



*And it came about that as he journeyed, he was
approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from
heaven flashed around him...
Who art thou Lord? ...I am Jesus.
Acts 9*

Damascus Road Church

The Gospel Class 1

Introduction

What is the purpose of this class?

This class is designed to introduce you to Damascus Road Church. It is a comprehensive course offered to anyone, suggested for everyone, and required for those who wish to officially join the community of Damascus Road and participate in leadership. Its curriculum serves as a starting point, a foundation, a set of lenses through which you can understand why we do what we do. As an introduction to our church, this class should answer some commonly asked questions about what it means to be a *believer in Christ*, what it means to be a *part of the body of Christ* invisible, as well as what it means to be a *member of Damascus Road Church* in particular. We will also explore how you can best take advantage of and become involved in the multitude of opportunities that come with being a part of our community.

This class will provide a general overview of who we are. Through the time you spend in class and in reading the pages of information provided, we trust you will begin to see our vision as we discuss our core values, our essential doctrinal beliefs, our philosophy of ministry, and our mission in this world, and in Marysville, as a church of Jesus Christ. It is very likely that some of your more specific questions may remain unanswered and new ones will be formulated. Knowing this, we encourage you to freely ask any question in the class for clarification or contact any of the church staff members to find the answers. We believe that God has brought you here for a purpose, and we are dedicated to helping you discover, cultivate, and fulfill that purpose.

We hope that *The Gospel Class* will be the first step in a long and God glorifying process of spiritual growth and fruitful service *in our family to our community*.

Session Topics:

1. Introduction & Purpose
2. The Bible
3. God
4. Creation & Sin
5. Salvation
6. Spiritual Warfare
7. Spiritual Disciplines
8. Stewardship
9. The Cultural Mandate
10. The Church

Why are we named Damascus Road?

"Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus..." Acts 9:3-5

Names are important. In them we find meaning, identity, and distinction. Some names are unique; others are common. Some names are inherently strong; others are superficially weak. Some names can propel you forward and push you outward; others can hold you back and stunt your growth. All names serve as the introduction, the first impression, the process of setting the stage. A name immediately reveals something to the curious and serves as a monument to the familiar. To the curious, a name provides a glimpse of who or what you are and in some way distinguishes you from who or what you are not. For the familiar, a name provides a history; it retells a story, it serves as a reminder of why you are here.

Unfortunately, the naming of post-modern era churches has evolved into a competition to crown the greatest non-conformist. Driven by an aversion for tradition and institution, eager church planters begin their search for a meaningful name in the languages of Ancient Greek or Latin. When they find that every Greek or Latin term with any significant meaning has been taken and used by at least five other churches, their search soon morphs into an outlandish experiment that results in a name projecting little more than some weird cult-like identity. How quickly they forget the importance of a name.

God has always placed a high value on names. The Scriptures speak about several men whose very identities were tied to their names. Men like Abram, Jacob, and Cephas experienced powerful callings and subsequent transformations. Their experiences began with a face-to-face encounter with God that climaxed in the bestowal of a new name—a reformed identity. Their new names embodied their distinctiveness and anticipated the mission that God would accomplish through them.

Our church's name finds its origins in the experience of Saul, a man walking on the road to Damascus as recorded in the ninth chapter of Acts. Saul stepped onto the road hell-bent on finding and imprisoning Christians. With every zealous step he unwittingly walked closer to a face-to-face encounter with the one true God he thought he was serving. Without warning, there appeared a light, a voice, and finally a name...Jesus. It was on this road that Saul the Persecutor of Jesus became Paul the Apostle of Jesus. He left this road a newly transformed creation and spent the rest of his life compelled to proclaim the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is why we exist—to meet Jesus and leave changed.

The Damascus Road experience is a story of complete reformation. It is noteworthy that Paul does not walk alone. He is aided by a community of believers beginning with a reluctant Ananias, then Baranabus, and finally by the apostles. At Damascus Road, we seek to share your journey as we glorify God for the transformation he initiates.

What is the purpose of Damascus Road?

Vision: *To be a community that brings glory to God through lives freed and transformed by the Gospel.*

A vision statement is a guiding image of what we want to see in the future—what we want to be. It focuses on tomorrow; it is inspirational; it is simple; and it is timeless. If it is too specific, our vision becomes little more than a yearly goal to achieve, a box to check off. An enduring vision describes what we aim to become and commit to be as we strive to impact the world around us. Living our particular vision means living the Gospel of Jesus Christ beyond Sunday mornings. As the gospel transforms our own church, we will be prepared to transform the larger community.

