

**DISCOVERING CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**  
**C.L.A.S.S. 101**  
**Rick Warren**

Welcome to C.L.A.S.S. 101. This is the basic introduction to the Saddleback family. I'm Pastor Rick, the senior pastor here. I have taught this class over 150 times. I've taught it almost every month for sixteen years. I never get tired of it. In each class we get to know the folks in our church family and explain over and over why we do what we do.

Turn to the very first page. "Welcome to Discovering Church Membership". This class is divided into four different sessions of about an hour each. I teach part of it. Other staff -- Pastor John Baker, our pastor of membership teaches some, Doug Fields teaches some. Tonight, Kay (she used to teach the entire class) is going to be here and teach part of the membership class.

The basis of this class, on page 1, is Ephesians 2:19, "*You are a member of God's very own family and you belong in God's household with every other Christian.*" 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 actually outlast the blood family that you have here on earth.

Some families are sick, some are strong, some are weak, some are small, some are big. The same is true with church families. We're going to look at what makes a healthy church family.

**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.

You need to understand when the word "church" is used in the Bible it's used two different ways. First it's used to refer to every Christian who's ever lived throughout history. That's called the universal church. Every believer all around the world regardless of the denominational label, regardless of whether they're in a church building or out, in a tent or a little hut or wherever around the world is part of the universal church.

But the other way the word "church" is used is to refer to a local group, a specific place. Like the church at Corinth, the church that met in Lydia's home, the church that was on the hill or like the church here at Saddleback church. It's used in a local sense.

It's only used four times in the Bible to refer to a general universal sense. Almost every time you see the word "church" in the Bible it's used to refer to a specific group of believers like we are here today.

Once you became a believer you are automatically a part of the universal church of God --

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automatically, the moment you gave your life to Christ. But you don't become a part of a local church until you make that choice. It's like when you were born physically, you were automatically entered into the human race. You didn't have a choice. You became a part of the human race the moment you were born. But you didn't become a part of any local family until somebody choose to take you home from the hospital.

That's what we're talking about here. You need to be a part of a local church family. I had a woman tell me one time, "I don't need to be a part of any local church. I'm a part of the invisible church." I said that's great. When you get sick, in the hospital, who visits you? The invisible pastor. You need somebody in the flesh. There are over thirty commands in the Bible you cannot obey, you cannot follow, unless you're part of a local church and say, "That's going to be my church family."

**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.*" As I said, 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.

Only in America do we have, what I call, floating believers. These are people who, every week, pop around to a different church. "This week let's go to the Crystal Cathedral. Next week we'll go to Calvary Chapel. Next week we'll go to Coast Hills. Next week let's go to Calvary Chapel at Dana Point. Then the next week let's go over to Saddleback." You float all around in different places.

The Bible says, if you're a Christian, it means you're apart 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."

**What makes Saddleback a family?** On Sunday morning we have about 12,000 people on a typical Sunday. They come from all different kinds of backgrounds, shapes, colors, race, intellect, even languages. We're different in so many different ways. What makes Saddleback a family? Four things.

First let me give you the goal of this class. Goal: I will commit myself to Christ and to the Saddleback church family.

What is it that makes a church family? On page 2 you'll see that there are four things that make us a church family.

1. Our Salvation. What God has done for us.
2. Our Statement. Why we exist as a church.
3. Our Strategy. How we fulfill our purpose.

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### 4. Our Structure. When and where we fulfill that purpose.

In this class, what we're going to do is take about an hour on each of these and explain them in detail -- what the Saddleback family is and how you can be a part of that family.

First a little background on how Saddleback got started.

Both Kay and I were born and raised in California. I was raised in northern California up in the redwoods and my wife, Kay, was born in San Diego and raised in southern California. We happened to meet in college. After college, we went off the seminary to Fort Worth, Texas, to the largest seminary in the world to get my masters and then later my doctor's degree. While I was there I decided I would do a study on what is it that makes a church grow. What makes a healthy church? All on my own, I decided to write to the 100 largest churches in the United States. I found their names and wrote them a letter, asked them a series of questions. I got all the information back and began to study -- what is it that makes a strong church?

One of the characteristics that I discovered was that in a strong church the pastor stays there for a long time. They don't keep changing pastors every two years. A church that gets a new pastor every couple of years is like a family that gets a new daddy. The kids would be schizophrenic. I told the Lord, "I'm willing to go anyplace in the whole world to be pastor, if You would give me the privilege of spending my entire life in just one location. I don't care where You put me if You'll just let me spend my entire life in one location. That way I can grow a church to a healthy size."

Kay and I got a map of the world and put it up on our wall in our home in Fort Worth, Texas. I began to pray about where God would send us in the world. I had been a short term missionary to Japan. I thought maybe we'd end up going back to Japan and being missionaries to Japan. But as we began to pray about it, I sensed the Lord say, "I don't want you to be a missionary overseas. I want you to stay in the United States and build a church that will send out missionaries instead of you going as a missionary yourself." I believe that you judge the health of a church not on its seating capacity but on its sending capacity. How many people are mobilized for the great commission and sent out all around the world. We're in the sending business.

We were a little disappointed. We had both thought we were going to be missionaries. We got out a map of the United States and I began to pray about the United States. I circled on the map, every major city outside of the south. If you've ever been to the south there's a church on every block. They call it the Bible Belt of America. There are churches everywhere. So I circled Detroit, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Albuquerque, Denver, Phoenix, all different kinds of

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cities. Finally I narrowed it down to four areas on the west coast: Seattle, San Francisco, San Diego, Orange County.

Over the next couple of months, Kay and I began to pray about these four areas that we might start a church. I spent three months studying census statistics on these four areas on the west coast. I discovered (this was in the summer of 1979) that the Saddleback Valley was the fastest growing area in the fastest growing county in the United States between 1970 and 1980. That caught my attention. I thought wherever there were lots of people moving in, obviously they're going to need churches. So maybe that might be a place I should go and start a church.

As we were praying about it, I found the name of a man who was like a superintendent or supervisor for Baptist Churches in Orange County. Since I was going to a Baptist seminary I thought I'd write this guy a letter. His name was Herman Wooten. I said, "Dear Mr. Wooten, I'm thinking about coming to the Saddleback Valley to start a church. I'm not asking for any money. I'm not asking for your support. I just want to know what you think about the area. Does it need churches? You obviously probably know more about the valley than I do. So let me know." And I sent the letter off.

In the providence of God, that man somehow had heard about me. He wrote me a letter while I was a seminary student in Texas that said, "Dear Mr. Warren, I understand you're thinking about starting a new church. Have you ever considered California? Have you ever considered starting a church in the Saddleback Valley?" Our letters crossed in the mail. I thought, Something significant is happening. It got my attention.

In October of '79, I flew out here and spent ten days looking over the area. I was still in school, finishing up my master's degree. I'd go up on the hills of the valley and pray over the area. I met realtors, mayors, the county planning commission. I talked with anybody who could tell me anything about the area. I flew Kay out. We went up on a hill and prayed about it. We felt a very strong sense in our heart that God was saying, "You are to move to the Saddleback Valley and start a church and spend your entire life building that one church." We felt very convinced about it.

We graduated in December of 1979. We packed up everything in a U-haul truck and being very wealthy seminary students it didn't need to be a very big truck. We headed out for Southern California. I had absolutely no doubt that God had called us to move here and spend our lives building this church. There was only one problem. I had no members. We had no money. We had no building. I didn't know a single person in the Saddleback Valley. So it really was a move on faith. God said, Go, so we went.

I'll never forget the day we moved here. It was about four in the afternoon, right in the middle of rush hour traffic. I've never understood why they call the slowest traffic the rush hour. We were crawling at a snail's pace. We looked out over all the cars and I had major doubts. I am a country boy. I was raised in a little town in Northern California of less than 500 people. When I looked out over these thousands of people and thousands of homes and said, "God, You've got the wrong guy." I was scared to death. "What in the world am I doing? I must have missed God's will here. What am I doing?"

We got here at four in the afternoon. We pulled off an off ramp and found the first real estate office that we could find. I met a guy whose name was Don Dale. "I'm here to start a church and I need a place to live and I don't have any money. And he laughed." One of the things I've learned in life is where

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God guides, God provides. If God tells you to do something, He'll take care of you if you do it. Within about an hour and a half we had found a condominium. We looked at only one place. Kay hated the lime green carpet but we took it anyway. We got our first month rent free. That man became the first member of our church.

That's exactly how Saddleback got started. My wife and I and our little girl and Don and his wife and his little girl. We started this church January 25, 1980 and had seven people meet in our little home. That's how Saddleback Valley Community Church got started.

I hadn't been here a couple of weeks when I realized that some of the top Bible teachers in the nation were already here within driving distance of this church. On any good Sunday you could hear Chuck Smith or Chuck Swindoll. If you wanted to drive a ways you could hear Jack Hayford or John MacArthur. There was David Hawking. Ray Ortland was in the area. There were a number of Bible teaching churches. I figured that any Christian worth his salt is already a member of a good Bible teaching church.

So the next question was, What kind of church are we going to be? That was the strategy question.

Turn to the session on strategy, about page 25. I want to explain a little bit about the strategy behind our church. We had to decide, What kind of church are we going to be?

Every church has a strategy behind it. Some are spoken, some are unspoken, some are effective, some are ineffective. There are many types of strategies for churches. Some churches have the strategy to reach people who like solemn, orderly, dignified churches. Some churches have the strategy of real emotional, exciting churches. Some churches are real casual. Some are real formal. All that has to do with strategy. They may be teaching the same thing about Jesus but they have a different style. Churches have different styles. No church can appeal to everybody.

It's like a radio station. If we had a radio station that tried to appeal to everybody who would they reach? One minute they play rock and roll, the next minute classical, the next minute easy listening, the next minute heavy metal, then a country western song, then a rap song, then a polka, then a Lawrence Welk song, then a hymn, then a marching band. What kind of audience would that radio station have? None. All it would do would make everybody mad.

Just like no radio station can appeal to everybody, no church can appeal to everybody. We're different. We have different needs, different personalities.

We said, What kind of strategy are we going to have? When I realized that there were already a bunch of good churches already reaching Christians, I said, Let's be a church for the unchurched. From the very beginning of Saddleback it has never been our goal to get Christians to come from other churches to transfer and join our church. Instead it's been our goal to reach people who hadn't been in church for twenty or thirty years or had never been in church at all. We wanted to reach who we call the unchurched.

I said, If we're going to reach people who've never been to church, I'd better go out and talk to them and find out what kind of church would interest them, would get their attention. Jesus said, I didn't come for the people who are well. I came for people who are sick. The great physician didn't come to be with healthy people. He said, I want to heal the unhealthy people.

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Likewise this church was not founded to reach a bunch of Christians who were already believers. It was started to reach people who had no church background and over seventy-five percent of the members of this church became Christians and were baptized here at Saddleback church. If you were a Christian before you came to Saddleback, you're in the minority here. Our church's goal has never been to get other church's people to come here. Jesus said, "I'll make you fishers of men not swappers of fish from aquarium to aquarium."

When we arrived here in January, 1980, I announced we'd start our first church service on Easter, 1980. If anybody comes to church, what Sunday of the year are they going to come? Easter. I said they may not come back but at least we'll have a crowd the first week.

Between the time we arrived in January and Easter I went out and spent twelve weeks going door to door visiting people in the Saddleback Valley. To every home I went to, I'd have my clip board with me and I'd say, "Hi, I'm Rick Warren and I'm here to take an opinion pole. I'm not here to sell you anything. I'm not here to convert you. I'm not here to invite you to anything. I'm just here to take your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers and it will only take three to four minutes." I didn't have anybody turn me down.

I asked these questions: Are you an active member of a local church? If they said, Yes, I said great and politely excused myself and went to the next home. I wasn't interested in the opinion of Christians who were already going to church. I just encouraged them to keep going where they were going. But when I found somebody that said, "I don't go anywhere." I'd say, "Fantastic! You're just the kind of person I want to talk to. Let me ask you four more questions. Why do you think most people don't attend church?" and I'd listen and write it down. I could have said, "Why don't you go to church?" but most people would say, "It's none of your business!" So what I did was make it psychologically non-threatening and said, "Why do you think most people don't attend church?" and they'll give you their reason anyway. So I just listened.

Then I said, "If you were looking for a church, what things would you look for?" And I discovered real quickly what the typical non church or non Christian person was looking for was not what the typical church was offering. I didn't find one unbeliever who said, "I'm looking for a great pipe organ!" Not one person said that.

Then I said, "What advice would you give to me as the pastor of a new church that really wants to be of benefit to the community? How can I help you?" And I wrote down all the different information.

