book was published. And Purpose Driven began to go international. We began to train pastors all around the world. What are some of the lessons that we learned from Saddleback 3.0 and in those years when we were in the tent? Well, one of the attitudes was an attitude of toughness that we learned. That we're pioneers, that we could handle anything. We can handle more than other people. Don't complete. We would burn up in the summer. We would freeze in the winter. It would rain on us all during the spring, and in the fall the winds would blow through. And yet people continued to come.

Sometimes it was so cold. I once spilled a cup of iced water, and by the end of the evening, it was still there, and the ice had not melted, 'cause it was on a Saturday night, and it was freezing cold. In fact, one Sunday, on Easter Sunday, it snowed on Saddleback Mountain, and we put up 18 Porta-Pottys. And we called that the Easter we froze our keister. And it had rained the night before, and this giant tent had been filled with water. And as the wind gusts would come through, it would rip the tent open, dousing the people underneath with water periodically through the message. So about every five minutes as I was teaching, people would go, "Whoa," and another group would be involuntarily baptized. And then, "Whoa," and another group would be involuntarily baptized. But it was a year where we learned nothing will stop us. We're going to keep on keeping on. Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without. Other people may give up, but we don't.

And what were the blessings of Saddleback 3.0? Well, during that three-year period, 2,345 people were baptized, as they're saying, "I'm not ashamed to say I'm a follower of Christ." And our attendance while we were in the tent, grew from 5,651 to 10,213. So Saddleback was the only church in America to grow to over 10,000 in attendance without a building. And the theme verse that we chose for that period of time was 2 Corinthians 8:3: They gave not only what they could afford but far more, and they did it out of their own free will. And because of their sacrifices, we were able to go to Saddleback 4.0. and that's next.

1996, we began Saddleback 4.0, and that began when we finally moved into our first permanent building, the Worship Center. That happened because during the tent days, our people gave over a three-year period in a campaign called Time

to Build, about \$15 million to pay for this building. And everybody who comes to Saddleback today to worship sees the purposes of God, the five eternal purposes, from the great commandment and the great commission, spread across this wall. This wall was paid for by the pennies and nickels and dimes of the children's offering during Time to Build, which I believe was over \$30,000. So that every time we go into this building, we remember that we do it on purpose. And although Saddleback is constantly changing, and we're always going through a new phase, the purposes of God always remain the same.

So let's go in on purpose, and I'll tell you a little bit more about phase four.

Now, I'm sitting here in the Worship Center in a spot I rarely get to sit in, and that's the bleachers. You notice over my right shoulder here is the clock. That was put there for my benefit. I want you to know, I've never, ever paid any attention to it, as you obviously know. But I am filling out my Saddleback response card, which we have been filling out now for nearly three decades since the first service of the church. And over time, I have read literally hundreds of thousands of these cards and helped people through their spiritual journey with prayer requests, and needs, and commitments, and all kinds of neat things.

Now here in the Worship Center and in Saddleback 4.0, we did a number of different things that were revolutionary for our church and for others. We did 40 Days of Purpose, then we did 40 Days of Community. We did 50 Days of Faith and 50 Days of Love. We did 40 Days of Peace. And then we built the children's building. We built the Ministry Center. We started all the campus venues. So many different things, so that in that 10-year period between '96 and 2005, Saddleback more than doubled in attendance from about 10,500 to almost 22,000 people in December of '05. And in that phase, Saddleback 4.0, we baptized 16,000, over 16,000 new believers in Christ in Saddleback 4.0.

Now in each of Saddleback's phases, from 1.0 to 4.0, we've had different target groups we've been trying to reach. In 1.0, we primarily were reaching just people in Laguna Hills and Mission Viejo. When we moved to Saddleback 2.0, which was in Trabuco Hills High School, all of a sudden we started reaching people from all over the Saddleback Valley, not just Mission Viejo and Laguna Hills. When we went to Saddleback 3.0 and we moved into the tent, all of a sudden we started reaching people from all over Orange County. But then when we moved into this building, and we began reaching out in Saddleback 4.0, all of a sudden we were reaching people from all over Southern California.

We've come to the point in the size of Saddleback's growth and its influence world-wide that I couldn't even tell you everything that's going on in our church. I couldn't

tell you about the hundreds of ministries that we do in the community. I couldn't tell you about the thousands of small groups and what each of them are doing, and the hundreds of peace trips that are going all around the world as we begin to launch out and help other churches. But we do know this, that all of our best days are ahead of us. And as we move into the future, we know that God is going to bless us as we continue to pass the test to be willing to sacrifice and to trust Him in faith. Now let's look at the future.