Mission: To see Jesus transform Marysville and its surrounding area into a God-glorifying city by living and working as missionaries sent into culture through which we faithfully proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A mission is a concisely worded statement defining the purpose of our church's existence. If our vision statement looks inward at our church, our mission statement looks outward on the community and people we hope to impact. It identifies WHO we have been called to reach, declares WHAT we have been called to accomplish, and communicates the overall strategy of HOW we have been called to accomplish it in the context we find ourselves (see core value mission). Accomplishing our mission demands we are conscious of culture. If our church is to remain socially relevant and gain a hearing, we believe it is crucial to recognize, and be in contact with, popular thought and practice. By studying and engaging the culture, we believe we will effectively communicate the gospel and experience lives transformed (Session 9)

What are core values and what are ours?

Our core values are the central and most essential qualities of our being. They embody who we are; these few words represent powerful convictions that permeate everything we do as a church. If the vision is a skeleton of what we want to look like, the core values are the internal tissues, muscles, and organs that make the vision come to life. More than hollow words, these phrases define what is most important in guiding our behavior as we actively pursue our vision for the church and accomplish our mission in the community.

The **experience of Damascus Road embodied in our name** provides a surface level snapshot of what we value. It is our church's convictions, however, that extend beneath the surface to reveal who we are at our core. What convictions make Damascus Road distinctively what it is? Of course, the first way to answer that question is to examine our *official doctrinal statement*. This statement summarizes what we believe the Bible teaches about God, humanity, sin, salvation, the Bible, the church, the world, and so on. Damascus Road stands with *all* churches in affirming the Apostle's Creed, and with the Protestant and Reformed churches in affirming the teachings of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

But in every culture, a church has to determine *how* these doctrinal commitments are to be, embodied and applied to the particular issues, minds and hearts of the people where the church exists. Our "how" can be called the *theological vision* or, more simply, the *core values* the congregation. At Damascus Road, these basic guiding values are broken down in the hopes of being both simple and timeless.

The following is a summary:

TRUTH

We stand firmly on the truth of God's spoken Word. It is the Scriptures that reveal to us who God is, who we are, and how we find our way in a fallen world. We believe in the plain, clear, bold, and consistent lifting up of God's Word. The preaching, teaching, and decision-making should point to the Scripture as the source of all meaning and direction. The love of Scripture is further encouraged with verse-by-verse expository preaching of God's Word centered on Jesus. We believe in tackling difficult, controversial, or "offensive" passages unapologetically and with authority. We are not "seeker-sensitive", as theologically there are no seekers, but we believe the direct unadulterated proclamation of biblical truth is the most relevant way to reach the lost and equip the saints. Without question, the teaching and preaching must connect with today's reality, but this is not accomplished through compromising truth, cleverness of speech, or any other approach that seeks man's approval before God's. Everything should be driven by, steered toward, or otherwise point to the truth and the person of Jesus Christ as revealed in all of the Scriptures and our need for salvation in Him.

WORSHIP

We desire to bring glory to God and His Kingdom through a lifestyle of worship. Our church aims to redeem worship from the limited definition of praise through a personal preference in music style. We aim to avoid worshipping worship by seeking to glorify God in every moment and through all aspects of our lives. We are creators not consumers. As possessors of the Imago Dei, God has empowered us with the ability to create. Since music naturally becomes a big part of our identity, we are committed to creating and playing music that glorifies God, preaches the gospel, and connects with culture. Because not everyone is a musician, however, we encourage individuals to worship and serve God creatively through their vocations and distinctive passions. True worship should involve all of who we are—our hearts, minds, bodies, marriages, finances, as well as our unique talents and giftedness. We must not go so far as mistakenly worshipping the creation but should encourage creative expressions to become another medium through which we communicate our love for Him..

MISSIONAL

This is not our mission; we joined the mission God began in the Garden of Eden. He pursues a loving and gracious relationship with the humanity whom he created and who rebelled against Him. He offers salvation to those who will repent and believe. God's mission comes to climax in the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who was SENT into the world to save sinners from Hell unto himself. Jesus SENDS the Holy Spirit to empower US as Jesus' people, who are SENT into the world to proclaim the good news that sinners can be forgiven and that lives can be transformed. Jesus has sent us to the lost. Evangelism, therefore, is not something we do it is something we are every day. "Reaching" the world means you cannot adopt a "come to us" mentality. We must enter, experience, and love a broken world while we communicate truth to them in an environment they identify with. These types of environments are naturally generated as we approach our community like missionaries, speaking in their own language and custom, inviting them to join our community just as they are--creating a place to belong before belief. We refuse to separate and protect ourselves from living culturally or confuse it with living worldly—which is disobedience to God. We do as Jesus did, incarnating into our world, living in it, redeeming it, and through it glorifying God. The church must habitually reform everything we do in order to avoid building a "church culture" that cannot genuinely connect with the people.

