



Frequently Asked Questions

These brief answers to common questions aim at brevity and can't say everything that could, and should, be said on a given subject. But we hope they provide a clear idea of where we are, and provide a helpful starting point for discussion.

Church Partnership –Are you part of a denomination?

The word “denomination” can mean many things—from the looser association of Southern Baptist Churches to the strong central organization of Anglican and Methodist churches. This is why we say we're part of a “family of churches” called Sovereign Grace Churches. We believe this reflects the New Testament example of interdependence. In Sovereign Grace each church is led by its own elders but partners with other churches for mission, theological integrity, and certain aspects of government. Cross of Grace is its own separate legal entity, owns all its property and assets, and voluntarily partners with Sovereign Grace. The aspects of government that involve Sovereign Grace include the following standards for ordination, courts of judicial appeal for both elders and members, and funding and approval for church planting endeavors.

Marriage –Who should be married and how?

God defines marriage as being between one man and one woman as a reflection of the gospel mystery (Ephesians 5). God calls believers to save sexual intimacy for marriage, but celebrates it in marriage. Marriage is more than a legal commitment but a spiritual, emotional, physical commitment before God and is meant to be for life.

However, divorce is painful reality in our world today and few lives have not been touched by its effects. Scripture does not encourage divorce and we encourage all possible avenues be used to work toward reconciliation. Scripture does allow for divorce in the specific cases of adultery (Matt 19:8-9) or complete abandonment by someone demonstrated to be an unbeliever (1 Cor 7:15). Each situation is unique and our elders will seek to prayerfully examine and walk with people through these situations.

In an effort to build strong marriages Cross of Grace offers an intentional program of premarital counseling, as well as marriage counseling when needed. Our hope is to encourage our members in their commitments before God in any way we can.

Same-Sex Relationships –What does the Bible say?

Scripture is clear that marriage is as God designed in Genesis 2—a lifelong union of a husband and wife. The Bible calls for all relationships outside of marriage to adhere to this clear sexual ethic. However, the Bible also calls for a compassionate and loving

response to those dealing with any sin, including sexual sins. Not all are called to marry (1 Cor 7) and outside marriage Christians are called to glorify God with their whole lives.

At Cross of Grace want to lovingly proclaim the ultimate hope of Jesus to all, serve them, and point them to the truth of God's Word. We understand that the issue of same-sex attraction is complex and often involves biological, emotional, and spiritual aspects that must be carefully and lovingly explored in light of Scripture. Our church desires to be a place of hospitality and love where anyone can wrestle with these issues in light of Scripture with us.

Church Discipline—What is it and what is it for?

While no Christian is perfect and all of us will continue to struggle with sin, we should exhibit a pattern of growth and repentance. In the Bible church discipline happens in cases of prolonged or flagrant sin after multiple appeals to repent (Matt 18). It is the process of multiple appeals to the member's continued sin and ends with the member being formally removed from membership in the church in process led by the elders and carried out by the church. Church discipline is practiced in an effort to serve the individual member as well as the whole church.

- First, church discipline is a rescue effort. It is not to be punitive but rather restorative. It is an effort to help the individual understand the seriousness of sin and the grace-filled pathway to repentance. While it may be relationally uncomfortable, it is an effort to bring forth the fruit of righteousness (Heb 12:6-11) and is done in effort to save the person's soul (1 Cor 5:5).
- Second, the church is called to demonstrate and declare Jesus in the world and our witness as Christians is a key way we demonstrate and declare Jesus. Prolonged or flagrant unrepentant sin damages the body and its witness to the watching world (1 Cor 5).

In cases of church discipline in which the individual in question believes that the discipline was unwarranted or wrong there is an avenue of appeal: they may formally request that the regional elders examine the case and render a judgment. (See the Sovereign Grace Book of Church Order for full process.)

Counseling –What can we expect?

Counseling provided by our pastors and church leaders is based on Scriptural principles. The Bible points out the deep issues of the human heart as well as the true remedy and hope for every case in Jesus. It also provides many clear principles for spiritual, emotional, and practical change.

In some cases our counsel works best alongside secular counselors and physicians for issues like addiction, suicide, depression. We may encourage those in counseling toward specific treatment as part of our counsel. We make every effort to keep matters discussed with us confidential, except for when we are required legally to report a crime, when there is an issue of safety, or when specific additional counsel is needed on a

particular issue (such as one of our elders needing to share the information with the other elders).

Don't see a question you have? Please ask us! We'd love to answer it personally as well as consider adding it to this document.