



# Healthy Church Distinctives



# Introduction

We believe the church serves as God's primary instrument of redemption in the world and has the leading role in His global story.

To that end, GSI is committed to partnering with the sending church – both locally and globally – in the Great Commission in the most challenging regions of the world, no matter what the cost, through cross-cultural church planting, making disciples, and the translation of God's Word among people groups who currently have no access to the Gospel.

As we partner with the sending church to plant a church, it is paramount to understand what healthy characteristics we are discipling people towards in order to see the task completed in each people group.





## Authority of Scripture

A healthy New Testament church understands the centrality of Scripture in the life of the church community. The church recognizes that all Scripture is the very Word of God and is the only authority for its life and governance. In light of the Scriptures, the church understands and proclaims the message of the gospel of grace by faith in Jesus Christ, and protects that gospel message from all heresies. Because a healthy church regards the Bible as the supreme, controlling authority over all that it believes and does, it also holds to the inspiration, inerrancy, authority, sufficiency, and clarity of Scripture, interpreting each text of the Bible according to the grammatical and historical context of the text.

Joshua 1:8

Isaiah 40:8

Ephesians 6:10-17

2 Timothy 3:14-17

2 Peter 1:20-21

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## Preaching and Teaching

Biblical preaching and teaching is central to the weekly gatherings of the church and its worship. Biblical preaching and teaching consists of the exposition and application of Scripture to the Christian life. In this way, the entire life of a healthy church is saturated with faithful Bible teaching by godly shepherds of the church.

Romans 10:14-15

Romans 15:15-16

1 Timothy 4:13

2 Timothy 4:2



John 3:3

Romans 12:1-2

Ephesians 2:4-5

Ephesians 4:22-24

1 Corinthians 6:20

## Biblical Conversion

The call to salvation in Jesus Christ comes through the clear proclamation of the gospel of faith and repentance in God's Word in the power of God's Spirit. Accompanying the call to salvation in Christ is a call to freedom, obedience, holiness, and suffering in Christ. The believer's union with Christ in salvation forms the unshakeable foundation of a disciple's primary identity, now and forever.

Ephesians 4:11-12

Philippians 2:3-16

1 Timothy 3:1-7

2 Timothy 4:3-4

Titus 1:5-9

Hebrews 13:17

1 Peter 5:1-5

## Biblically Qualified Elders and Deacons

The New Testament uses the terms pastor, elder, and overseer synonymously, all referring to those who shepherd the flock of God's people in a local church community. Biblically, elders are a group of men who lead the church in plurality in order to preach, pray, equip, and direct the work of the church. They must be men who meet the biblical qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 as mature, faithful disciples of Christ, able to teach, holding firmly to sound doctrine. Biblical deacons are those who faithfully support the work of the elders through service to the church in facilitating and coordinating ministry on behalf of the elders. Deacons must meet the qualifications that Paul defines in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

## Discipleship

Members of healthy churches intentionally invest spiritually in one another's lives in order that all might grow to maturity in Christ. This discipling produces transformed lives and the renewing of minds to Christ-likeness, as believers become living sacrifices as individuals and as a church body in order to propagate God's character and purposes here on earth.

Matthew 28:18-20

Luke 6:40

John 13:34

Acts 2:42

Romans 12:1-2

Romans 12:10

1 Corinthians 11:1

Ephesians 4:32

Philippians 2:3;

2 Timothy 2:2

1 Peter 4:9

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## Corporate Worship and Prayer

Biblically healthy churches come together weekly to offer worship to the triune God because he is worthy of praise and adoration. A healthy church is devoted to regularly singing, praying, reading, preaching, and seeing the word together. Seeing the Word together entails the observance of the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and baptism by immersion. During corporate worship, believers gather to the "let the message of Christ dwell among them richly as they are taught and admonish one another in all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the spirit, singing to God with gratitude in their hearts."

Acts 2:42

Romans 12:12

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Colossians 3:14-17

1 Timothy 2:8





Matthew 9:37-38

Romans 1:16

2 Corinthians 5:20

2 Timothy 4:5

1 Peter 3:15-16

## Evangelism

A healthy church is committed to making the message of the gospel known to those around them. Members are willing and able to give a reason for the hope they have in Christ in a gentle and gracious manner. The community of believers recognize that they are a called-out group of Christ's ambassadors and, compelled by the love of Christ, hold out the message of hope to those who are not yet saved, believing that the gospel is the power of God for salvation.

Acts 2:42-47

Acts 4:32-34

Romans 12:9-18

1 Corinthians 1:10

Philippians 2:3-5

1 Peter 4:8-11

## Community

A healthy New Testament church is a fellowshiping community. They sacrificially share their lives with one another for mutual edification. They open their homes to one another and show hospitality. Within the community context, Spirit-led members make decisions not be divisive by gossiping/slandering one another, but agreeing with one another in the Lord and uniting together in mind and thought. In this way, they enjoy the favor of the Lord and are a testimony to unbelievers, marked by the love of Christ and humbly functioning together as one body under Christ as Head to the glory of God.



## Church Polity and Membership

Members of the church hold one another accountable for their corporate obedience to the Word of God, and leaders of the church watch over and equip the flock that has been entrusted to them. Leaders employ appropriate processes to know those under their care, actively implementing both formative and corrective church discipline according to the instructions given in Scripture, always praying and laboring for restoration of an erring brother or sister.

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## Commitment to the Great Commission

A healthy New Testament church is concerned about fulfilling the Great Commission and reaching those who have not yet come to faith in Jesus Christ by declaring the gospel and making disciples of all nations in the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 18:15-20

Acts 2:38-42

Romans 12:4-5

Ephesians 4:1-6

Colossians 2:12

Hebrews 10:24-25

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Matthew 28:18-20

Mark 16:15-16

Luke 24:46-48

John 20:21-23

Acts 1:8

Revelation 5:9

Revelation 7:9





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