COMMUNITY

We endeavor to model the community eternally existing within the triune God. We believe that God exists in a perfect community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and that He created men and women not to live individually, but in community. No one wants to be alone. We believe we were built for community; we need people to share our hurts and our joys with. Kingdom community is not about programs; it is about people. It is about each individual fulfilling their God-ordained role as a man and a woman to serve one another to model His ideal Kingdom on earth. Our world often works against community because it is hard and uncomfortable to love anyone not like you. But that is what Jesus did without compromising the truth. True Kingdom community proclaims the truth of the gospel by how they love. The gospel says Jesus accepts us even though we're unlovable, dirty, and lost. We want our city to experience this kind of love and acceptance. We truly desire people to "come as they are", not so we can build a big church, but so that through genuine community, they will meet Jesus and find a family. In such a fragmented impersonal world, the church must be a place where people connect in the deepest way using their talents, blessings, gifts, and hearts in friendship, service, worship, prayer, caring, nurturing, & love

Acts 2:42-47

*Those who accepted His message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching (**Biblical Truth**) and to the fellowship (**Community**) to the breaking of bread and to prayer (**Worship**). Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts (**Community**). They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people (**Worship**). And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (**Missional Life**).*

The GOSPEL'S CENTRALITY

All of these Core Values fit within the gospel. Simply, the Gospel is the 'good news' of God's redemption of mankind.

...Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are all still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared to me. 1 Corinthians 15.3b-8

The gospel is not just the A-B-C's, but the A to Z of Christianity. The gospel is not just the minimum required doctrine necessary to enter the kingdom, but the way we the kingdom real in our lives here on earth. We are not saved by the gospel and then changed by obedience, but the gospel itself transforms us (II Cor. 5.17), is the way we grow (Gal. 3:1-3) and are renewed (Col. 1:6). It is the solution to each problem, the key to each closed door, the power through every barrier (Rom. 1:16-17).

The Gospel's core meaning

The gospel is not that we develop a righteousness apart from God so that we're deemed "good" and then he owes and accepts us, rather, that he develops a righteousness through Jesus Christ and gives it to us (II Cor. 5:21). The gospel is not that "it doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you've been good," but that "it doesn't matter if you've been good, as long as you believe in Christ as your Savior". The gospel is not that we go from being irreligious to being religious, it's that we realize that our reasons for both our religiosity and our irreligiously were essentially the same and essentially wrong. We were seeking to be our own saviors, develop our own righteousness, and thereby keep control of our own life. When we trust in Christ as our Savior, we turn from trusting either self-determination or self-denial for our salvation — from either moralism or hedonism.

The Gospel avoids legalism or liberalism, moralism or relativism. Yet, the gospel does not produce "something in the middle". Instead, it produces something different from both. By critiquing both religion and irreligion (Matt. 21:31), the gospel shows us a God far more holy than the legalist can bear (He *had* to die because we could not satisfy His holy demand), and yet, far more merciful than a humanist can conceive (He *had* to die because he loves us). Often both religion and irreligion are attempts to work their way to God's acceptance. Much of our feelings despair, guilt, fear, and anger emerge in our life when we adopt a works-based mentality and allow something other than Jesus (career, family, moral performance, romance) operate as our *functional savior*.

The gospel affects everything we do at Damascus Road. We assume that most people have not heard or thoughtfully considered the deeper implications of the gospel. We exist to bring things "in line with the Gospel" (Gal. 2:14) which renews us spiritually, psychologically, corporately, and socially.

New way with God

We move from an impersonal "boss-employee" relationship to a personal "Father-child" relationship; from a fear-based self-interested way to be moral to a love-based desire to delight in our God.

New way with Lordship

We are saved by His grace at such an infinite cost to him. He can, therefore, ask anything of us and we can serve Him joyfully.

New way with the self

We no longer take our identity from what we or *others* think of us but from what *God* thinks of us in Christ (I Cor. 4:3-4). The gospel produces neither an inferiority complex (since we are a treasure in Christ), nor a

superiority complex (since we are sinners standing only by grace). This unique boldness and humility at once is a sign of the transforming power of the Gospel.

New way with problems

We approach problems honestly. The moralist says: “repent, you are not living right”. The Psychologist says: “you must accept yourself just as you are”. The Gospel says: “only Jesus can be your functional savior and give meaning to our reality.”

Gospel reconciliation between individuals

In the gospel, Christians become a new people of God, united to Christ and to each other. As the gospel humbles us and assures us of God’s love, we are freed from either envy or pride, either inferiority or superiority. We no longer receive our sense of worth through the approval or power of men. Our relationships become things of beauty, driven by love (Gal. 5:6) in which we are neither using people nor overly “needy” of them. Instead we are freed to serve, affirm, or confront — whatever is best for the moment.

