



UNION HILL
BAPTIST CHURCH

Christian Essentials

Exploring the Fundamentals of our Faith



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The Purpose of This Document

At Union Hill Baptist Church, we want every person to clearly understand what we believe and why. This “Christian Essentials” guide is meant to help anyone build a strong foundation rooted in Scripture.

Whether you’re just beginning your walk with Christ or have followed Him for years, this resource walks through the core beliefs and practices that shape our life together at Union Hill. Everything you’ll find inside is grounded in God’s Word—the Bible is our ultimate authority, and we filter everything we do through it.

This document is part of how we live out our mission: to REACH UP to know God, REACH IN to build community, and REACH OUT to love like Jesus.

Our prayer is that this growing series will equip you to live your faith with confidence, clarity, and purpose—so no one ever has to wonder where we stand on the essentials of following Christ.

We will add to this document yearly and look forward to covering our core beliefs as well as practical Christian living. In time it will become a great reference guide, as we strive to unify the church body around sound doctrine while discipling new believers.

It’s important to know what a church believes. Brand-new believers, Christians transferring from another church, unchurched individuals curious about faith in Jesus, and everyone in between can benefit from the following pages about the fundamentals of our faith.

The Doctrine of Scripture

The Baptist Faith & Message

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Inspiration, Inerrancy, Infallibility

What does it mean that the Bible is inspired by God? Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God inspired humans to record His Words. The Bible originated in the person of God. It came from His heart. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God informed humans to write it down.

What does it mean that the Bible is inerrant? There are no errors in the Bible. When the Bible says something, it means it and it is 100% true on all accounts. The Bible never contradicts itself. Human authors recorded God's Words without error. The authors themselves were humans who messed up and sinned, but they recorded Scripture without error.

What does it mean that the Bible is infallible? The Bible is incapable of error. Every word in Scripture is reliable and trustworthy, because it cannot be any other way. By faith, we trust that every word, story, concept, saying is true without defect.

The Bible Continued

I. Why is this important?

- Our entire church... Every sermon & Sunday School lesson is centered on the Bible.
- It is the Source for every doctrine that we study.
- It is God's word that gives knowledge for salvation, and the standards for Christian conduct.
- 1 Peter 3:15 - Believers are commanded to be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is within you.

2. Reliability of Holy Scripture

- Goals for all our members:
 1. That you know why only the 66 books of our Bible are considered received from God and accept by faith.
 2. Strengthen your confidence in its reliability.
 3. Increase your confidence for personal study and sanctification.
 4. Give a foundation for a defense for the sufficiency of Scripture/exclusivity.
- Is it just a good book?
 1. It is the only book inspired by God, which reveals the only way of salvation.
 2. We are obligated to obey its commands.
 3. The Bible is the standard by which/through which God revealed to man, His inspired, Holy writings, man received.

Our Role in How We Received the Bible

2 Timothy 3:14-17

- All scripture is inspired or God breathed.
 1. Spoken by God.
 2. Written by man under divine superintendence.
 3. Without waiving the writer's human intelligence, vocabulary, literary style, or personality.

2 Peter 1:19-21

- How can we be sure we hold God's word?
 1. Infallible - incapable of failing or falsehood. Unable to deceive or error because God is infallible
 2. Inerrant - actually is without error, every word (in original manuscripts). No error in doctrine, history or science. No contradictions.

What is meant by Scripture?

All scripture is breathed by God

- Infallible - incapable of failing or falsehood
- Unable to deceive or error
- Inerrant - actually is without error, every word (in original manuscripts)
- No error in doctrine, history or science
- It does not contradict itself

How can we be sure that our Protestant Bible is the inspired Word of God?