I visited hundreds and hundreds of homes in the Saddleback Valley before we ever held a service, just listening to the needs. It's interesting, when I summarized all the information, the four biggest complaints people gave why they didn't go to church in the Saddleback Valley was:

1. Sermons are boring and they don't relate to my life. Why should I go spend an hour of my time listening to somebody put me down and put me to sleep?

So I said, whatever I do, I've got to have practical messages. And I asked the Lord, "Give me something to say on Sunday that is going to help people on Monday morning. Give them a spiritual

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boost but something that will help them on Monday morning."

2. Members are unfriendly to visitors. They said, "When we go to a church, we feel like it's a club, a clique. In fact they put a little sticker on me that says, "I'm a visitor. Notice me. I'm different." I don't want to be noticed. I just want to blend into the crowd and watch everything, get my feet wet in a safe environment without being put on the spot.

A study says that the number one fear that people have is the fear of speaking in front of other people. Yet in many churches when you go in, the first thing they say is, "Stand up! Tell us your name. Tell the whole world why you're here." And the guy's dying a thousand deaths! Then we wonder why he doesn't come back to church. He's going, "I don't want to be noticed! Just let me come in and check you out. You may be some kind of cult or something. I don't want anybody else to know I'm here."

So we just let people kind of sneak in. I can always tell who the visitors are in our church. In the first place, they always sit toward the back and the edges so if it gets really scary they can get out. The longer people come, the more they move to the front and the center. About fifteen minutes into the service, all the visitors breathe a sigh of relief and you see the fear and the tension drain out of their faces. It's a safe place here. It's ok. This guy is not going to yell at me. He's not going to come lay hands on me and make me speak in tongues. I may actually enjoy this thing. Heaven forbid, it may even be funny!" You can always tell the tension just drains out of their face.

This is intentional because part of our strategy is to make a service comfortable for people who have never been in church before. This church was not designed to reach Christians. It was designed to reach people who don't know Jesus yet.

Finally I asked what advice would they give to me and I got all that advice and went home and wrote it down. Then based on that summary, I wrote an open letter to the community that said, "Dear neighbor, At last a new church for those who have given up on traditional church services. Let's face it. Most people don't go to church these days." And I listed the four biggest reasons most people don't come to church. "But if you think church ought to be enjoyable, come give us a try. We're starting on Easter Sunday."

We had formed a little Bible study in our home and it grew to about fifteen people. During that twelve week period, we hand addressed and hand stamped 15,000 letters and mailed them out to people in the Saddleback Valley ten days before Easter. We said we'd start on Easter Sunday. We figured if one percent of them showed up that was 150 people would show up in our first service. That was our goal.

The only problem was, we misunderstood what God wanted to do and on the first Sunday of the church, 205 people showed up. It was an exciting day but I guarantee you, there weren't more than five people who were Christians in the whole group. It was like 200 none believers. It was like speaking to a Kiwanza's club. Nobody had a Bible. Nobody knew the hymns. I said, Let's

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pray and they went, "Ummmmmmmm...." I figured right from the start that we were going to have to develop a strategy to match the kind of people we were going to reach.

We did something at Saddleback I think no church had done before, although churches have copied us since then. We actually did a trial run service the Sunday before Easter. We did a dress rehearsal. I took these fifteen people in our little home Bible study. We'd rented Laguna Hills High School and I said, "The week before Easter, I'm going to preach like there are 150 people. We'll sing and learn the songs and work out all the bugs so next week when all these people show up it looks like we know what we're doing." The only problem was, some people got that letter early and misread it and came a week early. We had 60 people at the trial run service. And five of them gave their lives to Christ!

Saddleback was off and running and we began to grow. One of the things we announced at the very first service was, We're not going to build a building for at least five years. We're going to put our money into people and programs. Buildings don't build a church, people build a church. So for five years we didn't even look for land. After we began looking in 1985, it took us at least ten more years before we actually settled on the piece of property and we built this building as we started our 16th year.

We did that because most churches build too soon and they build too small. They get anxious to have a building and in the first year or two they build a building that seats 100-200 people and then the shoe tells the foot how big it can get. A permanently small building fills up and that's it! If we had build a building in 1981-82 none of you'd be here. We would have filled up that little building. But our vision was that as long as there was one person in the Saddleback Valley that doesn't know Christ we're going to keep on growing.

What is our strategy? You need to understand this because I get all kinds of questions like: Why don't we sing hymns on Sunday morning? Why don't we take communion more often on Sunday morning? Why don't we have a come-forward invitation like Billy Graham crusades or Harvest crusades? Why do I use modern translations of the Bible? and Why do I print up all the verses on an outline instead of having people turn in their Bible to find those verses? Why don't we have an organ in the church? Why don't we say the Lord's Prayer every Sunday? Why don't we use hymnals?

These kind of questions are basically saying, Why aren't we more like the traditional church? The answers to all of those questions becomes crystal clear when you understand our strategy. Jesus said, I didn't come for the healthy in the world. I came for the sick. *"To seek and to save that which is lost."* Our goal is to reach people who don't know Christ.

Once I had interviewed all those thousands of people I developed a little profile of the typical person we were trying to reach. We call that person Saddleback Sam. He's on page 26. Saddleback Sam is married to his lovely wife Saddleback Samantha. They have two kids, Saddleback Steve and Sally. 1 Corinthians 4:22 *"Yes, whatever a person is like I try to find common ground with him so he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him."* Paul said, When I'm with people I try to become like them in order to reach them. In this chapter in Corinthians, he says, "When I'm with Jewish people I become like a Jew to reach the Jews. When I'm with Greek people I become like a Greek to reach the Greeks. In other words, I build a bridge to where they're at. I don't ask them to come and be like me to become a Christian. I become like them to tell them about Christ. If a missionary goes overseas he doesn't say, "You guys learn my language and I'll tell you about Christ." He says "I'll learn



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your language." If Paul were in California, he'd say, "When I'm in California to reach Californians I become like a Californian."

So we said, "What is the typical Saddleback Sam?" Here he is: This guy is a great guy, a nice guy. He lives here in the Saddleback Valley. But while you were in church this morning, Sam was at home sitting in his back yard by his jacuzzi or pool reading the paper, a can of Budweiser in one hand and watching television. He's a nice guy. He just doesn't know he needs God in his life. Here's the things we discovered. These statistics are out of the Orange County *Register* and out of our own study. He is well educated. This is the most educated district in America. There are more college graduates in the Saddleback Valley in the 40th congressional district than any other district in America. He likes his job. He likes where he lives. He thinks he's enjoying life now more than he did five years ago. He's self satisfied, even smug about his station in life. Health and fitness are a high priority for himself and his family.

If you were me and sixteen years ago you came to the Saddleback Valley and you were going to design a church to reach Mr. Non Christian in the Saddleback Valley -- he's a yuppie, he's making it, he's having fun -- how would you reach him?

Some suggestions: How about, while Saddleback Sam's in the grocery store, we put a track on his window that says, "Come to church or go to hell!" Would that reach Saddleback Sam?

Saddleback Sam commutes about an hour and a half every day to work. He gets home at night. His home is his castle. He closes and locks the door, turns on Monday night football, sits down to watch it as he eats dinner. Let's send somebody to his house -- a stranger -- at night and knock on his door, right in the middle of his meal and have him say, "Come to church with a bunch of people you've never met before." Would that reach Saddleback Sam?

How many of you think Saddleback Sam is going to listen to Christian radio? No way. How many think he's going to watch Christian tv? (I hope he doesn't! I don't want him to get inoculated and think that's the real thing.) Before he gets all these phony ideas about Christianity, I want to get his attention.

Saddleback Sam gets to hear about Jesus by somebody getting close to him and becoming his friend. Somebody says, "Hey, Sam! You've gotta come to this church. It's incredible. You don't even have to come on Sunday. You could come on Saturday night. If you want to stay home on Sunday we have a service just for you on Saturday night. Come to this building that's real light and bright and airy and doesn't even look like a church. The pastor doesn't wear a robe. You don't even have to wear a suit. The pastor doesn't even wear socks! They tell jokes. And the music isn't hymns; it's like contemporary pop music. The messages aren't like 'Who is the beast in Revelation?' it's like 'How do I handle the financial stress in my life?' You're not going to believe this church. Come on, Sam!" That's about how 80% of the people in this church got here. People told people... "Come check out the good news!"

Also, he'd rather be in a large group than a small one. In a small group he gets put on the spot. If Saddleback Sam goes to a little church of about fifty people. They've got the hymnbooks. They're singing. He doesn't know the words. He's not singing and everybody knows he's not singing. And he knows everybody knows he's not singing because they're all looking at him. He feels very put on the spot.

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We have a church where the bigger it gets the easier it is for non believers to come because they can come and hide in the crowd. We welcome that. It's ok. We want them to come in, sit down, get their feet wet, listen for a while, check it out, consider the claims of Christ. We don't embarrass people before they become believers.

He is skeptical of organized religion. "I don't mind Jesus and God. I just don't like organized religion." We say, Great, come to Saddleback. We're disorganized religion.

He likes contemporary music. Every once in a while I have people say, "How come we don't use traditional Christian music?" Obviously our music is a little bit different. Why don't we sing old hymns? We don't know them. The point is, we want to use music that people understand, that their ears can relate to. Years ago, when we first started, we tried to appeal to everybody with our music. We said we went from Bach to Rock. In one service we'd use a hymn, and then a praise chorus, then a contemporary number then a jazz number, then a classical number, then an easy listening number and, like that radio station I was telling you about, we just made everybody mad! Finally I passed out a 3x5 card to everybody in church and said, "Write down the call letters of the radio station you listen to." When I got them back it was so overwhelming, like 96%, not heavy metal rock but adult contemporary music. Something you could tap your toe to, something with a beat. So we made the shift and said, "We are going to be a contemporary music church." That's our style.

You can't please everybody. We have lost hundreds of members because of the kind of music we have. But we've gained thousands. Every once in a while I'll get a letter from somebody who'll say, "I'd come to church if you'd just get rid of the drums" or "I really like your preaching but if you'd just turn that music down!" We're not going to turn it down! Baby boomers like to feel the music. If you don't like this music, I can give you a dozen good Bible teaching churches in the Saddleback Valley who teach the exact same thing Saddleback does. You just need to find the church that matches your style.

Some churches are real emotional. Some churches are real formal. Saddleback is kind of a middle of the road church. We're not so organized you can't sneeze if it's not in the bulletin. But we're not total chaos and people aren't hanging from the chandeliers either. We're kind of middle of the road and obviously a lot of people want a middle of the road church in style. It has nothing to do with preaching the good news. You have to teach the Bible. It's how you deliver it.

He prefers the casual and the informal over the formal. That's why I don't dress up. I don't wear a suit.

He's overextended in both time and money. That's Saddleback Sam.

That's our target. When you understand who we're trying to reach does it make more sense why we have the kind of service we do on Sunday morning? We're not trying to attract a Christian who's been a believer for fifty years and wants to sing "Rock of Ages". We're trying to reach the guy who wouldn't be caught dead in any of the other churches. That's our goal.

Sunday morning is geared for you to bring Saddleback Sam to. If you're not bringing your neighbors and friends and work associates who don't know Jesus on Sunday morning, you're missing the whole

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point. That's the purpose of Sunday morning. Our midweek service on Wednesday is the service we design for believers. In it we do longer worship, we do more in-depth Bible study, we go book by book through the Bible. We're going through the book of John right now. I once preached through the book of Romans on Wednesday night -- took me two and a half years. Every single verse, every single thing. We use that kind of teaching to build up believers. We use the topical exposition, like on Sunday morning -- like, What does God say about stress? What does God say about marriage? What does God say about worry? What does God say about money? -- to reach nonbelievers.

Now you know why we do what we do.

On the next page -- **The five circles of commitment.** At Saddleback, we actually have five different types of targets. I want to give you the words of these targets and explain who they are.

At the center of our church -- where it says ministry, write the word "core" in that circle. The core of our church are the people who are involved in the different lay ministries of the church. They are the leaders. They are the ministers, the workers, the servers. They're the Sunday School teachers, the greeters, the musicians, the ushers, the people who run the children's ministry, the youth ministry, the singles ministry, the military ministry, the deaf ministry, the computer ministry, the Helping Hands ministry, the Care Caller ministry, on and on. We have 89 different ministries in the church run by people who are in the core. If you're a member of our church, serving in a place of leadership, we call you a part of the core.

The way you get into the core is you take three classes: 101, 201, 301. When you finish 301 we do an interview with you. We help you find your SHAPE for ministry and you become a part of the core. Once a month I meet with the core on Sunday night and it's called S.A.L.T. -- Saddleback Advanced Leadership Training. That is my favorite meeting of the month. If I'm sick, I will give up speaking to the ten or twelve thousand people on Sunday morning in the crowd in order to have time for the core. They're the people who really make the church run. My goal for you is that you'll move into the Core. Right now we have about 1500 people in the Core. Write 1500 in that little circle. These are the people who have gone through CLASS 101, 201, 301 and they're serving in some area of the church -- using their gifts or talents. That's the Core. 301 is the class that gets you in the Core.