Gospel reconciliation between people

The gospel calls us to repent of ALL of our prejudices big and small. It removes cultural pride and brings down racial identity as a component of identity, making it possible to avoid idolizing one’s cultural strengths and appreciating those of others. Essentially, the gospel makes us humble — which heals the racial/nationality brokenness (Gal. 2:14; Acts 2:1-12). We no longer use our culture’s strengths for self-justification (racism). We now can look at others who are not like us and who are not even Christians and know that we can learn from them (since we are not saved because of our wisdom or performance, but because of Christ). Christianity becomes the greatest basis for civil relationships in a pluralistic society.

Sociologically, all injustice, violence, strife, dependency, intolerance come to the degree that something besides Jesus (wealth, race/blood, the state, human reason) is operating as our functional savior.

Gospel centered worship in the community

Worship is the process by which we continually attribute the most worth to Jesus. Many other things compete with Christ for this place of worthiness, and the Bible calls them idols. John Calvin referred to our hearts as “idol factories”, constantly manufacturing new objects of worship. As individuals and as a unified body, we highly value the identification of idols that compete with the one true God. Once these idols are identified, they are exposed (repentance) as unworthy and unfulfilling and then destroyed. Driven by faith in Jesus, our Worship declares Jesus as more worthy, more valuable, and more fulfilling than anything else.

Through an emphasis on the gospel, we seek to promote this ongoing process in the private lives of those we serve. On the corporate level we hope to see people go through this process as we gather to celebrate the “good news”. If there is no personal transformation occurring in the body, then corporate worship will be like a lifeless committee meeting instead of an encounter with the living God. If, on the other hand, we are being personally transformed, then our worship will be alive and outsiders will be attracted to what is happening (1 Cor. 14:24,25).

Gospel Respect

The gospel teaches us to have deep respect for non-Christians. Since we are saved only by grace, it is our responsibility to humbly demonstrate our reliance on Christ, and live out our security and peace as we boldly tell His story.

Gospel Hope

The gospel teaches us to have hope for non-Christians. No one is ever seen as “too far away”, since every conversion, including your own, is a supernatural miracle of the heart.

Gospel Courage

The gospel keeps us from over-dependence on appearances and in the approval of others. This clears the way for speaking God’s truth directly. The gospel should also prevent us from speaking arrogantly as we remember our own redemption.

Gospel Love

The gospel prevents us from defensiveness and the need to win arguments and prove ourselves through witnessing. We no longer need take things personally. We do not love people now in order to evangelize; we evangelize only because we love them.

Gospel Mission

Paul says that the gospel does not just have power, but rather it is the power of God (Rom. 1:16-17). We see this power in the gradual of inexorable growth of the kingdom of God (Matt. 11:12, 13:1-23).

A movement of priests

Every believer is a prophet, priest and king — we are a “royal priesthood” (I Pet. 2:9). At Damascus Road the laity is released to pastor, nurture and minister.

A movement of churches

We aim to plant or support the planting of churches with the same gospel based core values into every neighborhood and people group in the city, county, state, and country. It will take more than one church, but a movement of churches, to transform this world and spread the gospel (see lesson 10).

A movement of giving

The gospel makes us generous — which heals the social brokenness. For people with means, it gives us a model of sacrificial giving in Christ (II Cor. 8:2) which we now owe to others (Matt. 18:21-35), even to those who are undeserving, like we were (Is. 64:6; Luke 6:32-35). One of the marks of a heart truly touched by grace is a life poured out in deeds of mercy and justice (Is. 1:10-17; Matt. 25:35-36; Jms. 2:12-14). At the same time, the gospel empowers the poor to self-sufficiency through its hope (Luke 1:52).

All of our work matters to God

The institutionalized church has made religion and the Christian establishment into an idol. The gospel clears out religiosity and makes so called “secular” work as valuable and God-honoring as Christian ministry. When you use your gifts in work — whether by practicing law, tilling the field, mending broken bodies, or nurturing children — you are answering God’s calling to serve the human community.

God matters to all our work

We also believe that the gospel shapes and affects the motives and methods we use in our work. We encourage Christians to offer up their work to the God who saved them, transforming their vocational lives by working in line with the gospel. We do not want Christians to privatize their faith away from their work,

nor to express it in terms of subculture. We desire to see growing Christians working in their vocations both with excellence and Christian distinctiveness, thus transforming the culture from the inside out.

What is Damascus Road's basic strategy and structure?

