

Church Life Culture

Introduction.

If you've ever traveled to a foreign country it doesn't take long to discover they do things differently. They have contrasting values, standards, ideologies, practices and sometimes, even speak another language. God's universal family is like that, filled with a variety of church families—with different beliefs, different convictions, and different methods of church services on Sunday Morning. In this section we will address the church life culture of River's Edge— why we do what we do and why we believe what we believe.

A. Understanding the different dynamics of church sizes.

Smallest	Smaller	Small	Medium	Large
19 – 35 20%	36 -100 50%	101 - 200 80%	201 - 400 10%	401 - 2000 + 10%
<i>Pastor:</i> <i>Worker</i> <i>Pastor is:</i>	Relational Driven Know all people Lead man Lover	Foreman	Program Drive Know some people Supervisor Administrator Pastor/small staff	Organizational Driven Know few people Top Management Leader Pastor/multiple staff
	One Pastor Staff/or bi-vocational			

B. How we approach doctrine. “When the plain sense of scripture makes sense in context, seek no other sense.”

2 Tim 2:15 — “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

2 Tim 3:15-17— “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

2 Tim 4:2-5— “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”

Romans 14

Absolutes:

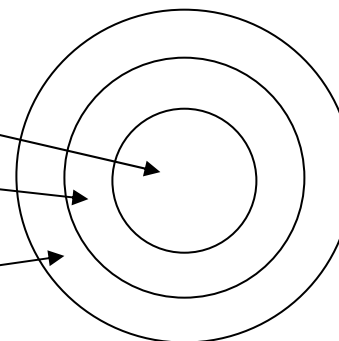
-The irrefutable *essentials* of life morals and doctrine which can affect the outcome of one's eternal destiny.

Convictions:

-The disputable *non-essentials* of life and doctrine which **do not** affect one's eternal security or destiny.

Preferences:

- The cultural & *non-essential* preferences and tastes of church life in regards to either a liturgical or freestyle form of worship service.



C. We are a charismatic church and practice the spiritual gifts.

Acts 1:8 - “But you will receive *power* when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

1 Corinthians 12:1-11 — *Word of Wisdom, Word of Knowledge, Gift of Faith, Gifts of Healing, Miracles, Prophecy, Discerning of Spirits, Gift of Tongues, and Interpretation of Tongues.*

1 Corinthians 14:1, 3, 12-13, 26-33, 39

D. An atmosphere of acceptance, mercy, and grace rather than legalism (grace based, not performance-based).

E. A church service at River's Edge.

1. Praise & Worship is upbeat and free, but no expression of worship is forced on people.
 - Singing (*Ephesians 5:19; Psalm 63:5*), variety of instruments (*Psalm 150*), clapping & shouting (*Psalm 47:1*), raised hands (*Psalm 134:2*), dancing (*Psalm 150:4*), kneeling down (*Psalm 95:6*), singing in the spirit or spiritual songs (*1 Corinthians 14:14 with Ephesians 5:19*), singing a new song (*Psalm 149:1*). We also encourage the expression of art, flags, and the dance as an act of worship before the Lord.
2. Spiritual gifts are encouraged to strengthen the church, in an orderly fashion (*1 Corinthians 14:1, 26, 40*).
 - Tongues & interpretation (*1 Corinthians 12:10; 14:5, 22, 26-28, 39*), prophetic words (*1 Corinthians 12:10; 14:1, 3, 29-33, 39*), words of knowledge (*1 Corinthians 12:8*), and gifts of healing (*Mark 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 12:9*) are the most commonly used gifts in a service.
 - *Note*: we reserve the right to get to know a person first by their *character* before we know their *charisma* in the vocal gifts (i.e. tongues, interpretation, and prophecy).
3. Praying for each other or specific individuals (*Mark 11:17; James 5:16*) prayer clothes (*Acts 19:11*).
4. Tithes & Offerings. (See addendum).
 - River's Edge is supported by the *tithes* of the members of the church (*Proverbs 3:9-10; Malachi 3:8-10*).
 - A special offering [aside from the *tithe*] is taken for all guest speakers (*1 Timothy 5:17-18; 3 John 5-8*).
5. Communion, with the emblems of grape juice & unleavened bread (*1 Corinthians 11:23-34*), is taken one Sunday each month.

F. Spiritual authority. See point H.



1. God is the establisher of all authorities, i.e. family, church, and civil authorities (*Romans 13:1-7*).
2. God established his authorities to lead, serve and protect the righteous (*Romans 13:2-5; Hebrews 13:17*).
3. God requires respect & submission toward his authorities (*Rom. 13:1-2; Heb. 13:7; 17; 2 Thess. 5:12-13*).
4. Don't receive an accusation against a spiritual leader without two or three witnesses (*1 Timothy 5:19*).
5. Leaders are not lords (*2 Cor. 1:24*) but servants of love, who may at times need to correct (*2 Tim. 4:2-4*).
6. No one is placed in a leadership position in River's Edge without adequate time to test their submission, fruit, faithfulness, reputation, and character (*Matthew 7:17-20; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 5:22; Philippians 2:22*).