The next group out is a little bit bigger group. We call that group the Committed. These are the people who have taken Class 201 -- the people in the church who are committed, those who are growing in their Christian faith. They're strong believers but for one reason or another they're not active in a ministry yet. In Class 201 we teach you the three essential habits you need for spiritual growth. If you were to get stranded on a desert island and you knew the things we teach you in 201 class, you would keep growing. Right now while I'm teaching Class 101, Class 201 and 301 are being taught to the people who have been through this class. The people who are committed have committed themselves to the habits of spiritual growth, they're growing in the Lord and that class is on How to Grow -- the Secrets of Christian Growth. We have right now in that group 3600 people in the Committed. They've been through Class 101 and Class 201.

The next group out is a little bit bigger group. That's the actual members of the church. They're the people who have taken Class 101. They're committed to membership. You're not a member of this church until you've committed the membership requirements -- one of them being, you take this class. We call that group the Congregation. The Congregation is that little bit bigger circle committed to

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membership and we have right now about 6000 adult members. They are more than just attenders, they are actual members of our church. They've taken Class 101. We also have a 101 class for children and a 101 class for young people, for youth, junior high and high school. It's geared to them.

The next group out are those who are committed to attendance. That's the group that shows up on Sunday morning. We call that the Crowd -- for obvious reasons. Right now the Crowd is between 11,000 and 12,000 people. There are 400,000 churches in America. Saddleback is one of the five largest in America. We went sixteen years without a building. While we were growing we used 89 different buildings before we built this building. We used every high school in the Valley. We used warehouses, we used banks, homes, restaurants. Every time we outgrew a building, we'd move that particular event to somewhere else or we'd do something else. We kept moving and using different buildings. We said, "We're the church that, if you can figure out where we are this week, you get to come." We only want really intelligent people in the church, so we kept changing the location and if you could figure it out then you got to come!

The outer circle is what we call the Community. The Community is everybody within driving distance of our church that we want to reach for Jesus Christ. We want them to come to know Christ. We want to keep on reaching out. As long as there's one person within driving distance of this church we are going to keep growing. We don't grow for our benefit. The bigger the church gets, the more problems there are for the pastors -- the more headaches, the more weddings, the more funerals, the more hospital calls and the more stresses there are. We grow because the Bible says God wants everybody to know Jesus. We keep on growing and growing because people need the Lord.

We also call the Community our occasional attenders. Write "Occasional Attender" in that outer circle. If you come four times in one year to Saddleback -- i.e. Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day and one other time -- and you either give an offering or you fill out a card so we know you've come four times, we put you on our computer role -- the Community role of Occasional Attenders. Right now we have 36,000 names on our church roll of occasional attenders. This means one out of every nine people in the Saddleback Valley goes to this church. We've actually had people who grew up in some small town in Michigan thirty years ago and met each other at Saddleback. We've had former sweethearts meet here. All kinds of interesting things.

With 36,000 names on our role, that means Kay and I don't go anywhere in this Valley without getting recognized. I used to go out on Mondays -- my day off -- in a sloppy shirt, beard, holes in the clothes. I'd go into Lucky's and the clerk would say, "Hey, Pastor Rick. Meet my mom!" So I have to be a little bit more careful now.

Saddleback's objective is to keep people moving to the center by encouraging spiritual commitment. For instance: The goal of our church is to move the Community into the Crowd. We want to get people who come every once in a while to start coming every week as regular attenders. That's the Crowd.

Then we want to get the Crowd to move into the Congregation. We want people who have been attenders to become members. How do you get into the Congregation? Class 101.

Then we want to get people who are members to start really growing in their faith, established in the most basics of the faith and move them into the Committed. How do you get into the Committed circle?

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Class 201.

Then we want to get the Committed to find a place of ministry where they can give back, where they can serve, where they can use their talents and abilities. We want to move them into the Core. Class 301.

In each of these classes we have a covenant. The **Membership Covenant** is a commitment to Christ and the Saddleback Valley family (our church).

The **Maturity Covenant**, explained in Class 201, is a commitment to the habits necessary for spiritual growth. We explain the Maturity Covenant in Class 201.

Then there's the **Ministry Covenant** which is a commitment to discovering and using my God-given gifts and abilities in serving God and others. One day you're going to stand before God and He's going to say to you, "What was your ministry?" and we don't want you just to have a dull answer there or to be silent. Part of our job as a church is to prepare you for the day you stand before Jesus and He says, "What was your ministry?" Because every Christian is to have a ministry.

Then the **Missions Covenant** which will be in class 401 is the commitment to share the Good News with others.

### Why do we have these commitments?

The last line on page 28 is one of the most important things I can say to you. We become what we're committed to. Many people are half committed to a dozen different things. If you really want to make an impact with your life, if you want your life to count, if you want to make a difference with your life, you've got to learn to be totally committed to a few things rather than half committed to a dozen things. Part of our job as pastors is to help you sort out your commitments in life and make the right commitments.

On page 29 is the **S.A.D.D.L.E.B.A.C.K. Strategy** -- 10 principles that make our church unique. We're not going to go into this in detail but write these things down. We've made an acrostic here. There are ten things that make Saddleback different from other churches.

**S - Seeker sensitive services.** We design church services that Saddleback Sam can enjoy. Even if I'm preaching on a Christian growth theme, he can say, "That makes sense!" So we are sensitive  
... in the way we greet people. We don't embarrass them. We never make visitors stand up and tell us their name.

... in the way we take an offering. How many times have you heard me or Pastor Glenn say, "If you're a visitor today, it's the policy of our church to tell you, Don't give." A lot of non Christians think churches are only in it for the money. At this church we say, If you're a visitor don't give. We depend on just the tithes and offerings of our members to support this church. If you're a visitor we want you to get something rather than to feel like you have to give something.

**A - Affinity groups.** Saddleback is built on a network of small groups. We want you to grow in your faith by being a part of a large group worship and a small group fellowship. We have hundreds and

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hundreds of small groups that meet all over the Valley and all over Orange County on different days and different nights and different places. They're done by affinity which means by interest. We have small groups for Parents without Partners, Single Adults, people in different recovery programs, people in retirement, people who are interested in backpacking, people who are interested in computers, people who have children who are in trouble with the law, people who are dealing with the struggle of infertility, on and on. Affinity groups and groups by interest.

**D - Driven by Purpose.** Later on Kay is going to come and explain the five purposes of our church and how everything we do is driven by these five purposes.

**D - Defined target.** Saddleback church is not trying to reach everybody. Saddleback is trying to reach people who don't know the Lord. We're not trying to reach Christians who have been Christians for 30, 40, 50 years. We say there are a lot of good churches you can go to. Our defined target is Saddleback Sam.

**L - Life Development Process.** I'll explain this a little later. We have designed a process that will help you grow to spiritual maturity, help you develop your spiritual talents and abilities and help you become a success in life. The goal of this church is not to build big buildings. The goal of this church is to make you successful in your life so that one day when you stand before God He'll say, "*Well done thou good and faithful servant.*" Our goal is to help you become all God wants you to be. We have a process called the Life Development Process.

**E - Every Member a Minister.** Not every member's a pastor, but every member has a ministry. Ministry is serving others.

**B - Behavioral Preaching.** One of the most important verses in the Bible is James 1:22 "*Be doers of the word and not hearers only.*" Have you ever been to a church service where you heard a sermon, you went out and couldn't do anything about it? Sure. It was a lot of theory or Bible history or Bible background. But there wasn't anything you could apply to your own life and practice it. It wasn't something you could do. At Saddleback, every sermon, every message, every study we have here is not to give you a bunch of head knowledge. The goal is to change your life, change your behavior, help you become more like Christ. That's God's goal for your life -- to help you become like Jesus Christ. If you look at my messages, almost every one of my points have a verb in it. It's like, "Here are five things to do..." like we talked about this morning. "Here are five things to do if you want God to help you with your finances." We call that behavioral preaching because it focuses not on just giving you a bunch of head knowledge about the Bible. But it actually helps you change your life.

**A - Authentic Leadership.** We believe that you lead by serving. In this church, we don't have a big board that controls everything and has all these power plays. We don't have a single committee in this church. The leaders are authentic leaders in that they lead by example. They lead by serving.

**C - Climate of Acceptance.** We don't expect people to be perfect in this church. Some churches, you either have to be perfect or pretend you are. Otherwise you're not welcome. This is a church for people who don't have it all together. This is a church for people who want to grow. This is a church for people who are hurting and are willing to admit it. Every week, right at this pulpit, we have a constant parade of people who get up and spill their guts. They say, "This is what I was going through. This is the hurt." They're not getting up and saying, "I'm so glad my life is perfect. I've never had

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problems with my children. I've never had a marriage problem. We've never had a finance problem. Thank God." They aren't here. This is a church for real people with real problems. We don't expect unbelievers to act like believers until they are. We offer acceptance of people without being judgmental of them. There's a difference between acceptance and approval. We can accept a person without approving of their lifestyle. Jesus did. Jesus accepted the woman who was caught in the act of adultery without approving of that. It was obviously wrong. But He accepted and loved her without approving of what she was doing. We can accept people who don't have it all together without necessarily approving of all the hang-ups they have.

**K - Keep the structure simple.** We're not organized in a complex way but in a very simple way that you can get involved.

These ten letters -- I explained that in about two or three minutes but there's a whole lot more behind this. Once a year we do a five day conference at Saddleback for church leaders. We spend an hour and fifteen minutes on every letter -- at least. On some of these letters we spend three to four hours, explaining all the philosophy. When you come to Saddleback, it may look like everything's casual and unplanned, but even that's planned. We have a strategy that is highly thought out behind everything that we're doing. There are two ways you can get that strategy. One of them is come to our five day conference or get The Purpose Driven Church. This book explains the entire strategy and philosophy behind Saddleback. If you're going to be a strong member here, I'd suggest you get this book. The reason I can promote it here is because the money doesn't come to me; it goes to our building program. I'm not making any money on hyping this book to you. It happens to be the number one book on the best seller list in Christian Book stores. It's \$20 and all the money goes to the building program.

These ten letters that I went over, there's a whole lot more behind it than what I just said. I would encourage you to get the book and discover why is Saddleback, for the last three years out of 400,000 churches, the fastest growing church in America.

Turn to page 30 and **The Saddleback Structure**. In this session we want to talk to you about how Saddleback is organized so you can get involved in our church. If you have come from another church background, take all the way you thought a church should be organized and set it on the shelf, and let me take you through the Bible and show you what the Bible says of how a church should be structured and organized.

Structure is like the skeleton. The Bible says that church is the body of the Christ and every body has to have a skeleton. You have to have a skeleton to hold your body. No animal can grow above nine inches without a skeleton. Every church has a structure behind it. Some of them prevent growth, some of them cause growth. Some of them are good, some of them are bad. Page 30, 1 Corinthians 14 *"For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace. Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way."* What I'm going to explain to you now is something you'd never know about unless you came to Class 101. We wouldn't talk about this on Sunday morning. It's kind of an inside view, behind the scenes, of what has been behind this church that it grew from just seven people to 12,000 people in about sixteen years. What has caused that growth?

Notice on the top of page 31. We believe that the structure of the church should not be determined by

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culture, business practices, or even denominational traditions. We believe that the nature of the church determines its structure. In other words, what the church is should determine how we organize. Voting, committees, boards, parliamentary procedure, majority rule, elections, board members -- what do these words have in common? Politics? Trouble? Bureaucracy?

None of them are in the Bible. Not one of them. Yet how many churches do you know are organized around committees and boards and board members and voting and elections... stuff like that. None of that's in the Bible. What we have done is we have taken our culture, an American form of government which does have voting, elections, committees, majority rule... and we've imposed it on the church. As a result, the church is often as effective as the government is, which isn't saying a lot. You know how long it takes to get anything done in the government? Forever!

So how should a church be organized? Let's look at what the Bible says.

1. The church is a fellowship.
2. The church is a family.
3. The church is a body. The body of Christ.
4. The church is a flock, like a flock of sheep. This was Jesus' favorite description of the church.

### **1. The Bible says the church is a fellowship.**

Acts 2:42 *"They continued steadily learning the teaching of the apostles and joined in the fellowship."* Circle "the". Fellowship is not just something the church is. It's something we do.

What is fellowship? The best definition is "Two fellows on the same ship." If you were in New York City and you were going to take a boat to London, you would inevitably have fellowship with some people. You're headed in the same direction, so you get to know each other and you associate because you're going in the same direction. That's what fellowship is. Fellowship is when you get to know other people because you're headed in the same direction.