Led by our commitment to the Gospel and Core Values, Damascus Road seeks to organize the ministries of our church so that we can work together, by the power of the Spirit, to effect change in Marysville. While we have responsibility, ultimately, we do not have the power within ourselves to change anyone. Our questions, therefore, are not always how effective are our strategies, rather, how clear is our gospel communicated. Like Martin Luther, we believe that "everything preaches." We desire to use all that we are to call the people of our city and surrounding communities to a relationship with Jesus Christ. Here are some strategies:

1. **We are a missional community.** We are a sent people. We have a message to proclaim to the world and our job is not to ensure it is believed but that it is articulated clearly. The medium often is the message and we approach the culture as missionaries seeking the best medium to communicate the truth. We are not a people about personal preference but one that places the mission before the church and does not subjugate the mission to the church. In essence, we are by nature and choice a witnessing community, seeking the lost like Jesus sought the sick and sore—entering in their world, living with them, and loving them as he told them the truth.
2. **We are a worshipping community.** We are called to worship God in spirit and in truth. Our worship services are designed to point to Jesus and thereby glorify the one true God. We believe that worship is not just music, and does not happen for 20 minutes one day a week. While our services aim to build up those who believe, and to challenge and help those who doubt or seek, ultimately, we want to foster a lifestyle of worship that encapsulates all that we do, eat, sing, etc.
3. **We are a reforming community.** We enjoy change. This does not mean that we don't have some repetition or routines, but we do not follow tradition for tradition sake. Outside of scripture, there are no sacred cows and remain untouchable. As culture changes, we must change if we are to remain relevant and connected with those who need the gospel most.
4. **We are a creative community.** We desire to see the Imago Dei revealed in everyone. We value originality and imagination as ways to reflect the creative principle we share being made in God's image. We embrace art, music, film, etc. and encourage others to use such gifts to glorify God.
5. **We are a loving community.** We desire to be identified by our love for one another. The heart of our church is a unified bond reaching beyond all prejudices through which authentic friendships, needed encouragement and genuine caring develops.
6. **We are family community.** We support each other through intimate relationships as singles, couples, and families. Like brothers and sisters, we laugh, cry, and help each other in the best and worst of times. Additionally, are children and youth are of utmost importance. They are not a separate group abdicated to the "kiddie table", but also part of the one church. We nurture them within a gospel-centered community as we teach to them their need of Christ and model Christ-likeness before them.

7. **We are a learning community.** Many of us who become followers of Jesus, lack an understanding and familiarity with spiritual truth, and have little if any Christian background. Our classes and studies are designed to teach the basics of the faith and help Christians grow into servant leadership. We desire men, women, and children to have a firm grasp on the Scriptures and Christian doctrine.
8. **We are a praying community.** Without prayer and reliance on God's grace, all of our plans are hollow. God has commanded us to pray and ordained many things to come to pass through prayer. We continue to develop regular prayer times to seek God's favor and praise him for what he has already done.
9. **We are a giving community.** We match people with ministries. We give of our time and resources (financial, people, skills) where we are best created to serve within the church.
10. **We are a merciful community.** Community development and ministry of social service help reweave the physical and social fabric of our community. We are also a connecting community in that we recognize that we are not always best equipped to serve every need we might encounter. Our desire is to ensure we can connect anyone and everyone with someone who can minister to their specific

What does it mean to be a member of Damascus Road?

To be a member of our church is to make a promise to live according to the Word and to support the work of the congregation. In the Bible this is called "a covenant". Every believer is part of the church as *organism* (the Spiritual Body of Christ), but we are called to be a part of the local church as a *gathering*. A covenant is the basis for all society, according to the Bible: marriage, employment, citizenship, church membership, etc. are all relationships of accountability.

Membership in a church is not like membership in a social club or other organizations. Most organizations see their members as consumers, the ones whom the organization serves. The Church of Christ is a completely different community — membership means *ministry and service*, means going from being a consumer to becoming a co-owner who provides God's love and care to others. At Damascus Road, we take seriously that we are a church not for ourselves, but for others.

Why formal membership in a Church?

Of course, many of the benefits of a vital congregation are available to anyone who becomes involved, whether they are members or not. The term "Church" in the NT usually meant the specific local church like that at Ephesus or Corinth. Whether the believers actually joined local churches formally or simply maintained an informal association is clear. Here are five scriptural indications and our rationale for formal membership:

1. **The instructions for church discipline**
Matt. 18:15-17 & 1 Cor. 5 talk about putting a person out of the church ("remove" NASB, "expel" NIV) and treating him like an unbeliever. Since unbelievers were welcome at worship, removal of such a person must have indicated a distinct formal association.
2. **The meaning of the word "join"**
After the fiery end of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:13, no non-Christians "dared join them [the church], but the people [unbelievers] esteemed them highly." The Greek word for "join" has

strong connotations of commitment. The same word is also used to speak of sexual relationships (1 Cor. 6:16) and joining to the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17).

