

A Person Committed to PURITY in LIFE

It is expected of every member of Oakwood, no matter the depth of spiritual maturity, that he or she is **seeking** to live a life of obedience to the Scriptures free from sinful practices in his daily life.

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him, must walk as Jesus did.
1 John 2:3-6

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.
Galatians 5:22-25

On occasion, a member of Oakwood may get involved in a sinful situation which necessitates those in spiritual leadership to respond. While all Christians are **accountable** to the Lord for how they live, a church member is also **accountable** to the church and its leadership to uphold the Biblical standards held by that church.

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.
Hebrews 13:17

Thus, when a member is involved in a continuous and unrepentant sinful condition, it is the church's responsibility to provide **LOVING CORRECTION** (commonly referred to as church discipline).

The PURPOSE of Loving Correction:

- **RESTORE** a person to fellowship with God and others.
- Preserve the **PURITY** of the church, the Body of Christ.
- Preserve the **INTEGRITY** of the witness of the church.

Scriptural Guidelines:

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.
Galatians 6:1

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along,

so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. Matthew 18:15-17

I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people – not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you." 1 Corinthians 5:11-13

The PRINCIPLES of Loving Correction:

- Conducted at the **lowest** possible level first.
 - Conducted in **stages**—private before public.
 - Handled by those who are spiritually **prepared**, in humility.
 - Done in a spirit of deep **love** and **concern** for the individual involved.
1. Most aspects of loving correction take place **privately** between individual members, as we lovingly and sensitively hold one another accountable.
 2. The **small group** provides another confidential and caring context for encouraging one another in purity.
 3. The pastoral staff provides teaching and counseling to both **prevent** and **correct** sinful patterns of behavior.
 4. If a matter of habitual or flagrant sin cannot be resolved at these informal levels, then **official** loving correction may be warranted. The same biblical principles are applied as with the informal levels of discipline.
 5. Should a member refuse to repent and continue in willful and grievous sin following the process of informal and formal discipline, then that member would be subject to **removal** from the church rolls. All privileges and responsibilities of membership would then be terminated until genuine repentance was evidenced.
 6. It is imperative to keep in mind that all of this is done with the ultimate goal of **restoration**.

A Person Committed to Practicing SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Placing our faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation begins a life-long **pursuit** of God. This pursuit is characterized by a growing awareness of who Jesus is and a desire to serve him completely. The Holy Spirit, who takes up residence in us when we believe in Jesus Christ, begins a **process** of change in us as we yield to his leading. This growing commitment to Christ reflects itself as we...

1. HONOR Him.

You shall have no other gods before me. Exodus 20:3

To honor Christ is to respect him. We recognize his worth and hold him in esteem. We place Jesus first in all aspects of life, learning his priorities and then lining up our goals and aspirations with his.

2. LOVE Him.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. Deuteronomy 6:5

To love the Lord is to desire to please him with our whole being and life. We want to understand him, know him, and be with him.

3. OBEY Him.

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. John 14:21

In order to obey Jesus, we must know what he wants us to do. We must be students of his Word—hearing (Rom 10:17), reading (Rev 1:3), studying (Acts 17:11), memorizing (Ps 119:9,11), and meditating (Ps 1) on the Bible and then applying its truths to our lives.

4. SERVE Him.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--which is your spiritual worship. Romans 12:1

As we honor, love and obey Jesus, he builds within us a desire to serve him more and more. We begin to discover his unique plan and gifting for each of our lives. We start to see the needs all around us, and we begin serving the Lord by serving our neighbor.

Members of Oakwood are committed to growing in Christ through the regular and frequent practice of the following two spiritual disciplines:

- Daily intake of **GOD'S WORD**
- Daily **COMMUNICATION** with God in prayer.