As Christians, we're all headed to heaven. We're headed in the same direction. So the Bible says we're to have fellowship with each other. Because the Bible says the church is a fellowship, a top priority in fellowship is harmony and unity. You can have unity without having uniformity. Have you noticed we're all different? We have different colored hair, different colored skin. We're different ages. We're different sizes. God loves that. God loves diversity. Thank God we're not all alike. It would really be boring if there was only vanilla in the world. I like 31 flavors. And so does God. God made you to be a flavor and He wants you to be you. He doesn't want you to be anybody else. And no one flavor is better than any other flavor. When we talk about unity, we have unity because we're all saved by Jesus Christ, not because we all look alike, act alike, breathe alike, talk alike or even dress alike.

The Bible says *"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."* The next verse says, *"Let us concentrate on the things that make for harmony and the growth of our fellowship together."* The Bible teaches that anything that causes disunity is sin. There are a bunch of verses that says anybody that causes conflict in the church is sinning. When you cause conflict in a church, when you get Christians mad at other Christians, what you're doing is destroying the fellowship. And if you destroy the fellowship, you don't have a church.



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The implications of this is that however you organize your church a good structure should promote unity and downplay differences. We should organize in a way that minimizes our differences and maximizes what we have in common.

The problem is that many churches, the way they're organized actually promotes differences rather than downplay them. For instance, if a church votes on all kinds of different stuff, every time you take a vote are you causing people to take sides? Sure you are. So every time you take a vote, you're creating division in the church.

Paul talks about this in the Corinthian church. He says "Often your meetings do more harm than good." Have you ever been in a church meeting that did more harm than good? I'll tell you the kind that does, *"Because I hear that when you come together as a church there are divisions among you."*

The Bible says that anytime you divide the church, you're creating a division and that harms the fellowship. For that reason we don't vote on a whole bunch of things here at this church. Voting tends to create division. For instance, if I were to say to you, "How many of you like this shirt I'm wearing?" Three of you might like it and fifty of you might not like it. Two hundred and fifty of you might not care. Every time you take a vote somebody loses. Nobody can win all the time. Not pastors, not elders, not deacons. So if you vote on everything, pretty soon you've got a church full of losers! The harmony has gone down and the love has gone down because the division has gone up because you're voting on everything.

Voting is so foreign in the New Testament that there's not one example of voting in the New Testament. You would think if they voted on anything it would have been choosing Judas' replacement. They had to pick an apostle to replace him because he went out and committed suicide. How did they choose? It says they cast lots. That means they rolled dice. Voting was so foreign to their thinking they were more likely to draw straws than they were to vote. There is not one example of majority rule in the New Testament except when Paul was taken prisoner on the ship to Rome and he told them, "God's told me, even though I'm the prisoner, not to set sail. If you do, we're going to run into a storm." But the majority of the sailors thought it would be good anyway so they left. And the ship wrecked.

The majority is often wrong. In the Old Testament the majority of the Israelites wanted to go back to Egypt and Moses said, "No, we've got to keep going. We've got to go to the Promised Land."

A church is not a democracy. A church is a theocracy. God is in charge and our whole job is to find out what God wants us to do and then do it.

At Saddleback, we only vote on four things. That keeps the division down to a minimum. When you join our church, we're only going to vote on four things.

1. The annual budget and legal trustees. Who are the trustees? By law in California, somebody has to be selected to sign the legal documents. In our church the trustees only do two things: They sign the legal documents and they set the salaries of the pastors. I started this church but I've never had anything to do with my salary. When we first started, I took a group of people and said, "You go over there in that room and you set my salary. Whatever you say is fine with me." I have never even seen the financial books of this church, even though I founded it. I'm the founding pastor.

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Most pastors get in trouble with either pride, sex or money. So I'm running as far as I can from all three of those. When I hired Tom Greer our Pastor of Administration, I sat him down and said, "Your job is to keep me off 60 Minutes! I want this church to be so squeaky clean that they have to make stuff up about me and the other pastors in order to accuse us of anything."

We're going to vote on the annual budget in two weeks. There are no secrets in this church. Once a year we print up a budget of where all the money is going to be spent the next year and anybody can get a copy of the budget. You don't even have to be a member. We'll give it to a regular attender... anybody can get a copy of the budget. You'll see where the money's going. Once a year we have one business meeting. Anybody can come to that meeting and they can say their piece and say this or that and then they vote on it and that budget is elected. We have never had more than about 80 people show up at the annual business meeting. In fact, I haven't gone for the last seven years. I stopped going because nobody else was going. I used to wonder how come more people don't show up to vote on the budget. I asked them one day. A lady stood up and said, "Pastor, this is evidence of the kind of trust we have in the leadership of this church. We like the way it's going. We believe in the way it's going. Go for it! We've got better things to do."

2. We vote on the purchase of land or buildings. We voted to build this building. We voted to buy this land. When we build our next buildings, we will vote to build those buildings.

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3. We vote on the calling of the senior pastor. If I were to die or if God were to call me to go somewhere else and do something else, this church would select the next senior pastor. We would vote on the senior pastor.

4. We vote on changes in the church constitution if we were to change any of the ways that we operate by law in California.

Outside of that, all the decisions of the church are made by the people actually making the decisions in the ministry. Children's Ministry makes the decision for children's ministry. Youth Ministry makes the decision for youth ministry. Once a church gets this big nobody can know everything that's going on. I don't know everything that's going on. How do I control it? I don't. It's not my job to control the church. That's the Holy Spirit's job.

But the point is, the church is a fellowship. So we don't divide the church through votes.

### **2. 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."* We fulfill that one good. We are one big happy family with the emphasis on **big** and **happy**.

So because we're a family, we operate on the basis of relationships not rules. When Kay and I got married nearly 21 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 21 years, we don't have any rules any more. 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. As a result we act like a family. And in a family you don't have a rule book for your family. You don't have a policy manual for your family. You operate on the basis of relationships.

How do we relate? Like a family. 1 Timothy 5:1-2 (Phillips) *"Don't reprimand a senior member of the 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."* 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 have three spiritual fathers in this church. Nobody elected them. They're not a board. They're not some heavy duty council. I have been a Christian for 36 years even though I'm a relatively young guy.

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The Bible says you're to treat those who are more mature spiritually than you as spiritual fathers. I went out and found three men in this church who had been Christians 45 years or longer. 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. 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.

Do you vote in your family? If we voted in our family, we'd have ice cream for breakfast, we'd play Nintendo all day, we'd never go to school, we'd never do any homework, we'd take vacations every other week. In my family, the mature are in the minority. We've got two parents and three kids.

That's why it's stupid to give everybody an equal vote in the church. To give an equal vote to somebody that's been a Christian fifty years and another guy who's been a Christian twenty years and another guy who's been a Christian one year and another guys who's been a Christian one day and say you all have an equal vote. That's silly. 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 with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his family how can he take care of God's church?"* It's interesting that it says the pastor is to manage the church like a father and husband is to manage the family. An un-managed family is an unloved family. And an un-managed 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 it says 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. In fact I have an earned doctorate and two honorary doctorates. Three doctor's degree. Not once does it say you have to be a success in business to be a pastor.

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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 sixteen 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.

### **3. The church is a body.**

There are many verses in Scripture that says the church is the body of Christ. We're a body, not a business. We are an organism, not an organization. Therefore at Saddleback we function on the basis of spiritual gifts (your abilities and talents), 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

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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.

*"Just as each of us have one body with many members and these members do not all have the same functions, so in Christ we who are many form one body and each member belongs to all the others."* 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 set 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. We actually 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 becomes 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 89 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 community 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.

The fact is, 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

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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 ministry so that the body of Christ may be built up."*

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.

On the top of page 33, this is Saddleback's organization in two sentences.

1. The people are the ministers and the pastors are the administrators. 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 6000. We have 6000 members and every member is a minister.

Currently there are 89 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."

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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 Idlewyld 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.

There are 36,000 names on our church role. That means I don't care what you think of is a neat thing to do, there's at least 100 other people in the church who'd like to do it too. If you want to start Underwater Basket Weaving for Christ, I guarantee you they'd be people who'd say, "Sure, let's start 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 formed a computer ministry and Saddleback's been on the Internet for over a year -- [www.saddleback.com](http://www.saddleback.com) -- and people all over the world call into our homepage. We were one of the first web pages to have sound. You can hear Rick Muchow's songs, excerpts of a message on our web page on the Internet.

All of these ideas! Do the pastors set 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 2000 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 any more. I am running out of energy. I can't personally minister to every person in the church. I cannot personally meet everybody's need any more. But as I read the Bible, I'm not supposed to. It's not my job to minister to you 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.



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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 wild fire, they have all these rules, restrictions, regulations and they run around stomping out every little camp fire 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. We have 89 different ministries.

### **4. The church is a flock**

This was Jesus' favorite description of the church. He called it "My little flock". Therefore the church is cared for and led by shepherds. Shepherds lead and feed.

John 21. *"Jesus asked Simon Peter, 'Do you really love me?' 'Yes, Lord,' said Peter. 'Then take care of My sheep.'" 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 any more. 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 does. So a number of years ago I stopped

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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. Now I have two teenagers. I snuck in and Walt has all these IV's. He sets 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, "When are you going to come visit me?" He said, "You don't want to be that ill!"

I talked to Walt about fifteen 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 super star 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 super star 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 fall 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. So from the very beginning of the church it's been my goal to give the ministry away.

When Kay and I started this church sixteen years ago, 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.

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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 ten volunteers, then to twenty volunteers, then to thirty ministers, then to forty lay ministers. Finally we now have 1500 lay ministers in this church to do the ministry. And we began to add staff and now we have over 70 paid staff members in this church and seven other pastors. Finally I realized about four or five years ago 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. We brought in Pastor Tom, then Pastor Doug, then Pastor Greg and I started sharing even the preaching with them. 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 forty 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 11,000 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.

Now the church is a flock. Therefore it's cared for and led by shepherds. There are three different terms that are used in the New Testament to refer to the same church leader.

1. "Poimen" in Greek means pastor or shepherd. 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.

2. "Presbuteros" means "elder" in Greek. "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

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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 Christian 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.

3. "Episcopos" is the word for "overseer" or "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.

1 Peter 5:1-2 *"To the elders [presbuteros] I say, be shepherds [poimen] of God's flock,"* 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.

Acts 20 *"Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders [presbuteros] of the church. When they arrived he said to them, 'Guard yourselves and all the flock of God which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [bishop]. Be pastors [shepherds] of the church of God.'" They are used interchangeably.*

How many pastors does our church have? Remember I'm not talking about ministers. Every Christian is a minister. In our church, we have right now, seven ordained pastors who lead the church and they form what we call the Pastor's Management Team. How many elders do we have in this church? Seven. It's the same seven people because an elder is a pastor. How many bishops? Seven. Overseers? Seven. They are the same people.

In many churches, you have pastors who are paid full time to serve, then you have volunteer men who serve as elders. There's nothing wrong with that at all. There's only one problem: In a church this big when you have 36,000 names on a roll, that's a city. And you need full time leadership, not part time leadership leading it. So at Saddleback, all our elders are paid full time to serve. We call them pastors. In this church we don't have part time elders because it takes 24 hours a day to keep up with a church this size.

So we have, for instance, Pastor John Baker. He is our pastor of membership. He was just a businessman in the community. We saw he was leading in our church as a lay leader and the church said, "There's the man God's put His spirit on." We brought him on staff as a full time pastor-elder. Steve Rutenbar has two businesses in the community. We recognized spiritual leadership in his life and brought him on as an elder pastor. He serves full time. So when people ask how many elders we have in our church, we have seven full time and ordained. Lay pastors we have over 100.

What do you call me? You don't have to call me "Reverend". Actually you can just call me Rick.

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That's my name. I'm not into titles. If you want to call me Pastor Rick, that's fine. When I got my doctor's degree someone asked, "What are we supposed to call you, Dr. Warren?" No. Please don't. I'm not into titles. At one time I said, "Why don't you just call me Gumby?" If you were to come to my office you'd find all this Gumby paraphernalia.

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 tonight 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. You can join tonight, take 201 next month, 301 the next month and be involved in ministry -- start a ministry. You can be involved immediately but if you want to start a ministry you go through class 301. Within about three months you could be a lay pastor of our church, serving the way God wants you to serve.

Kay Warren:

I am Kay Warren, Rick's wife. We've been married 21 years. Turn to page 15 and look at the Saddleback statements. We have three statements we're going to be covering in this session. Our Statement of Purpose -- why this church exists; our Statement of Faith -- what this particular church believes; our Statement of Practice -- what we actually do.