3. **The meaning of “the whole church”**

In 1 Cor. 14:23, Paul writes, “if the whole church comes together in one place...” In order for the leaders to have known if the “whole church” was there implies that a formal relationship had been established.

4. **The instructions for pastoral oversight and spiritual leadership**

Pastors/overseers/shepherds were to care for “all the flock” (Acts 20:28; cf. 1 Tim. 3; Acts 20; Phil. 1:1 & Titus 1). Leaders of the citywide churches must have had some listing of believers. Since leaders were accountable for the souls of the flock under their care (Heb. 13:17), they must have had some commitment for care.

5. **The biblical metaphors used to describe local churches**

Flock, temple, body, and household, are used specifically of local churches (Acts 20; Eph. 2; 1 Cor. 12; 1 Tim. 3). Each of these metaphors has a clear distinction of who is part of the church, and who isn't.

“In the New Testament there is no such person as a Christian who is not a church member. Conversion was described as ‘the Lord adding to the church’ (Acts 2:47). There was no spiritual drifting.” (Douglas Millar).

What are the benefits of membership at Damascus Road?

There has been much debate regarding the need for membership. Past negative experiences, fear of commitment, or simply misunderstanding of exactly what it means. We don't want to “sell” you on the benefits of membership so that you're persuaded to join us. Joining a church will not save you any more than your good works, your education, your culture, your friendships, your financial contributions, or your baptism will save you. Non-Christians should not seek to join a church, but learn more about what the Bible says a Christian is.

But, for those who are confessing Christians, we believe that living the Christian life alone is neither healthy nor wise. We believe that are some significant benefits to taking ownership in a church:

1. **You have the benefit of accountability to spiritual leaders.** Every believer is called to “obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls” (Heb. 13:17). This command assumes that you have a covenant with certain spiritual leaders. They are responsible for you and you to them. Some people may say, “I am accountable only to God”. Ultimately, only God has authority over you. But the doctrine of sin should sober us about making ourselves the sole judges over our own hearts, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9). Heb. 3:13 say we need others to exhort us “daily” lest we become hardened by sin.
2. **You shamelessly identify with Christ or his people** (Mark 8:38). Our hope is that you can speak with confidence and love about your identification with Christ and His church community. We all desire to see people share, talk about, and stand for Jesus. We also desire community that we want to talk about and share with others as opposed to inviting others because of a sense of duty or guilt.
3. **You encourage other believers to commit to the local body versus consume** (Heb. 10:24). We believe it is a good thing to encourage commitment. Our world encourages consumerism. In essence, consumers exhaust resources without giving of themselves—they're users. In the church, this manifests itself out in church-hopping where the believer skips around to different services looking for their next “fix.” Their refusal to commit allows them to slip out the backdoor because they are not personally

invested anywhere or connected with anyone. Asking people to make a covenant, or a promise, encourages them to take their participation in the body seriously by owning it. Ownership will always produce more satisfaction than renting.

4. **You stop being an independent Christian** (Matt. 18:15-17; Heb. 13:17). Community is a core value because God's very nature declares it. The early chapters of Genesis declare that we are not made to be alone. As a part of our community, you have a family there to love you, cry with you, laugh with you, and serve you.
5. **You participate in a stronger more unified effort of God's people.** Ecclesiastes 4:9 teaches that TWO people can accomplish more than TWICE as ONE. There is strength in numbers. There are very few things, if any, that are ever accomplished by one person. God has called a people, not a person, to join his mission. If we are to fulfill the calling of Jesus, we need each other.
6. **You may have opportunity lead church ministries or serve as a church leader.** You will not find a verse that says you must be a member to lead a Bible study. It does say, however, that pastors must watch over and protect the flock from false teachers and false doctrine. Membership is one means through which we can protect the purity of the word and the church. As a member, you agree to uphold the teachings of the church and respect its leadership decisions. It is both practical and wise to ensure those leading the flock do so from the same foundation under the same authority.
7. **You have greater opportunities to use your spiritual gifts** (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4). In other words, You openly manifest the reality of the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27). As part of the body of Christ, you serve a particular purpose. Without you we're missing parts! The body might function, but it certainly is not robust. When you are using your God given skill, gift, talent or resource for the body, you are fulfilling God's ideal for His community.

What are the membership commitments?