A Person Committed to Active PARTICIPATION in Church Life

Oakwood Community Church is very much like a **FAMILY**. In a good family, the members learn to:

- **live together peacefully**
- **give support and encouragement**
- **accept one another in failure**
- **give and receive correction**
- **contribute to the common good**
- **respect authority**
- **adjust to changing needs**
- **practice financial stewardship**
- **do what needs to be done, whether one feels like it or not**
- **forgive when wronged**
- **do everything in an atmosphere of love.**

Jesus said that others would know of our commitment to him, not by our Biblical knowledge or by our amount of involvement in church activities, but rather by our **LOVE** for one another. This was his Great Commandment:

Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.
John 13:34-35

The New Testament is filled with clarifying instructions about how believers are to relate to one another in love within the church:

- *Serve One Another* (Gal. 5:13; 1 Peter 4:9-10)
- *Live in Harmony with One Another* (Mark 9:50; Rom. 12:16; 14:13; 15:7; 1 Cor. 11:33; Gal. 5:26; Eph. 4:2, 32; Col. 3:13)
- *Encourage One Another* (1 Thess. 4:18; 5:11; Heb. 3:13; 10:24-25)
- *Instruct One Another* (Rom. 15:14; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16)
- *Honor One Another* (Rom. 12:10; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Pet. 5:5)
- *Support One Another* (Gal. 6:2; James 5:16)
- *Pray for One Another* (James 5:16)

In love for one another, every member of Oakwood is encouraged to make two participation commitments:

- worship God by faithfully experiencing **Sunday Worship Services**, and
- develop meaningful, accountable relationships by contributing to the life of a **Community GROUP**.

A Person Committed to PEACE in the Body

The PEACE of the Church has to do with the harmony and unity of its members.

1. The IMPORTANCE of Peace.

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:2-6

2. The FURTHERING of Peace:

a) It *doesn't* mean...

- We can't express our concerns.
- We can't conscientiously differ.
- We can't change procedures.

b) It does mean...

- We can express our views calmly and constructively.
- We disagree charitably and carefully.
- We major on the majors, and minor on the minors.
- We allow room for differences in preferences and style.
- We compromise and yield on non-essential issues.

3. Emphasizing Positive Speech:

A twinkle in the eye delights the heart. Good news refreshes the body.
Proverbs 15:30 (GW)

Scriptural guidelines that promote peace within a church:

a) Go **DIRECTLY** to those with whom you have a problem.

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you.

Matthew 18:15

- b) Go directly to those who have a problem **WITH YOU**.
Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23-24
- c) Always be **POSITIVE** in speech and remain silent rather than be negative.
Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. James 1:19
- d) **TRUTH** and **LOVE** must season our conversations with each other.
Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. Ephes. 4:25
... Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. Ephes. 4:15

4. Avoiding DESTRUCTIVE Talk:

The LORD hates...a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers. Proverbs 6:16, 19

- a) What is destructive talk?
- Using words, tone of voice, or facial expressions to put someone else in a bad light.
 - Damaging someone else's reputation with information that doesn't need to be shared.
 - Encouraging and spreading discontent or discord among others.
- b) What is **GOSSIP**?
- Sharing information of a personal nature about someone to someone else who is neither part of the problem nor part of the solution.
- c) Five questions to ask before listening to gossip:
- 1) What is your reason for telling me?
 - 2) Where did you get your information?
 - 3) Have you gone to those directly involved?
 - 4) Have you personally checked out all of the facts?
 - 5) Can I quote you if I check this out?

5. Concentrating on BUILDING One Another UP.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Hebrews 10:24

- Our desire is that **encouragement** would be a hallmark of Oakwood Community Church.
- Oakwood should be a place where people come to be **built up**, rather than torn down.

6. Being a good FOLLOWER.

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. Hebrews 13:17

- Article IV of the church by-laws addresses the whole concept of church leadership. A thorough reading is helpful.

A Person Committed to MINISTRY According to S.H.A.P.E.

Why be committed?

1. The Bible teaches that the primary responsibility of the church elders is to **EQUIP** the people to do the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11-13). Therefore, it is our goal to **involve every member** in some form of ministry. We desire to help **identify the gifts and abilities** of each member and **provide opportunities** for ministering to others.
2. If Oakwood is to be a church that meets the needs of its people and is an open, attractive body for those seeking God, our activities, programs and ministries must be efficiently and excellently resourced. If this is left to a “faithful few” or “the professionals”, these saints will quickly become “burned out”. However, if everyone is involved in ministry, all share the joy, grow in spiritual maturity, and no one becomes over-burdened or over-worked.