At the bottom of page 15 there's a verse *"Let there be real harmony among you so there won't be any split in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose."* That's why we're doing this particular session, because in this session we want you to understand what the purposes of this church are. You wouldn't join a service club or a philanthropic club or any kind of an organization if you didn't know what it stood for and was organized around. Therefore it doesn't make sense to join a church if you don't know what the church stands for and why it believes it exists. The reasons we at Saddleback church exist, we've come up with these reasons from the scripture based on two main passages of Scripture.

**Our Purpose Statement:** We believe a great commitment to the great commandment and the great commission will grow a great church.

This summarizes everything we do here at Saddleback church in one sentence. It's taken from two main passages of Scripture: Matthew 22:36-40, The great Commandment: *"Jesus said, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and 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 Prophets hang on these two commandments."* Then from the Great Commission we get these things: *"Jesus said, '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."*

From the first -- the Great Commandment -- we take Loving God With All Your Heart. That's worship. Also Loving Your Neighbor As Yourself -- that's ministry. From the Great Commission -- Go And Make Disciples -- evangelism; Baptize -- incorporate into fellowship; Teach Them All Things -

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- discipleship.

So we exist for these five reasons. Have you noticed how Rick says the same thing a whole bunch of different ways? He figures if you didn't get it the first time, he'll rephrase it and say it another way and maybe another group of people will get it that way. Then he'll rephrase it another way so another group of people will get it so that everybody eventually will understand. So everything on this page is the same thing said over and over in a different way. These five things -- these five reasons why we exist:

1. To celebrate God's presence. The number one purpose of this church, to celebrate God's presence or worship.
2. To demonstrate God's love through ministry.
3. To communicate God's word by evangelism.
4. We exist to incorporate God's people into His family which is fellowship.
5. We exist to educate God's people which is discipleship.

Celebrate, Demonstrate, Communicate, Incorporate, Educate

### **1. We exist to celebrate God's presence.**

This is the number one priority of our church because it is the number one priority for our lives. We weren't made or created to have great jobs or careers or grow beautiful gardens or to have fabulous hobbies. We were made to have a relationship with God. We were made to have fellowship with Him. If that's what we were made for that should be the number one purpose for our lives. That's the number one purpose for our church.

Worship is expressing my love to God. Matthew 4:10 says, "*Worship the Lord, your God, and serve Him only.*" A lot of Christians get real excited about serving God, real enthusiastic, but in the process they forget that they are supposed to worship Him first. If you're not worshipping Him first, service gets old and wears you out. Start with worshipping because that's why we exist. "*The Father seeks worshipers and His worshipers must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*" Have you noticed there is a lot of variety among churches?

Some church are so full of emotion, they bounce around, jump, hop, skip over the chairs. The people love that. Other churches are very formal and they are strict in their observance. There are certain things you do and you do the same thing every week at the exact time and people love it. Is there anything wrong with either of those? Not at all. As long as they're doing what the Bible says -- worshipping in Spirit and in truth. It's ok to have variety in worship style. Saddleback has chosen to be a kind of a middle-of-the-road church. We hop around a lot. Rick Muchow does a great aerobics exercise up here every Sunday. We have a lot of warmth and enthusiasm in our services. But we also have some structure and order to them also. We're kind of middle-of-the-road.

On your outline are listed seven or eight different ways you can express your worship to God no matter

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what style you choose to do it in: singing, commitment, praying, hearing the word, giving, baptism, meditating, Lord's Supper. These are all ways, according to the Scripture, that you can demonstrate your love for God and celebrate His presence in your life.

Our particular style is kind of middle-of-the-road but we use three words to characterize it.

1. Celebration. Psalm 122:1 David says, *"I was glad when they said unto me, let us go unto the house of the Lord."* Not sad or mad but I was glad. I think that's one of the things I love about this church. I grew up in church. I've been in church all of my life. One of the distinctions of Saddleback is people love to be here. They celebrate. It's fun. We have a philosophy that it should be a celebration time to come when you worship the Lord. It should not be like a funeral process. It should be fun. And we will always have celebratory services.

2. Inspiration. Isaiah 40:1 says *"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, mount up with wings as eagles, run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."* When you come here on Sunday morning, have you ever come but you didn't really want to be here? That's the way I was this morning. I was tired. It was Sunday morning and it already felt like Monday morning. The week had been so packed. I came because I knew this was what I needed to do, I needed to be in church. I wanted to be here but my body was really tired. I set over here on the side and Rick Muchow's up here doing the jitter bug, jumping around. I'm just trying to catch up and focus my eyes on him, he's moving so fast. He's trying to get people to clap, but I don't want to clap; I'm too tired to clap. But by the end of the service I was rejuvenated. My spirits had lifted. I was so glad I came. That's intentional. We design our worship services so that when you come in like me, dragging, tired, exhausted, you ought to be able to come here and leave feeling better than when you got here. So our services are designed to inspire you, to lift your spirits like a spiritual filling station. The music and messages kind of pour spiritual gasoline back into your tank.

3. Preparation. Ephesians 4:11 is a pivotal verse when it talks about the church. It says that pastors are to prepare God's people for the work of ministry. Rick has an intentional design in the messages that he gives every Sunday to give you something you can take away that you can use in your life on Monday morning. He feels like if he doesn't give you something that you can grab onto and use when you live everyday of your life, he's wasted your time, that's he's made the Bible (the most exciting book in the world) the most boring book in the world.

So you're going to come and celebrate, you're going to be inspired, and you're going to be prepared at Saddleback, you're going to get something for preparation for the week ahead. That's our number one purpose to celebrate God's presence.

### **2. We exist to communicate God's word.**

The definition of evangelism is "sharing the good news". Ephesians 3:10 *"His (God's) intent was that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known."* In other words, the purpose of the church is to talk about God, talk about the incredible things He has done and the incredible person He is to make known His wisdom to other people. That is our purpose.

Romans 10:13-14 (Living Bible) *"Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, but who can ask Him to save them unless they believe in Him and how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him and how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them."* The

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point of the verse is that you can't know about God unless somebody tells you. A great majority of people have somebody first tell them about Jesus Christ before they come to church. That's one of our purposes, to tell the good news of Jesus Christ.

On page 18 see "Why our church Must never stop Growing." We are committed to growing here at Saddleback. We've got 12,000 people. Isn't that enough? How many more people do we need? I want to give you some reasons why this church is never going to stop growing.

1. Because God loves people. This is the most important reason of all. God loves people. He is our model. If He loves people, we love because He does. 2 Peter 3:9 *"The Lord is patient not wanting anyone to perish but wants everyone to come to repentance."* The fact is we believe that every single person in the world needs Jesus Christ. Every single person needs to have a relationship with Him. If they don't they will spend eternity in hell. Because we believe that it means that we are going to continue to reach out to every person in Saddleback Valley. We feel the responsibility to tell them about Jesus Christ. Because He loves them, we do too, so we will never stop growing.

2. Because God commands us to reach out. He says you are to reach out and tell people about Me. Luke 14:23, Jesus talking, *"Go out into the country and urge anyone you find to come in so that My house will be full."* We've got a a lot of people here and in some ways it's full but it's not as full as it could be. Every person who comes represents someone who needs Jesus. Acts 1:8 Jesus again speaking, *"You will be My witnesses."* He doesn't say, Maybe, if you're having a good day and you're feeling ok about things you can be My witnesses. He just flat out says, *"You will be My witnesses."* Because God loves people we will reach out and because He has commanded us, we will reach out.

3. Because growth is God's will. It's His will that His church grows. Colossians 2:19 *"Under Christ's control the whole body is nourished and it grows as God wants it to grow."* It is very clear, very straightforward God says He wants His church to grow. Matthew 16:18 Jesus says, *"I will build My church."* God loves everybody. He wants us to continue to reach out because He cares about them. He has said, You will do it if you are My disciples. You will do what I told you. You will share your faith. Growing is His will.

Let me give you some unbiblical reasons we've heard as to why we maybe should stop growing and try to put a lid on this growth. They are unbiblical so don't think any of them are good.

1. God isn't interested in numbers. If God isn't interested in numbers tell me why He named a book of the Bible by that name. Numbers? And what does He do in that book of Numbers? He has the people be numbered over and over. Why? Because every single person, every number, represents a person that He loves. God is interested in numbers. They represent people.

One time a pastor came to Rick and said, "We don't count people at our church." Rick said, "Do you count the offering at your church?" Of course. "So you don't count the people but you do count the money. Isn't something a little off there?"

The point is of course people matter and we count numbers not to insulate our ego, not to have some great charge how we're better than somebody else. Every number represents a person. God is interested in numbers.



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2. Our church wants quality not quantity. This is usually said in a very pious voice. When you go fishing, are you interested more in quality or quantity. Aren't you interested in both? Most people who fish want to get the most fish they can within the legal limit and the biggest and most beautiful fish they can catch. There's no contradiction between quality and quantity.

It's the same in church with seeking vast numbers of people for Christ and wanting them to grow up into maturity like Jesus Christ. Quantity and quality easily go together. It's one of our goals in this church to be one of the most spiritually mature churches that we can by the year 2000.

If we weren't interested in quality we'd just be interested in numbers and getting people in. We want as many people as we can to know Jesus Christ and we want to help them in a process to grow like Jesus Christ as they become quality believers. There's no contradiction at all.

How many of you were not the first born kid in your family? What if your parents had said, "We have one quality kid. We don't need any more?" Many of you wouldn't be here.

What if we were camping with our three kids and lost all three of them. I would never lose them; Rick might. Let's say he lost all three of our children. We go out searching and he finds one of them and he says, "Honey, we don't need to look any more. I've found one quality child!" Would I be happy with that? No way! Would you? Of course not.

There is no contradiction between quality and quantity.

3. Another reason we've heard is large churches are impersonal. I suppose they could be. But you really don't get to be a large church if you're impersonal. People don't go to a church that's cold and unfriendly. It's usually the little churches that are that way, rather than the big churches. Big churches get big because they are friendly and care about people.

We have collected thousands of the cards that visitors give their impressions of Saddleback on. The number one thing people mention first besides the enormous size (that or the parking) is the warmth and friendliness of the people. That's intentional. We try very hard to have people turn around and greet each other. It's corny to say, "Greet 47 people." But it's making contact, letting somebody know with a smile and a greeting that they are important. It impresses people. It makes them feel like somebody here cares about me. Large churches can be impersonal but this one isn't.

One of the ways you safeguard against that is this next thing on your outline.

While the church is going to keep growing larger (and it is) on Sunday morning/Saturday night, it grows smaller by involving the people in small groups. It's absolutely fantastic to come here on the weekends and have the worship services and there are thousands of people singing. You hear the voices and the music that's so awesome. It's an incredible experience and I love it, but these thousands of people don't meet my personal needs, when I need somebody to pray for me. The way you take care of that is you get yourself involved in a small group. It's going to get bigger but you need to be in a small group where somebody knows your name, somebody knows what's going on in your life, somebody knows what matters to you and is there to help you when you're sick or in the hospital or have some kind of tragedy or just the normal everyday stuff of life. We grow larger on Sunday mornings and smaller at the same time by being in a small group.

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### 3. We exist to educate God's people.

The definition of that is discipleship. Discipleship means helping believers grow spiritually. Hebrews 6:1 *"Let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity."* Evidential there is something more than just coming to know Jesus Christ in a personal relationship. There's something more. The Bible says it's maturity, becoming like Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 3:18 *"Grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."* Ephesians 4:11-13 *"God has given some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all become mature like Christ."*

One of our goals is to make Saddleback church one of the most spiritually mature churches as we possibly can by the year 2000. Part of that process is Class 201 which I hope you'll take next month. Everything that's in that class will teach you how to grow, how to begin this process of maturing. It talks to you about how to learn how to read the Bible, how to study it, about prayer, about a quiet time. It talks about those things that will get you on that road to becoming a spiritually mature person. Take that class and you'll get all the information you need to get going in that area.

### 4. We exist to demonstrate God's love.

A definition of ministry is meeting needs with love. The reality is, everybody hurts. Everybody has a hurt. Everybody has a struggle. It doesn't matter how nicely put together you look. It doesn't matter whether your shoes match your purse. It doesn't matter whether you've got a great house and a great car and a great job. It doesn't really matter if all those things are in place because somewhere in your life is a hurt, a need, a struggle. Part of the reason this church exists is to help meet those needs with love. And not even just the needs of you here but the community where we know people are aching and dying.

So one of the purposes we exist is to show love, to meet needs. John 13:35 *"By this shall all men know that you are My disciples that you have love for one another."* Jesus could have thought of all kinds of reasons, all kinds of hallmarks for His disciples and He had the opportunity right here to tell them, This is what I want you to be known for. He didn't say to His disciples, "I want you to be known for your fabulous preaching. I want you to be known for the great clothes you wear. I want you to be known for the beautiful temples that you build." He said, "I want you to have a reputation in this world as people who love."

