

Teaching, fellowship, communion, prayer, and discipleship are foundational to our ministry at Parkland Chapel. Acts 2:42 is the biblical model for the new church, but what does this model look like for the modern church? Since Parkland Chapel began in 2005, we have established eight distinctives that explain why we do what we do. While these distinctives are effective for this family of believers, we are only one representation of the body of Christ. The distinctives that guide Parkland Chapel may not necessarily work for another church body.

1. VERSE-BY-VERSE TEACHING THROUGH THE WHOLE BIBLE

At Parkland Chapel, the pastor teaches the Bible verse-by-verse, one chapter at a time, one book at a time, looking for Jesus in every passage (John 5:39). Sitting on a stool rather than standing behind a pulpit gives the implication “we are doing this together.”

The pastor teaches rather than preaches. Teaching appeals to the mind, which in turn affects the heart. Decisions are made as a result of information, knowledge, and understanding. Preaching, on the other hand, appeals to the heart, where emotions and feelings can change with circumstances, and decisions can be impulsive and lack deep roots. Teaching, however, allows the mind to convert the heart with reasoning, not emotions or feelings, firmly setting decisions in place

We strive to make the Bible and teaching relatable and vulnerable. Some pastors may clean up their real-life stories for church consumption, but censored stories are not realistic. When the Bible becomes relatable and applicable to real life, the distinction between the secular and sacred disappears. When the Word of God changes one’s life, everything becomes sacred. Studying the Bible becomes a part of one’s life rather than a discipline practiced in the morning or evening or on Sunday. Every part of life is used as a testament to God.

2. ORGANIC DISCIPLESHIP

Rather than focus on discipleship programs, Parkland Chapel practices organic discipleship. When Jesus commissioned the disciples to go and make disciples, the word *go* means “as you are going.” Organic discipleship does not mean unintentional. Discipleship involves building

relationships with others by being friendly, generous, and hospitable. Parkland Chapel encourages members to go into their communities and areas of influence (work, hobbies, sports, shopping, etc.) and disciple by doing life together. For some, discipleship might include Bible study and prayer. For others, discipleship is sharing a meal, watching basketball together, doing laundry, or any number of activities. Because the Bible naturally disciplines, by studying the Bible, members of Parkland Chapel become the evangelistic program.

Parkland Chapel offers discipleship within the church family by providing opportunities for members to gather for a five-week small group session in the spring and fall. Groups discuss how the previous Sunday's teaching applies to life. A wide range of ages attend small group, allowing demographics to learn from each other. Everyone is encouraged to invest in someone younger. However it may look, discipleship is all relational.

3. NEVER ASK ANYONE BUT GOD FOR A PENNY

An offering plate is not passed at Parkland Chapel. The pastor does not ask the church for money. Parkland Chapel believes God will provide the funds necessary to do His work. Unless the topic is included in the passage we are studying, money is not discussed at Parkland Chapel. This distinctive is inspired by George Müller (left) and Francis and Edith Schaeffer (right). Müller and the Schaeffers founded thriving ministries without asking anyone for anything. George Müller cared for thousands of orphans in England, and God provided all their needs. The Schaeffers' ministry, L'abri, provided shelters for people, using the same principle. L'abri still provides shelters all over the world.

For those who feel led to give, offering boxes can be found at the back of the sanctuary, in the foyer, and in the grand hall. The first ten percent given to Parkland Chapel is given to local, national, and global ministries. This practice is inspired by Acts 1:8b: "and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

4. GET THE MEN

God designed men to be spiritual leaders at home and in church. However, too often women are the deepest believers and spiritual leaders. Nevertheless, when men fulfill their role as God intended, families and churches are greatly impacted. In *Becoming Spiritual Soulmates With Your Child*, authors Robert & Deborah Bruce explain that parents' church attendance influences the faith of their children. When neither parent attends church, only 6% of children become Christians. If only Mom attends church, 15% of children remain faithful to God. However, if only Dad attends, that number increases to 55%. Clearly, men have a significant influence on their children's decision to commit to a lifetime of faith.

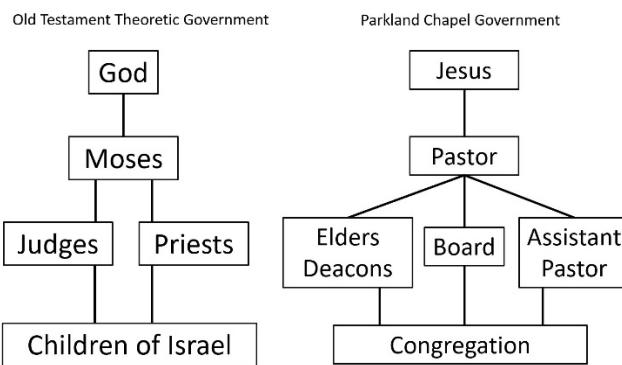
When men pursue a relationship with the heavenly Father, families become the core of the church. Families that grow in Christ impact the community. Communities that are influenced by biblical values shape the culture. Men who are obedient spiritual leaders can have an eternal impact that reaches far beyond the home or church building.

5. FLEXIBILITY

“Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be broken,” states Chuck Smith, founder of the Calvary Chapel Movement. Parkland Chapel is open to new ministries and ideas that further the Kingdom. Likewise, we are not afraid to cut off once thriving ministries or events that have run their course. A church must stay active to stay healthy. For Parkland Chapel, this means we change things as things change. A change can be as small as adding artwork to a wall or as big as building a new sanctuary. Static churches are dead or dying, so we do not get too comfortable. We strive to remain fresh.

6. GOVERNMENT

Parkland Chapel government is based off Moses's model of Old Testament theocratic government (see diagram below). A few board members and many leaders allow us to move with the Spirit and make quick decisions that are confirmed through prayer. The board makes business decisions, the elders help with spiritual matters, and deacons assist with practical matters. We have no church politics or committees. Good leadership matters.



7. PRAYER

Prayer is foundational in any church or Christian walk. At Parkland Chapel, we model praying for someone immediately after they ask—whether in Walmart, at a restaurant, or at the races. We pray right then and there. Exercising this habit builds faith to pray in public, and praying for people changes people. Praying puts feet to one's faith. Eventually, prayer doesn't become something one feels he or she must do, but it becomes a lifestyle.

8. BUILDING/GROUNDS AVAILABILITY

Parkland Chapel strives to break down barriers and get people onto the church grounds or into the church building. The practical leads to the spiritual. If someone will come to the tent for a BBQ, he or she may come to the sanctuary. If a youth comes to play basketball, he or she may come to youth group on Sunday. As people become comfortable on the property, they become comfortable with church. The church should be a hub of our members' lives, not a spoke.

Parkland Chapel's building and grounds are available and easily accessible to our members outside of service times.

9. SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Service is part of a mature Christian life. Parkland Chapel encourages all members who have been attending at least six months to serve in some capacity. Service is a “get to” opportunity, not a “have to.” We do have needs, but we don’t *have to* have volunteers. We *get to* have volunteers. Volunteers are asked to serve only once a month to avoid burn out, although they are invited to serve more if they wish.