Membership at Damascus Road means that you have committed yourself to our family of believers — that you have agreed to participate as fully as you are able in the life, ministry and government of our church. Therefore, Damascus Road members must affirm the following promises as a vow unto the Lord:

You must believe the Gospel (see Session 5)

1. Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope except through his sovereign mercy?
2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?

You must seek to grow into the likeness of Christ, not through proud self-reliance, but through constant repentance and reliance on the Holy Spirit. (see Session 7)

3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes a follower of Christ?

Regular involvement in the life and ministry of the congregation. (see Session 8 and 10)

4. Do you promise to support the Church in its God-glorifying worship and work to the best of your ability?

You hold yourself accountable to the leadership and one another to live up to the above promises and seek to be a Biblical peacemaker in your relationships. (see Session 10)

5. Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to strive for its purity and peace?

What are the expectations of membership?

We encourage all of our members to live out their membership in the context of Scripture's expectation for the Christian life. God wants more than just a name on a list. He expects that you will actually grow into active membership at Damascus Road and flesh out your promise to "support the Church" through involvement in the ministry not just your checkbook.

There is, however, a proper balance between active involvement and over-commitment. Damascus Road seeks members who are thoughtful in their involvement levels. We feel it is important to serve but not to "burnout" in the name of the Lord. Our ministry activity should not become a barrier to living a God-honoring life. Your Christian walk ought to, therefore, be lived out in the following specific, practical ways:

1. **Daily walk with God**
Regular, daily use of the "means of grace" - Bible reading and prayer - methodically for your own spiritual growth. See Mark 1:35.
2. **Weekly worship with the people of God**
Attend services regularly and worship even when you are away from your home congregation. See Heb.10:24-25.
3. **Participation in a Community Group**
Community groups are the main way that pastoral care occurs at Damascus Road. For your own spiritual growth as well as others, you need to belong to a group. See Eph. 4:15-16.
4. **Ministry involvement**
Besides attending worship and a community group each member should find one way to minister to others. Use your gifts. See I Pet. 4:10-11.
5. **Stewardship of finances through tithes, gifts, time and talents.**
Give of your first fruits to support the work of God and do it joyfully from a pure heart. See Mal. 3:8-10; I Cor. 16:1-2; Acts 4; Mark 12:41-44
6. **Bring and include new people**
Let the gospel overflow from your life into the lives of those around you - at home, at work, in your circle of friends. Help those whom you bring to Damascus Road to be able to connect into the life of the church. See Acts 2:41-47.

How do I become a member of Damascus Road?

Your first step is attendance at *The Gospel and our Church Class*. The classes run for 10 consecutive weeks. You must complete all 10 classes, although you may make up missed sessions during the next cycle. Attendance at the seminar in no way obligates you to pursue formal membership—you may simply use the class to find out more about Damascus Road's vision, goals or what position we take on certain Christian doctrines.

When you have decided you want to belong to the Damascus Road family and have completed the above class, call the church office and schedule your membership interview with one of the pastors by emailing info@damascusroadchurch.org . Generally, these meetings last about 45 minutes.

The interviews are designed for several purposes: *First*, it gives us a chance to get to know you better, to hear your experience in coming to know God in Christ and to see what is happening presently in your spiritual life. *Second*, you have an opportunity to ask any questions you might have — about the church, its

position on certain issues and how the church operates. This is your opportunity to interact, to make sure you are comfortable with your decision to join Damascus Road.

If you have never been baptized, we would be delighted to baptize you after we meet at the next available opportunity. Let the pastor know during your interview and we will schedule your baptism.

What if I chose to *not* become a formal member?

If you decide to stay involved with Damascus Road without membership, there will be no effort to pressure you into joining. Do not join unless you are ready to be committed! A broken promise is worse than no promise at all.

We believe that membership in Damascus Road is a privilege. It is not required for full participation in church activities. We encourage you to join our covenant family, but we do not intend to exclude anyone from family activities if they have chosen not to pursue formal membership. Non-members may worship with us, be active in a home group or other ministry, go on the church retreats, etc.

We encourage you to continue this class even if you do not intend to join Damascus Road. There will be no pressure or obligation toward formal membership.

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Damascus Road Church - Official Doctrinal Statement

The Scriptures ~ we believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the verbally inspired word of God, the final authority for faith and life, inerrant in the original writings, infallible in its teachings and God-breathed (II Tim 3:16, 17; II Peter 1:20,21; Matt 5:18; John 16:12,13).