We could have, when we came to build this building, we could have built something very lavish. Everybody likes to look at real pretty things. We could have spent a ton of money building a very lavish building. We chose not to because we don't want to be known as "this gorgeous church that you have got to go see. You can't come to Orange County unless you see this church!" Like Disneyland; you've got to go see it.

We want to be known for something that will last a whole lot longer. We want people in this valley to know Saddleback church as a place of love. A place where you will be loved. A place where you can express love. A place where you can meet needs and a place where you can have your needs met. It's so much more important to be known as people who love than as people who have a great building.

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The heartbeat of Saddleback is our small groups. This is the place where you need to get involved where you will find somebody who will know you and care about you. 1 Corinthians 12:4-5,27 *"Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities. There are different kinds of service to God or ministry. All of you together form the one body of Christ and each of you is a separate and necessary part of it."* One of the favorite metaphors in the Bible for the church is a body. It's a great metaphor. Everybody's got a body so we can relate to this metaphor. Jesus is the head of the body. He is the one in charge. All of us are the separate parts. Some people are the elbow, some are the knees, some are the eyes, the nose, the big toe. Everybody's got a part in the body of Christ.

This has been such an incredible lesson to me, how important I am in the body of Christ, in His church. What I have to offer is something valuable. I know that probably some of you when you came to this church, I bet at some point you looked around at this huge place and said, "They don't need me there. What do I have to give? I can't sing like Lynette or Rick. I can't play the piano like Rick Muchow. I can't play any of those other instruments. I can't speak the way Rick Warren speaks. I can't do art work like the people who make these beautiful banners, arrange flowers like the people in the decoration ministry do. I can't teach children." You look at this church and you see the incredible ministries and just think, "They don't need me here. They really don't need me here."

Nothing could be further from the truth. We need every single one of you and each one of you is vital and necessary. When you became a Christian, when you gave your life to Jesus Christ, He gave you in return some kind of a gift, something that you could give back that would make such a difference in His body.

When we started this church we were young kids, 26 years old. At that point in time I already knew he was like a superstar guy. He won all these awards. People fell all over me to get to him. He was an awesome person and I felt so inadequate. When God called us to this church I kept thinking, "You've made a big mistake here. He needed to marry somebody who was twice as talented, twice the ability that I have. I have really nothing to give in this place." Yet God had called us. I was starting, I was working, I was doing all I knew to do but with such a heavy heart, feeling so inadequate.

We hadn't been here that long and I got asked to speak at one of our mother-daughter events. I was terrified and crying, bemoaning the fact that God has chosen the wrong person to marry Rick, the wrong person to be the pastor's wife of the church I knew God was going to do awesome things through. I felt so inadequate. I was crying and thought, I've got to stop this, I'm going to speak, I'd better get myself in a better condition. I turned the radio on to distract myself. I don't listen to Christian radio that often but for some reason the channel that day was turned to a Christian radio station. As I turned it on these were the exact words that came across the radio to me in a song, "God uses ordinary people. He chooses people just like you and me who are willing to do what He commands. God chooses people who will give Him their all no matter how small their all might seem to them because little becomes much when we place it in the Master's hands."

I said, "Ok, God. You've made me an average ordinary person. For the first time in my life, thank You." I began to believe that day that God would do something through this average, ordinary person. I'll never sing like Muchow or Lynette or anybody else who has gorgeous voices. I'll never play the piano the way they do. I'll never be able to do the art work. I'll never be able to do so many things, but I believed that day that God would do something through this average person and I gave Him that and I have seen God do miracles. When I tell you that you are needed here, it's ok if you're sitting there

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saying, "But you don't understand, I'm average. I'm ordinary. I don't have any extraordinary thing to offer." That's ok. Give what you have. To you it seems like it's so little. It's so tiny when you compare it to the vast gifts that other people seem to have. But God promises that if you give Him what seems so little He will take it and make a miracle of your life.

When we talk about the fact that this is a body and you are a part of it, we need you at Saddleback church. We need what you have to give. I really care about this. It's my passion. I've seen what God has done in my life. And God has something for you here. At Saddleback church, every member is a minister. Every single one of you is a minister. If you belong to Jesus Christ, you are His minister. At Saddleback, every task is important. The people who park the cars are just as important as the people who stand in front of the pulpit every week. The people who stand behind the scenes picking up the paper, washing the windows -- making sure we can see out -- are just as important as those who teach our children in Sunday School. Every job is important. And everyone of you, every member, is a "10" in some area. You have something very special even you are an average ordinary person. You have that to offer back to God and He will use it in a miraculous way.

That's why we exist. That's the purposes of our church.

Let's look quickly at our **Statement of Faith**, what we believe. We'll see in these next to pages there are eight different essentials we say about God, about Jesus Christ, about the holy Spirit, about the Bible, about the human beings, about salvation, about eternal security, about eternity. These are eight doctrines that if you're going to join Saddleback church, you need to be in harmony with. These are things we need to agree on. if there is any one that you think, "I don't know about..." please wait and talk to somebody before you decide to join Saddleback church.

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These are things we believe are essential. These are things we need to be united in thought and purpose on. In the essentials we have unity.

Ephesians 4:4-6 *"There is one body and one Spirit, there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all."* Essentials. But there are a lot of things in the Christian life, the Christian walk, that are not essentials. They're kind of open to however you interpret them, as you study, as you pray, as you ask God to show you. There's some things you're going to differ from other people on. We consider a lot of these to be non essentials and in those there's liberty. In those we can have diversity.

Romans 14 *"Accept him whose faith is weak without passing judgment on disputable matters. [underline "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 to himself to God. So whatever you believe about these things, keep between yourself and God."*

For instance: Some people ask, "Is this a charismatic church?" This is not a charismatic church but we are not anti charismatic. There are people in this church who are very charismatic, who practice speaking in tongues, who believe that is an essential part of their faith and their walk with God. There are people who think that's appalling and they don't want anybody getting near them talking about speaking in tongues. Because we don't believe it's essential for salvation, it's not one of these eight, it is one of the gifts of the spirit that God gives to whomever He will, we say you have liberty. If God has given you that gift, that's great, as long as you don't try to tell everybody else they have to have the same gift. That would make it something different. That's one example. We are not charismatic, but we are not anti-charismatic.

About the second coming of Jesus Christ. There are probably three main positions. You're either pre-millennial, post- millennial, or amillennial. (If you have no idea what this means, don't worry about it!) There is liberty. The only thing that we believe as you see in these eight essentials, that we teach about the second coming of Christ, is that Jesus Christ is coming back. It is our responsibility to be ready, to have our hearts ready to meet Him. Beyond that there are so many divergent views about the second coming of Christ. As long as you believe that, we can have liberty, we can discuss it, we can go back and forth in discussing. As long as the essential is you do believe Jesus Christ is coming back.

Someone asked Rick one time, "Will smoking send you to hell?" This is one of these disputable matters. Rick said, "No, it'll just make you smell like you've been there." A disputable matter.

Drinking. I grew up in a church where anyone who drank at all was very suspect. No good Christian ever drank at all. At Saddleback we don't teach that because we don't think the Scripture reaches that. We think that the Scripture teaches drinking in moderation is all right. The operative words are "in moderation". Anything that causes you to give over the control of your life to something besides God is very dangerous. Drunkenness is always wrong in every circumstance. There is no place ever for drunkenness. Drinking in moderation is something else. However, all the pastors have taken a vow of abstinence -- complete abstinence -- partially because we don't want to add anything into our lives to get caught up in something we don't want to get caught up in, partially because if we were out drinking it would give other people permission to drink. We don't see any need for that. So we have all chosen not to drink at all. But it is a disputable matter so there is freedom between you and the Lord, the Holy Spirit, in your life.

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The point is: In essential things we have unity. There are eight things here you need to agree on if you're going to join Saddleback church. There are many other things that are open to interpretation and we have liberty in those. And in all things we have love, we have charity. 1 Corinthians 13:2 *"If I hold in my mind, not only all human knowledge but also the very secrets of God and if I have the faith that can move mountains, but have no love, I amount to nothing at all."* You can be so theologically correct, and you can have all the things worked out in Revelation about who the beast is and who the red horse is and what the bowl is and what the trumpet is and when this happens. And you can have Daniel figured out to the nth degree, but if you are not a loving person, who cares? It doesn't matter!

The bottom line is we have unity in the things that matter, that we allow each other liberty in the things that aren't as important, and above everything else we relate to each other in a loving way.

You're going to run into some people here at Saddleback church you don't like. You're going to run into some people that may hurt your feelings either intentionally or unintentionally. You may find some people who take credit for an idea that was yours. You may find you don't get credit for something you did that you worked so hard on and it hurts you. You may find some people who are obnoxious. Why? Because this is a church made up of people just like you. Imperfect, sinners, saved by the grace of God, who make mistakes. You have to make a decision, if you're going to join this church, that you will have a loving heart toward those you meet and that you would be willing to do work of reconciliation and forgiveness if it's ever needed. You're going to need it! You're going to need to learn to forgive and you're going to have to be willing to do that if you're going to join here. We don't want people to join this church who aren't willing to go through that process. We've never had a major split in sixteen years and we don't want you to be the one who inaugurates it. If you decide to join, you come with an attitude that says "If I run into trouble, when I run into trouble, when I run into difficulties, when I run into situations, I promise before God to do what the Bible says and that is to work through with a loving heart to reconciliation and forgiveness."

Our **Lifestyle Statement** is on page 23. These are the things we practice because beliefs don't really matter a whole lot unless they're actually translated into action. These are some things we really believe and teach strongly.

### **B - Bible is our sole authority.**

2 Timothy 3:15 *"The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and helps us to do what is right."* At Saddleback church we have done our very best to make sure that the Bible is our final authority. Not a creed, not a denominational statement, not what Oprah says or Montel says. Who is our final authority, not only in our lives but in our churches -- the Bible. And it can be trusted. Whenever there is a question about what to do, we know where to go to find the answer. The Bible. The word of God. It can be trusted as an authority in our lives.

### **A - Autonomy of the local church.**

Jesus Christ is the head of this church. Not Rick, not the elders. Jesus Christ is the head of this church, the recognized honored head of this church. Because of that, we are a body and we work together. He is the source of our life. There is value in associating with other Christians, other groups of

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Christians. Rick will be talking about that. But this church makes its own decisions about its land, its property. No denominational control from outside can tell us what to do with our land or tell Rick to move to another church. This church makes its own decisions about those kinds of things. We are autonomous.

### **P - Priesthood of every believer.**

This is another doctrine very close to my heart. 1 Peter 2:9 and Revelation 1:6 *"Christ loves us and by His death He has freed us from our sins and made us a kingdom of priests to serve God. ... You are the King's priests, God's own people, chosen to proclaim the wonderful acts of God."* Nobody here wears special clothes, a special collar or a special robe. You and I are all priests before God. We don't need anybody to stand between us and God anymore. Jesus Christ did that by His death and resurrection. You don't need another human being to stand on your behalf in front of God. Because of that we all have equal access to God.

Sometimes people say to me, "Will you pray for me?" and they'll tell me a need it their life. I know the reason they're asking me is because I'm Rick's wife I've got kind of a special hot line to God. Not at all. You and I have equal access to God. We are all priests, which means we all have that same responsibility of telling people about Christ, of worshiping before Him. That's a unique privilege we have and something we believe in.

### **T - Tithing.**

The word tithing simply means ten percent. It's the way we finance this church. We don't finance it through bingo or raffles or any kind of gimmicks like that. We finance this church through the members giving ten percent of what they earn back to the church. Nobody's ever going to come check up on you. Nobody's ever going to knock on your door, "You're about three months behind. Let's cough up some back pay!" Never! It's between you and God. We feel like if we teach you what the Bible says, then it becomes something between you and God. It is the responsibility of the people who commit themselves to membership here to give and support the work of the church.

### **I - Immersion.**

Rick will talk about this. Colossians 2:12 *"When you were baptized you were buried with Christ and in baptism you were also raised with Christ."* If you have never had the opportunity to watch the baptisms in the baptism pool, you've got to do it. You watch people make a public statement of their belief in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The picture of baptism is being buried under water just as Christ was buried in the tomb and raised into a new way of life. Baptism is simply a picture of what's happened on the inside.

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### S - Spirit led living.

John 15:5 *"Jesus said, 'I am the vine, you are the branches. If you abide in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. But apart from Me, you can do nothing.'"* This is something we believe deeply. He is the source of our life not just for salvation but for everyday. Every day, when you get up, if you do not reconnect yourself, not in terms of salvation, but in terms of dependence, "God, I depend on You today to get me through this day", you'll miss out. You're trying to live your life on your own strength and that leads only to frustration and exhaustion. God has intended that we be plugged in to Him. He is our power source in life.