3. One's **view** of the church helps determine how he or she **functions** as a member of that church.

Popular Images:

If the church is a ...

- Country club
- Corporation

then a good member...

PARTICIPATES, PAYS DUES, HAS A GOOD TIME, INVITES GUESTS

MAKES A PROFIT, ATTENDS MEETINGS,

PROJECTS A SUCCESSFUL IMAGE

- Lecture series

LISTENS, TAKES NOTES, ATTENDS REGULARLY,

GIVES FEEDBACK

- Theater

IS ON TIME, APPROPRIATELY DRESSED, COMES

TO BE ENTERTAINED, APPLAUDS

- Counseling center

IS HONEST & OPEN, COMES TO GET NEEDS MET

Biblical Images:

But if the church is...

then a good member...

- The Household of God (Eph 2:19-20)

BUILDS LIFE ON A GOOD, RIGHT FOUNDATION, BELONGS TO A FAMILY

- God's building (2 Cor 6:16 – 7:1)

LABORS WITH GOD TO BUILD IT UP

- A Body (1 Cor 12)

LOVES, COOPERATES, FEEDS, CARES

- God's Flock (1 Pet 5:2)

SERVES WILLINGLY, FOLLOWS, DEPENDENT

- Nation of Priests (1 Pet 2:9-10)

PURITY, EXAMPLE, WORSHIP, MEDIATES

The work of God's kingdom is accomplished primarily through the Holy Spirit working through God's people in the church. Consequently, God desires that his people commit their **time**, **treasures** and **talents** to him.

Commitment of TIME

All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. Psalm 139:16

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven. Ecclesiastes 3:1

The commitment of time refers to how and why we schedule our **PRIORITIES**. Oakwood members commit themselves to seeking after God's priorities and ordering their days in line with these priorities.

Each of us is allocated the same amount of time each day--24 hours--but we vary greatly in the various **roles** and **responsibilities** we carry. The commitment of time to the affairs and ministries of the local body will also vary. Each should determine in his or her own mind, in faith and obedience to God, how to balance the commitment of time, and then serve with joy not obligation.

Here are some values to help each member determine the appropriate level of his or her commitment of time:

1. What commitment *doesn't* mean:

- Being involved in **every** activity the church sponsors.
- Neglecting your home. One's home life and responsibilities take priority.
- Neglecting your job.
- Not initiating new ministries.
- Becoming a square peg in a round hole.
- Ignoring special and unique situations requiring special **SACRIFICE**.

2. What commitment *does* mean:

- Active
- Attending
- Available
- Assignable
- Amiable
- Accountable
- Adaptable

Commitment of TREASURES

Our attitude toward money should reflect our understanding that all we have is a **gift** from God, entrusted to us to be used for his purposes. The issue isn't so much what we give, but what we **keep** and how we **use** it.

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Psalm 24:1

What do you have that you did not receive? and if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? 1 Corinthians 4:7

We are to be good and faithful **STEWARDS** of the financial resources he provides.

Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. Luke 12:42-43

Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Romans 13:7

Our **MOTIVE** in giving is first of all to honor and please God.

Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine. Proverbs 3:9-10

And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Hebrews 13:16

Our **PRIORITIES** in giving should reflect our priorities in life.

...but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. 2 Corinthians 8:5

If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

1 Timothy 5:8

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress... James 1:27

Our **MANNER** of giving should be consciously, generously, cheerfully, regularly, proportionately, and sacrificially.

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things and at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

We believe giving to and through the local church should be a priority. The members of Oakwood collectively determine the annual budget for the church. Presently, the first **20%** goes directly to our missions budget. The balance of tithes and offerings go toward our general fund.*

In addition to the general and missions funds, members may also contribute to two other funds: the **building** fund and the **compassion** fund.

The compassion fund supports those in the church family experiencing financial difficulties or special needs.

Ultimately, giving is a matter between **you** and **God**. No one at Oakwood monitors the giving patterns nor amounts given by members or others who give. One lay person records the total amount given by each contributor for the purpose of IRS reports. As with individual members, those entrusted with spending the financial resources given to the church do so with the intent of being good stewards of God's gifts.