G. Hot-button issues. "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light ..." Isaiah 5:20

1. **Judging.** God delegates the authority to church leaders and the church corporately to judge problems and sin within the church (i.e. disputes between believers—*Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 6:1-4*; sexual immorality—*1 Corinthians 5*; doctrines and ministries—*Matthew 17:15-20; Romans 16:1; Revelation 2:2*; idle busybodies & gossips—*2 Thessalonians 3:6-15*; divisive, quarreling persons—*Titus 3:9-11*; and prophetic words—*1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 John 4:1*). **See 1 Peter 4:17.**
 - a. God has authorized leaders to judge only in their jurisdiction in order to protect the righteous.
 - b. We are not authorized or responsible to judge another believer's *non-essential* religious convictions (*Romans 14*); other people's children (*1 Timothy 3:4-5*); other churches, or their methods, or their members (*Romans 14:4-12*); unbelievers outside the church (*1 Corinthians 5:12-13a*), or the final evaluation of a person's *inner* personality, character, or motives (*1 Corinthians 4:5*).
 - c. Judgment must be: righteous (*John 7:24*), made with facts (*Deuteronomy 13:12-15*), facing accusers (*John 7:51*), on the testimony of two or three reliable witnesses (*Matthew 18:16; 1 Timothy 5:19*), and for the purpose of repentance, reconciliation, and restoration (*Matthew 18:15; 1 Cor. 5:4; 2 Cor. 2:5-11*).
2. **Abortion.** We believe abortion to be morally wrong. It is the taking of a human life who has been formed by God in the womb from the time of conception (*Job 31:15; Psalm 139:13; Luke 1:41-44; Exodus 20:13*).
3. **Fornication.** We believe the practice of sex outside of God's institution of marriage [i.e. between a man and a woman] is physically, emotionally, and spiritually destructive and clearly depicted in God's Word as sin and sexually immoral (*1 Cor. 6:13b-20; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4*). Therefore, we strongly discourage co-habitation because the temptation is stronger and more difficult to resist (*1 Cor. 7:1-2*).
4. **Homosexuality.** We believe the practice of homosexuality is physically, emotionally, and spiritually destructive to the participating individuals and is clearly depicted in God's Word as fornication, idolatry, unnatural, and sexually immoral (*Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:24-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11*).

H. The Anointing Flow of Spiritual Authority. Read Psalm 133

1. The “anointing flow” principle of Psalm 133.

- The anointing flow of “authority” starts with the “**head**” (*primary leader*) – vs. 2a.
- Running down to the beard (maturity) which represents the “**shoulder**” region (*team*) – vs. 2b.
- Down to the skirt of the robes which represents the entire “**body**” (*the people*) – vs. 2c.
- Being under a spiritual covering of this anointing flow of authority results in: living together in good and pleasant unity – vs. 1 (*see 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13*); receiving the refreshing dew of the Holy Spirit – vs. 3a; being in the place (under the anointing flow of authority) where the Lord bestows blessing & life – vs. 3b. -i.e. blessing & life in creativity, multiplication, reproduction—and favor upon the process & venture.

2. The assigned “fields of influence” principle of 2 Corinthians 10:12-18.

- Paul speaks of grace given to him for specific assigned fields of authority and influence in God’s kingdom.
- Paul understood the pitfalls of operating outside the “boundaries” or spheres of his authority.
- Satan stepped out of his “assigned” field & lost his original place of authority (*Isa. 14:12-14; Ez. 28:12-17*).
- Consider the pattern in the following examples of the “anointing flow” of authority:

Head (Primary Leaders) <i>Leads, Serves, Trains & Equips</i>	Shoulders (Team) <i>Assists & Affirms the Leader</i>	Body (the People) <i>Empowered to Serve God</i>
Husband Aaron (High Priest) David (Shepherd King) Jesus Centurion Jesus, the Chief Shepherd Primary Leader (Local Shepherd) Paul (servant & apostle) James (Acts 15:1-35)	Wife Aaron’s Four Sons Officers & Officials Twelve Disciples / Apostles Officers Five-fold Ministries (Eph. 4:11) Team (Elder/Shepherds) Apostolic Team (fluid) Jerusalem Apostles & Elders	Children Tribe of Levi The Tribes of Israel The House of Israel Regiment Universal Church Local Church Family (God’s Flock) The Gentile Churches The Jew & Gentile Churches