There were some situations in my life that, if I did not know I had God's help to get me through another day, it would be real difficult to face some days. If I did not know that God was there to guide me every moment of everyday, to give me strength, to give me wisdom, to give me patience, I'd quit! I know that there's at least one situation in your life that God has allowed if for no other reason it is that you would be dependent on Him for life for energy to keep you going.

### T - Telling others about Christ.

1 Peter 3:15 *"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."* It is the responsibility and the privilege of every believe to tell someone else. You don't have to know the whole Bible, you don't have to have some witnessing plan memorized. All you need to do is tell somebody else, "This is what God did for me. I don't even understand it all, but my life is different because of Jesus Christ." Telling people about Him.

Rick:

We're from many different church backgrounds. Some of you may have been believers for years, some of you are brand new believers, some of you are still on the edge. You're still considering the claims of Christ. So one of the things we do as part of 101 is review quickly what exactly does it mean to be a Christian and what are the symbols of salvation -- baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Page 3, let's look at the one thing we all do in common who are part of Saddleback church -- **Our Salvation.**

In Galatians 3:26-28 *"For now we are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ [notice it's not through church, not through baptism, not through good works; it says through faith in Jesus Christ we become children of God] and we who have been baptized into union with Christ are enveloped by Him. We are no longer Jews or Gentiles or slaves or free men or even merely men or women. But we are all the same. We are Christians. We are one in Jesus Christ."*

This says that when you become a believer and you become a part of God's family, in God's eyes all of the distinctions are wiped out, that the church is a united family. There is no place for discrimination. There is no place for racism. There is no place for even gender differences. It says we're all the same in God's eyes. We're all equally valuable to Him in the family of God.

What makes us a part of that family?



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Page 4, **What does it mean to be a Christian?** Everybody wants to be happy. People try, primarily, three different ways.

Some people look for happiness through 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 people 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 people 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 the fact is real happiness comes from understanding it's not pleasure, possessions or power. But from understanding my purpose. That's where real happiness in life comes from. Understanding your purpose in life. Why are you here?

Why am I here? What's the problem with it? What's the solution? What does God want me to do?

### 1. Why am I here?

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

1. God made me to love me. God says, *"I have loved you with an everlasting love."* Ephesians 1:4-5 *"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."*

You were created to be loved by God.

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 in His image. He blessed them and said 'Live over the earth and bring it under control. I am putting you in charge.'" The Bible says "God richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment."* 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 (top of page 5) John 10:10, *"I have come in order that you might have life, life in all its fullness."* 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 conscious. It provides purpose in life, power and strength, life and peace, confidence, fulfillment. He

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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.

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?**

Here's the problem: Man has a natural desire to be 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, "Look out for number one... Do your own thing... If it feels good, do it regardless of what God says." 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. 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 and each of us have turned to his own way." Today we'd say, "All of us have gone astray and everybody's done their own thing."*

*"If we say we never sin we're only fooling ourselves and we refuse to accept the truth."*

The sad part is that sin breaks our close relationship to God and it causes us to fear God and to try to live our lives outside 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."* Romans 3:23 says *"All have sinned and fall short of God's glorious ideal."* 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 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.

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

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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 any more. 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 was 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 if you 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 is the solution? Look at what Jesus said. *"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through Me."* 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

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was that all the major religions point to truth. In Japan, where I served as missionary for a while, it's called Truth. 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.

Then Jesus comes along and He 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.

Jesus has already taken care of your sin problem. "*The wages of sin is death, [that's the bad news; then the good news] the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

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 setting 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 Lion's 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.

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. So what's the difference. It means to believe in Christ. 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.*" 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 form 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."

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What does God want me to do? Four things:

1. Admit. 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. First you admit. I admit that God has not been first place in my life and I ask Him to forgive my sins. *"If we confess our sins He's faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from every wrong."*

2. Believe. I believe that Jesus Christ died to pay for my sins and that He rose on Easter and is alive today. *"If you confess that Jesus is your Lord, and you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."* 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 tonight. 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."

3. Accept God's free gift of salvation. Don't try to earn it. *"It is by grace you are saved through faith and it is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God. Not of works so no one could boast."* 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.

Page 8. Our relationship to Christ is not restored by anything we do, but on the basis on what Jesus Christ already did for us on Calvary.

4. Invite Jesus Christ to come into my life and be the director or Lord of my 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 receive Him, He gives the right to become the children of God. All we need to do is to trust Him to save us. All those who believe this are reborn. Not a physical rebirth but from the will of God."* Circle "receive" and "believe". What does it mean to be a Christian? You must

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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, *"Listen! I stand at the door [of your heart] and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in."*

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: "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 to grow as a Christian. Amen."

The Bible says, *"Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."* 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 marathon or be a Billy Graham. You have to grow as a Christian. That's what this church is all about. We're here to help you grow. We have other classes. Class 201 -- How to Grow in Your Faith. Class 301 -- How to Discover Your Ministry. Class 401 -- How to Discover Your Life Mission. And all kinds of other classes and mid-week services to help you grow. But the starting point is the commitment you've made or re-made 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.

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### The Importance of Being Baptized.

#### 1. Why should I be baptized?

1. To follow the example set by Christ. Mark 1:9 *"At that time Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the river."* 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 commands it. Christ commands that every Christian be baptized. *"Jesus said, 'Go then to all people every and (1) make them My disciples, (2) baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and (3) teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.'" These are the three things the church is commanded to do: Make disciples -- help people come to know Christ; Baptize them; 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 demonstrates that I'm really a believer. The Bible says, *"Many of the people who heard Him believed and were baptized."* 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."* How do you prove you're a Christian? You obey His commands. One of His first commands is, Be baptized.

**What is the meaning of baptism?** Baptism does two things.

1. It illustrates Christ's burial and resurrection. *"Christ died for our sins. He was buried and He rose again."* the Bible says *"For when you were baptized you were buried with Christ and in baptism you were also raised with Christ."* 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. Baptism illustrates my new life as a Christian. 2 Corinthians 5:17 *"When anyone becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and a new life*

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*has begun.*" 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.

Next page, *"By our baptism then, we were buried with Him and shared His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead so we also may live a new life."* It doesn't make you a Christian, it shows you already believe.

**Why should I be baptized by immersion?** There are lots of ways. 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 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."* 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. Example *"Then both Philip and the man went down into the water and Philip baptized him. Then they came up out of the water."*

3. That's what the word means. "Baptize" literally means "dip under water." The Greek word baptize means to dip under water.

4. It best symbolizes a burial and resurrection. The founders of denominations agree about this.

Martin Luther (Lutherans) said, "I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed as the word imports and the mystery signifies."

John Calvin (Presbyterians) "The word 'baptize' signifies to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church."

John Wesley (Methodists) "Buried with Him, alludes to baptizing by immersion according to the custom of the first church."

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." It says since 1988 every Catholic church in Orange County has been built with a baptism pool so they can immerse. As an example they said on this particular day the archbishop was baptizing 839 people by immersion. 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



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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's believed in Christ. *"Those who believed and accepted His message were baptized."* Acts 8:13, *"Simon himself believed and was baptized."* Acts 8:12, *"But when they believed Philip as he preached the Good News and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."*

At Saddleback, we wait until our children are old enough to believe and understand the true meaning of baptism before we baptize them. There is only one qualification in the Bible to be baptized. You've got to believe in Christ. Obviously you've got to be old enough to understand what that's all about. There are many churches that practice the baptism of confirmation. 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 confession of faith. This custom only began about 300 years after the Bible was finished. It's not in the Bible. It's just a tradition. This is different than 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. 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.

Last year we baptized here at Saddleback 1,365 adults and, if you have not been baptized, it would be my privilege to baptize you. We baptize after the Saturday night service and after the second service on Sunday. We warm up our baptism pool so we can have jacuzzi for Jesus!

What do you wear when you're going to be baptized? Whatever you feel comfortable in. If you're a woman, maybe a swim suit with a t-shirt over the top simply for modesty. The men, just a pair of shorts and a t-shirt. Something you don't mind getting wet in.

**When should you be baptized?** 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."** In Acts it says those who believed were baptized that day.

*"Philip began with the scripture and told him the good news about Jesus and as they traveled along the road they came to some water and the man said, "Look! Here's water. Why shouldn't I be baptized right now?" Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The man*

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*answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he went down into the water and Philip baptized him."*

There's nothing special about the water. The water in the pool is not holy, neither is 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 consenting follower of Christ." There's no reason to delay. After you've decided to receive Christ you ought to be baptized.

P. 12 are some common questions.

Can my family be baptized together? Yes. If each family member understands the full meaning of baptism and has become a Christian, we encourage families to be baptized at once. I once baptized a family of six. The mom and dad and four teenagers. It was a great experience.

Younger children who wish to be baptized are asked to have a meeting with our minister of children for a pre baptism conversation. If your whole family knows Christ and want to be baptized together, you need to call the church office and arrange a baptism conference with our children's pastor. They will sit down with you and your child and, in simple terms, explain what it's all about so they can understand the meaning of baptism.

Will you have to say anything at your baptism? No. At the beginning of the service, I will briefly explain the meaning of baptism. You will wait at the edge of the pool for your turn to be baptized then I or another pastor will introduce you, briefly lower you under the water, then you can leave the pool, dry off and watch the others. Later you will be mailed a certificate of your baptism. It's in a leatherette binding embossed with "Saddleback Valley Community Church". We take your picture and it has your certificate with your name embossed and I sign it. This is to help you remember your baptism.

A funny story: Carol McCord and her husband were flying overseas and they couldn't get their passports because she couldn't find her birth certificate. She took her Saddleback baptism statement and the guy thought it looked official enough and let her in!

We also encourage you to pick up these invitations you can mail out to friends and relatives inviting people to your baptism.

In the Bible there's no such thing as a Christian who hasn't been baptized. Let me mention a couple of special things. You may have a special circumstance which needs a private baptism. 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 ok to be baptized more than once? I often have a 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. Do you take communion more than once? 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.

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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**. (p. 13) It's interesting that 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. We do not call Baptism and the Lord's Supper, **sacraments**. We don't call them that because the word sacrament means it saves you. We don't believe baptism saves you and we don't believe the Lord's Supper saves you. The Bible says they are symbols of your salvation, not things that make you saved. So technically they are not sacraments. We call the ordinances because they were ordained by God for Christians to remember Jesus' death.

The Lord's Supper is an object lesson that represents a great spiritual truth. **What is the Lord's Supper?**

1. It is a simple act. 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.'"* 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 to remember Me.'"* 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's a statement of faith. *"For whenever you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes back."* 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.

Page 4. **Who Should Take the Lord's Supper?** Only those who are already believers. When Jesus offered the communion (the Lord's Supper) He didn't offer it to the 5000 where He fed the loaves and

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fish. He only offered the Lord's Supper to the twelve disciples whom He knew were true believers. He didn't offer the Lord's Supper to the crowds.

That is why we don't do it on Sunday morning. Sunday morning, remember, is a seeker service. It's to bring non Christians to, bring your friends. The Lord's Supper isn't for your friends who don't know Christ. In fact, the Bible says that when a non believer takes the Lord's Supper he brings judgment upon himself. We don't want to cause a non believer to sin even more so we don't take it very often on Sunday morning.

We take the Lord's Supper when primarily it's just believers. We take the Lord's Supper once a month at our mid week service on Wednesday night which is for believers. We take the Lord's Supper a couple times a year at banquets when it's primarily just our church family. We have authorized all the lay pastors 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.

But about twice a year we take communion on Sunday morning. We usually do it on Sundays when we know there's not going to be a whole bunch of visitors like the Sunday after New Years 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.

The Bible says, *"For anyone who eats or drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment upon himself"* So it's not for unbelievers.

**How do I prepare myself for the Lord's Supper?** *"Therefore 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. A person ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup."* 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 ourself every time we take the Lord's Supper.

We do these four things. First self examination -- "God, what is it in my life that needs to be changed." Then we confess our sins. We recommit our lives and we even restore relationships. 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. And since it's a Supper it seems more appropriate to observe it in an evening service. It's not the Lord's breakfast. It's the Lord's Supper. It's more appropriate to take it in the evening. Acts 2 they took it in their homes.

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Since Sunday morning believers service is designed so you can bring non-believing friends. We only take the Lord's Supper at that service about twice a year. Instead we take it at Midweek, retreats, banquets and in small groups.

Page 34-35 Talks about **Our Affiliation** and how that Saddleback is in association with the Orange County Baptist Association. There about 90 other churches we fellowship with in Orange County. There's all the information about the state convention and the national convention.

Why are we a part of a denomination? We're a part of the Southern Baptist convention which is the largest denomination in America. One out of every ten churches in America is an SBC church. The largest denomination in California is Southern Baptist. Many of them don't have the name in their name like ours is Saddleback Valley Community Church. On Sunday here in Orange County there are Southern Baptist churches speaking in Korean, Spanish, Chinese, Rumanian, Latvian, Laotian -- about 32 different languages here in Orange County. There are black Southern Baptist churches, white Southern Baptist churches, German Southern Baptist churches and more.