Commitment of TALENTS

It is God's will that **every** Christian be involved in serving him in some significant manner. In order to do this, God has given each believer natural abilities, personality traits, special inclinations, unique experiences, and one or more spiritual gifts.

Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability... Matthew 25:14ff

When we serve God in line with these unique "talents," we not only are efficient and productive in accomplishing the work of the Kingdom, but

we also experience personal fulfillment and joy. Additionally, we have the promise of Jesus' "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

To help determine our place of service, it is important to do a personal **inventory** of our abilities, personality, inclinations, and gifts. Considering all these elements together, and the ministry needs at Oakwood, will assist us in determining our best areas of service.

- **SPIRITUAL GIFTS:** A capacity to develop a special ability given by the Holy Spirit to every believer for the purpose of serving God in a unique manner.
- **HEART:** An inner compulsion to do something productive and beneficial to others.
- **ABILITIES:** Those tendencies and skills an individual has inherited and/or developed through experience and training.
- **PERSONALITY:** Unique temperament traits that influence how one works with others and acts in response to circumstances.
- **EXPERIENCES:** Life situations, training and exposure that have allowed you to test your *SHAPE* in the past.

Members of Oakwood are encouraged to seek out and serve in ministry responsibilities in line with *SHAPE*. However, members should not use a perceived lacking in an area as an **excuse** for a lack of involvement; rather, members should recognize the various ministry needs and ask God to equip them adequately for the task.

To help members discover their area of gifting and find places of effective service, Oakwood conducts periodic seminars entitled, *Discovering My Ministry*, which all are encouraged to attend.

EVERY MEMBER A MINISTER

A Person Committed to Maintaining a Vibrant LIFE WITNESS

A Great Commission

Before he ascended to his Father in Heaven, our Lord gave his followers one final promise and command:

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 1:8

A member of Oakwood, having experienced the life-changing reality of a relationship with Jesus Christ, now has the opportunity and privilege to share with others how they can have such a relationship as well. Jesus graciously promises to provide us the power of his Holy Spirit, but he tells us we must “*go, and make disciples of all nations*” (Matthew 28:19). We begin with those closest to us—our families—and then progressively reach out to our friends, co-workers, acquaintances and even strangers.

A Matter of Heart and Life

Being a witness for Jesus Christ involves more than simply mouthing a few religious statements; rather, it is a matter of a whole **lifestyle** that reflects the reality of a relationship with him.

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:35

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. 1 Peter 2:12

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. 1 Peter 3:15

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? Romans 10:14

Moving Beyond Our Comfort Zone

At Oakwood, we encourage every member to practice the “**TEN MINUTE RULE**” and the “**TEN FOOT RULE**” before, during, and after the Celebration service. Before connecting with people they know, members spend the first ten minutes reaching out in genuine interest and friendship to others whom they don’t yet know – and anyone within ten feet of them. If they express interest, members invite them to their small group – even offering to pick them up!

We also encourage members to develop an on-going **PRAY FOR FIVE** list of those people within their spheres of influence who they desire to come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. The strategy is simple:

- ✓ *Look Around.* List the names of individuals you know who need Jesus Christ, whom you will commit to praying for daily.
- ✓ *Look Up.* Pray each day for those on your list that God will give you opportunities to share his love with them and they will have a receptive heart.
- ✓ *Look Out.* Seek out ways to cultivate friendships that will earn you the right to be heard.
- ✓ *Look Forward.* Be sensitive to opportunities to share your personal testimony of how you came to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and how they can too.
- ✓ *Look After.* Nurture those who respond in faith to the Gospel by helping them get started in their new walk with Christ.

Every Member a Witness

Not everyone has the gift of evangelism, but everyone has the responsibility and privilege to **INVITE** others to know the Savior. This is illustrated perfectly in John 1:35-42.

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?"

They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?"

"Come," he replied, "and you will see."

So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

Through lifestyle, caring friendship, and timely words, every member can be an effective witness of Jesus Christ.