

Christian Formation and the Church: “What God has joined together...”

It is often thought today that the church is not necessary for true Christian formation, growth, and spirituality. Some believe that the institutional nature of the church hinders growth and love. Others have been hurt by churches, so they now have decided to “love Jesus, but not the church.” Still others reject the authority inherent to all churches, and choose instead to practice Christianity with “just me and my Bible.”

While the church is never without its problems, to reject membership and participation in Christ’s visible church is ultimately to reject God’s clearly designated means of Christian growth. In the New Testament it is the church that is “a pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15); the Bride of Christ who has made herself ready for her bridegroom (Rev. 19:7); the temple of the living God where God’s Spirit dwells (1 Cor. 3:16); and the body of Christ with Jesus himself joined as its head (Eph. 5:23). To live apart from membership in Christ’s church is to literally “lose one’s head” - that is, lose Christ!

Christian growth normally does not happen outside of the context of Christ’s church. To be a member and participant within Christ’s visible church is indeed demanding, but it is also quite simply and quite gloriously *the way God grows Christians.*

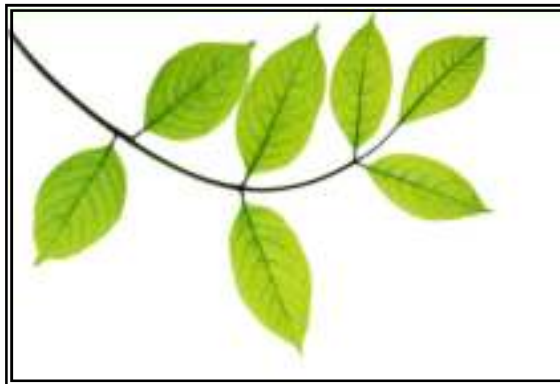
And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:11-16



Opportunities for Christian Formation at Calvin PCA

Sunday Worship, AM and PM
Sunday School
Men’s Bible Studies
Women’s Bible Studies
Fellowship Groups
Youth Group
Covenant Life Family Ministry



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Growing in Christ



Christian Formation at Calvin PCA: Doctrine, Duty, and Delight

The goal of all Christian growth is aptly summarized by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:15, “We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.” Christ is the source and goal of our salvation and growth.

At Calvin PCA we are wholeheartedly devoted to this kind of life-encompassing, Christ-centered growth. This brochure highlights the basic structure and emphases of our adult Christian formation programs. Our passion is singular and simple, that each of us might *grow up in every way into Christ.*



Doctrine, Duty, and Delight Growing “in every way” into Christ

The biblical picture of Christian growth and formation is holistic. As God’s people grow, every aspect of their lives is affected. Traditionally, the Church has conceived of this growth around three “centers” expressed in a variety of ways: knowledge, piety, and practice; faith, hope, and love; learning, worship, and action; the way, the truth, and the life; etc. We have chosen to use the simple triad of doctrine, duty, and delight, believing that these three capture most clearly the essence of our calling to grow “in every way” into Christ.

Doctrine: To grow in “doctrine” is to grow in our knowledge of God, his ways, and his Word. Scripture repeatedly calls for Christians to grow in our “knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 2:14; 4:6; Eph. 1:17; 4:13; Col. 1:10; 2 Pet. 1:2), and Jesus himself describes the very essence of eternal life as knowing God (John 17:3). Growth in doctrine is essential to Christian formation (Rom. 16:17; 1 Tim. 4:6; Tit. 1:9; 2:1,10).

Duty: To grow in “duty” is to grow in our love to God and love to neighbor. Jesus affirmed that the whole of God’s law can be described in this way, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). Our Christian duty entails our obedience to God’s law, our growth in sanctification, and our love to God and neighbor.

Delight: To grow in “delight” is to grow in our vital relationship with the living God. As God’s people, dead to sin and alive with Christ, we have been called to a living hope (1 Pet. 1:3), we are now no longer “of the world” (John 17:16), and our chief delight is in the Lord (Ps. 37:4). We grow in this delight through worship, prayer, communion, and church life, all the while learning “to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.”

Adult Sunday School

Our adult Sunday school classes are structured around the thematic triad of doctrine, duty, and delight.

Core Curriculum: Our core curriculum classes (listed right) touch on the vital areas of Christian formation as historically taught by Christ’s church. Two quarters of core curriculum classes are offered each year. The twelve core classes are each taught once every six years. Every Calvin member should make it a goal to participate in the core curriculum courses during their years at Calvin.

Elective Curriculum: Our elective curriculum offers a wide variety of class topics. These classes include studies in Bible books, contemporary issues, various theological topics, church history, Christian living, etc. Two quarters of elective courses are taught each year.

Sunday School Core Classes

Doctrine

Old Testament Survey
New Testament Survey
Scripture
Covenants
Theology (Doctrine of God)
Jesus Christ and Salvation

Duty

Sanctification
The Ten Commandments
Christian Ethics

Delight

The Church
Worship
The Christian Hope

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:5).