We are an independent church but we choose to associate with a larger body. Why? Because we are a part of the largest missionary force in the world. Just like we believe in tithing ten percent of our income to the Lord, the church tithes. We take ten percent of all the money that comes in to help other churches get started. We are part of what's called the Cooperative Program which is the largest missionary force in the world. Every time you give on Sunday you sponsor 4200 missionaries in 134 countries. Your gift helps sponsor them.

p. 36 **What It Means To Be A Member.** The difference between being an attender and being a member can be summed up in one word -- commitment. The difference between being an attender at a church and being a member is like the difference between living together and getting married. If you're just living together there's no commitment; you can walk out at any moment. Marriage means you're committed for the duration.

At Saddleback, we recognize the need for a formal membership. We ask you to commit to membership in our church for four reasons.

1. A Biblical Reason. Christ is committed to the church and it shows obedience to what He is committed to. The Bible says, "*Christ loved the church and gave His life for it.*"

Every once in a while I'll hear somebody say, "I like Jesus I just don't like the church" or "I'm committed to Christ but I don't want to be committed to any local church" or "I like Christ; I don't need the church".

Whenever I hear that, I know one thing: They are an incredibly immature believer. The more mature you grow as a Christian, the more you're going to love the church. The Bible says the church is the bride of Christ and the body of Christ. How about if I said to you, "I like you. I just can't stand your body." You'd be offended by that. The Bible says the church is the bride of Christ. How about if I said, "I like you. I just can't stand your wife." You'd be offended. When you say, "I love Jesus but I don't need the church." The Bible says Jesus died for the church. He gave His life for it. The more like Christ you become, the more you're going to be willing to give your life for the church. It's not perfect

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but it's what Jesus died for. If we're going to be like Christ, we'll be as committed to the church as He is.

2. A Cultural Reason. It is an antidote to our society. We live in an age where very few people want to be committed to anything ... a job, a marriage, a church, a country. This attitude has produced a generation of church shoppers and church hoppers. They hop around from one church to another every week. Membership swims against the current of America's consumer religion. It is an unselfish decision. Commitment always builds character.

3. A Practical Reason. It defines who can be counted on. Every team must have a roster. Every school must have an enrollment. Every business has a payroll. Every army has an enlistment. Even our country takes a census and requires voter registration. Membership identifies who's in our family and who's not.

4. A Personal Reason. Membership produces spiritual growth. The New Testament places a major emphasis on the need for Christians to be accountable to each other for spiritual growth. You can't be accountable when you're not committed to any specific church family.

We're not into rituals or organization or simply signing your name on a piece of paper and it meaning nothing. That's not what membership is all about. We're talking about a step in your personal development. First, you commit your life to Christ. But that's just your first step in your growth. Next, you need to commit yourself to Christ's family, the body of believers. If you don't like other Christians you're not going to like heaven -- that's all who's going to be there. If you're not willing to commit to some other Christians right now, what do you think you're going to enjoy about heaven?

**What is expected of me as a Member?** 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.

On page 37 is the preamble to the covenant: "Having received Christ as my Lord and Savior and been baptized, 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..." If you choose to join Saddleback church this is what you're committing to

1. I will protect the unity of my church by acting in love toward the other members, refusing to gossip, by following the leaders.

*"Let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, ... Live in harmony with each other ... Have a sincere love..."* 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. We don't want you. If you're not willing to commit to loving the other people of this church, don't join.

By refusing to gossip -- *"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

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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 12,000 people in sixteen 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 you don't start this rumor mill that causes all kinds of stuff and problems in churches.

Then "I will protect the unity by following the leaders." *"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them that their work will be a joy and not a burden for that would be no advantage to you."*

This verse scares me to death. Not the part about *"obey your leaders and submit to their authority."* But the part that says, *"They keep watch over you as men who must give an account."* The Bible says that one day I, Rick Warren, will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and I will give an account of how well I helped you grow spiritually if you choose to become a member of this flock. I do not take that responsibility lightly. It scares me to death! One day I, because I'm the pastor of this church, and the other pastors will stand before Jesus Christ and give an account of how well we helped the members of this church family. If you don't join this church, if you're just an attender, I'm not accountable to you. I'm not responsible for you. But if you choose to say, I'm going to place myself in this family under the protection and leadership of Pastor Rick and the other pastors, one day we are going to report to Jesus Christ of how well a job we did in helping you grow.

I am not smart enough to lead a church this big. If you choose to join this church, I beg you to pray for me and to pray for the other pastors in this church. Because I find myself constantly on my knees and on my face before God saying, "You've got to tell me what to do!" There's no way one man could be wise enough to lead a church with as many thousands of people as we already have and as many more are going to be coming. In all sincerity, if you choose to become a member of this church, pray for your pastors and pray for me regularly that we will lead the church in the right way and not the wrong way.

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 actually a crew member on the cruise. Now that you join the church it's your job to reach out and bring others in. Pray for it's 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 sanguines 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 having their hand shaken at least three times. When a visitor walks in and three people have already greeted him before he even gets into

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the church he things, "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 fifteen 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 thirty days as a member. Anybody can do this. Two, if you do this you'll actually meet some people. You'll get to know some people.

**3. I will serve the ministry of my church** by discovering my gifts and talents, by being equipped to serve by my pastors, 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.

**4. I will support the testimony of my church by attending faithful, by living a godly life, by giving regularly.** Take 201. In that class you will learn the basic habits for Christian growth.

### **What Next? Saddleback's Program to Help You Grow. Christian Life And Service Seminars.**

At Saddleback, I have written four basic classes. You are in the first class and that's at first base. You are at first base, Discovering Membership 101. Then you go on to second base, class 201, Discovering Spiritual Maturity. Then you go on to third base, Discovering My Ministry, 301. Then you come on to class 401, Discovering My Mission. Once you finish all four classes -- 101, 201, 301, 401 .... we give you a pair of 501 jeans. Then you're in!

Actually, we give you a little square pin. It looks like a baseball diamond that says you've completed Saddleback basics -- the first basic sixteen hours.

You've already made it to first base. Congratulations. But you don't get credit for runners left on base.

So we want you to go on and hit a home run. We want you to go on to second base and take Class 201. In your binder, there are already tabs there. Once you have completed all four basic classes at Saddleback, then you can go back and start taking all kinds of other classes.

One of our goals is to start a Bible school on this campus for our members. It's not going to be a college for people outside of the church. It's just for members of the church. We've wanted to do this for years. The only reasons we didn't do it sooner is we didn't have the buildings. We started these four basic classes. But once you've finished that you can go back, there are other 200 level classes on maturity -- How to study the Bible, How to pray and get answers, How to overcome temptation, Overview of the Old Testament, Overview of the New Testament, book studies of individual books of the Bible. Then you can take other 300 level courses on ministry -- How to be a small group leader, How to be involved in music ministry, How to be involved in deaf ministry, How to start a ministry on your own, How to be a lay pastor... And other 400 level classes that we have already offered. We have hooked up with Golden Gate Seminary where people are going to be able to get seminary credit for classes in this church. We're about to conclude an agreement that will allow you to get seminary credit for completing 101, 201, 301, 401 toward a seminary degree, a master's degree. It's been our goal to have a fully graded educational program for our own members where you can take classes



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morning, afternoon, evening here on this campus. You need to take the four basics first. We want you to become a grand slam disciple.

### Page 40. **The Saddleback Quiz.**

Simple structure: The people are the ministers and the pastor are the administrators. Why do we have a simple structure? Because we're simple people. To maximize ministry.

A Climate of Acceptance: In the essentials, we have unity. In the non-essentials, there is liberty. In all things we show charity, love. The heartbeat of Saddleback is our small groups.

You're never really going to feel a part of Saddleback church until you become a part of our small groups. That's where you get known.

Defined Purposes: Can you say the Saddleback Statement? A great commitment to the great commandment and the Great Commission. We talked about our purposes of educate, demonstrate, communicate.

Defined Target: Who are we trying to reach? Saddleback Sam and his lovely wife Samantha. How does that affect the Sunday morning services? What do we call the services? Seeker sensitive. You can bring people who are just checking out God for the very first time. Seeker sensitive services. Can you name the five levels of commitment? The inner circle -- the people who are involved in ministry -- we call that the Core. How do you get in the Core? Class 301 and 401. The next group out are the people really committed to maturity. That's the Committed. How do you get in that? Class 201. It helps you grow in your spiritual life. Then to join the Congregation -- that's the next group out, the actual members. How do you get in that group? Class 101. The group that comes on Sunday morning, we call that the Crowd. And we want to reach the Community.

Lay Ministry: At Saddleback, every member is a minister. Currently how many lay ministries do we have operating? 89. What class should I take to find out the ministry best for me? 301. Who can begin a new ministry at Saddleback? Anybody, once you've taken class 301.

Encouraging Preaching: What is the difference between Sunday morning and Midweek messages? On Sunday morning we basically do topical exposition. What does the Bible say about various topics -- marriage, family, etc. At Midweek we do a book by book exposition, the books of the Bible.

Build-Up before Building Out: Can you name the 3 Phases of our building campaign? I didn't tell you. How much land did we purchase? I didn't tell you that either, did I? 79 acres. This is the largest church site in California and one of the largest in America. But we actually need more land and we're negotiating on a 40 acre piece next door so we can have more parking and also to have another exit. We're trying to get maybe four lanes going in and four lanes going out and it'll be a lot smoother. When will we move into our building? We did -- September 16.

Advertising: Who are we trying to impress with our ads? Nobody. If we did do an advertisement would we try to attract Christians or non Christians? Non Christians. They would be designed for non Christians.

Contemporary Worship: Why don't we sing more old hymns on Sundays? We don't know them. Where do we usually take communion? Small groups, mid week service, retreats, banquets, New Years.

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Keep on Growing: Why must Saddleback never stop growing? Because people need the Lord. As long as there's one person who doesn't know Jesus we're going to keep reaching out to share the good news. What does the phrase, "grow larger and smaller at the same time" mean? We grow larger through the worship service. We grow smaller through the small groups. You need to be a part of both. How many daughter churches do we have? I didn't tell you that. We have 26. We've started two churches in Huntington Beach, one in Irvine, one in Laguna Hills, one in Anaheim Hills, one Palmdale, one in Sacramento this Easter, one in Santa Margarita. We have started 12 Spanish speaking churches in all of Orange County. We've started two Korean speaking churches, one Vietnamese church. Why? Because it takes all kinds of churches to reach all kinds of people. We start at least one new church a year.

What is our goal for the year 2000? To be the most spiritually mature church in the nation by the year 2000. That's an audacious goal? No, it's not. It ought to be the goal of every church. Every church ought to say, We want to be the most like Christ we possibly can. We're already one of the five largest churches in America. We want to be the most spiritually mature church in America, developing this Bible church through our church.

**Membership Application.** There are four requirements for membership here at Saddleback. You must fulfill all four before you can be a member of this church.

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

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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 Discovering Church Member 101? Yes, you have and put today's date. You take 101 class this month, 201 next month, 301 next month, 401 after that (which, by that time, it will be offered) you will get to know the other people in this group.

4. Do you desire to abide by the Saddleback Membership Covenant? If Yes, check yes and please sign your name and date it.

The one thing I don't like about Saddleback is it's hard to know everybody's name any more. I knew every person's name in this church up to the first 3000 people. Then my brain fried. If you will tell me your name about three or four times, I'll get it by about the fourth time. I almost never forget a face. I have a photographic memory with a face. But I don't remember names that well any more. When you see me out somewhere don't be embarrassed to come up to me. It's no big deal. I want to see you. I want to say Hi to you. Tell me your name. If you'll tell me your name four times, I'll usually get it.

Prayer:

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. When we think about the fact that these taped messages are being sent to 42 countries around the world and we've never advertised it. When we think about the fact that 26,000 pastors of different denominations -- 60 denominations -- have come and studied this church and how we're going to have another 2000 in just another couple weeks for a conference. These kinds of things are mind boggling to us. For one reason or another You've put your hand on this church and people. We're not only modeling for this area but we're modeling a new way of doing church for the whole world. I thank You for the people who are reading this book around the world, the people who are coming to the seminars, the conferences, these people who are such an example. 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. Lord, I make no apology in saying that maybe the most significant thing these people do with their lives is to join this church family and get involved in ministry. 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." Although maybe we've never met them they say, "But you were one of the people who gave and sacrificed and served at Saddleback and 25 years after you died I accepted Christ because of that church." Lord, then it will be worth it. Help us to see the importance of the decision we're making today. How that 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. Tonight, 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

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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 folks as You use them in our church. In Jesus' name. Amen.