The Godhead ~ we believe in one living and true God, one in essence but eternally existing in three persons-- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Deut 6:4; Ps. 139:8; Matt. 28:19; II Cor. 13:14)- co-eternal in being, co-eternal in nature, co-equal in power and glory, having the same attributes and perfections; each equally deserving of the same worship and obedience (Acts 17:24-29; 1Cor. 8:6; Rev. 19:10)

The Person and Work of God the Father ~ we believe that God the Father, possessing all the divine attributes, orders and disposes all things according to his own purpose and grace (Ps. 145:8-9; Eph. 1:4-11) He is the absolute highest ruler of the universe, and He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Job 1:6; Ps. 1-3:19; Isa. 45:5-7; Rom. 11:33-36). He is the creator of all things (1Cor. 8:6). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass. He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1Chr.29:11). He does this so as in no way to be the author and approver of sin (John 8:40-44), nor to abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creations (1Peter 1:17). He has graciously chosen from all eternity those whom He was have as His own (Eph. 1:3-6).

The Person and work of Jesus Christ ~ we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God through whom God the Father created all things. He became man without ceasing to be God fusing humanity and deity into an indivisible oneness (Micah 5:2; John 14:9-10; 1 John 5:20), having been conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful man (John 1:1,2,14; Luke 1:35). We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His voluntary death on the cross as a representative, substitutionary, propitiatory sacrifice; and that our justification is made sure by

His literal, physical resurrection from the dead (Rom 3:24; I Peter 2:24; Eph 1:7; I Peter 1:3-5). We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God, where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate (Acts 1:9, 10; Heb 7:25, Heb 9:24; Rom 8:34; I John 2:1-2).

The Person and work of the Holy Spirit ~ we believe that the Holy Spirit is a person who, possessing all divine attributes, executes God's will in relation to mankind. He convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ by enabling man to know God, and transforming believers into Christ-likeness. He is the Supernatural agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ, indwelling them at the moment of salvation and sealing them unto the day of redemption (John 16:8-11; II Cor 3:6; I Cor 12:12-14; Rom 8:9; Eph 5:18). He is the divine teacher who guides believers into all truth as revealed in Scripture (John 16:13).

The Human Race ~ we believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but that through Adam's sin the race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God; and that man is totally depraved, and of himself utterly unable to remedy his lost condition (Gen 1:26,27 Rom 3:22, 23, 5:12; Eph 2:1-3, 12).

Salvation ~ we believe that God, in His sovereign grace and mercy, regenerates sinful men by the power of the Holy Spirit, not by any action of their own, bringing them to new life. God grants to them the gifts of faith and repentance, which they then exercise by believing in Christ and turning from their sins in love for God. As a result of this faith, based upon the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, God justifies or makes righteous the one who believes. God's gift of faith, and the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the elect, results in good works. These good works flow from true, saving faith; they are a necessary result of faith, but are not to be considered necessary to the gaining of justification, which is by God's grace through faith alone, so that no man can boast. (Eph 2:8-10; John 1:12; Eph 1:7; I Peter 1:18-19).

Eternal security and assurance of believers ~ we believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 6:37-40, 10:27-30; Rom 8:1, 38, 39; I Cor 1:4-8; I Peter 1:5). We believe it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word which clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion to the flesh (Rom 13:13,14; Gal 5:13; Titus 2:11-15).

The ministry and spiritual gifts ~ we believe that God is sovereign in the bestowing of spiritual gifts for the maturing of believers. We believe it is the believer's responsibility to attempt to discover and develop their sovereignly given spiritual gift(s) We believe it is the privilege and responsibility of every believer to minister according to the gift(s) and grace of God given to him (Rom 12:1-8; I Cor. 13; I Peter 4:10-11). We believe the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs at conversion and is the placing of the believer into the Body of Christ. We also believe that particular spiritual gift(s) are neither essential (proving the presence of the Holy Spirit), nor an indication of deep spiritual experience (I Cor. 12:7,11,13 & Eph. 4:7-8). We believe that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith, in accord with His own will, for the sick and afflicted (John 15:7 & I John5: 14, 15).

The Church ~ we believe that the church, which is the body and espoused bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism made up of all born-again persons of this present age (Eph 1:22,23; 5:25-27; I Cor 12:12-14; II Cor 11:2). We believe the supreme authority of the church is the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18; 1 Cor 11:3; Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18). We believe in the establishment and continuance of local churches as clearly taught and defined in the New Testament scriptures (Acts 14:27, 18:22, 20:17, I Tim 3:1-3 & Titus 1:5-11). We believe in the autonomy of the local churches, free of any external authority and control (Acts 13:1-4, 15:19-31, 20:28; Rom 16:1,4; I Cor 3:9, 16, I Cor5: 4-7, 13; I Peter 5:1-4). The believer's baptism and the Lord's supper are ordinances of the church and serve as scriptural means of testimony for the church in this age (Matt 28:19,20; Acts 2:41,42; Acts 18:8; I Cor 11:23-26).