OLD TESTAMENT

- When Paul said “All scripture is God-breathed,” he had at least the Old Testament in mind because the New Testament was not complete
- What makes up our 39 Old Testament books had always been considered as divine writings by the Hebrews as all authors were trusted
- All teachings are consistent with each other
- Jesus quoted many Old Testament teachings
- The Old Testament Canon (approved scriptures) was closed by 425 BC
- Accuracy
 1. The scribes periodically counted the number of letters when copying scripture
 2. Later discoveries like the Dead Sea Scrolls, verify their accuracy
 3. In Paul’s time the Old Testament was established as God’s Word without dispute

NEW TESTAMENT

II Peter 3:15, 16 The Apostle Peter includes Paul’s writings as scripture and places them on the same level as Old Testament scripture

- Clearly the Apostle Paul understood himself through his apostolic authority to be producing inspired scripture
- Galatians 1:11, 12 “That what I preached to you was not from man, but I received it through revelation from Jesus Christ.
- Criteria for other New Testament books:
 1. Written by an apostle or close associate of Jesus, such as Mark, Luke, James and Jude
 2. Church Father Papias legitimized the authors because he was a trusted Church Father (60-130 AD) and knew some apostles personally
 3. Every one of our New Testament books were accepted by the Church as authentic at the time of their writing

The Bible Continued

4. Consistent with the teaching of Jesus Christ and the Old Testament (no falsehood or contradiction)
5. Recognized by the Church Fathers as canonical. Which means they were deemed worthy of being in the Bible
6. 27 books of our New Testament were recognized by Clement of Rome (probably mentioned in Phil. 4:3 and studied under Peter and the apostles) as divine in 96AD. Polycarp, Ignatius (disciple of John), Justin Martyr mentioned the canon quoted for Matthew, Luke, John in 200 AD gospels inspired. The writer was confirmed by miracles, chosen by Christ. Evidence that the book has a divine capacity to transform lives - divine ability to bring the sinner to a saving faith and Paul's epistles, referring to them as scripture - all before 170 AD
7. Many (Matthew, John, Mark - through Peter) were eye witness accounts by men who were tortured, killed and exiled without recanting their testimony.

WHAT ABOUT BOOKS THAT ARE NOT INCLUDED IN OUR BIBLE?

These books are called the Apocrypha.

- Rejected during four church councils: Laodicea, Rome, Hippo, Carthage
- By 398 AD the 66 books we have were confirmed and the apocrypha was branded a fraud
- Written between Malachi and Matthew: 1 & 2 Esdras, Jobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the Letter of Jeremiah, Prayer of Manasseh, 1 & 2 Maccabes
- Were never included in the Hebrew canon of Scripture
- Were never quoted by the Lord or any New Testament writers
- Were not written by a prophet
- Contained historical, geographical & chronological errors
- Contained heretical teachings that contradicted scripture
- Some are contained in the Roman Catholic Bible, however they include things like:
 1. Prayer & Offerings for the dead
 2. Indulgencies & purgatory
 3. Atonement and salvation by almsgiving
 4. Praying to saints
- These books officially became part of the Roman Catholic Bible at the Council of Trent in 1546
 1. This same council condemned the reformation tenants of justification that we hold to. These tenants are salvation: -Sola Gratia (by), -Sola Tide (through), -Solas Christus (in), -Sola Deo Gloria (to), -Sola Scriptura (both sufficient & exclusive source of God's word).
 2. The teachings of this council go against our beliefs. The books they affirm allow salvation by other means than Jesus.

Why is Scripture Sufficient for our Lives

- Scripture alone carries God's authority
- Scripture alone is sufficient for knowledge unto salvation
- Scripture alone is the final authority on matters of the Church and Christian conduct
- Scripture was written by apostles who were chosen by our Lord to be the founders and leaders of the Church
 1. He promised the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance Christ's words and teach them all things - John 14:26
 2. No one else has had the qualification of apostle to dispense doctrine directly received from God
- The canon was closed in 96 AD and no writing or traditions afterward were inspired
- The following documents are not scripture but contain sound teaching:
 1. Creeds (apostles, Nicene Athanasian), great statements confirming what scripture teaches but not inspired
 2. Confessions (Westminster, the 1689 Baptist Faith and Message) - Summaries of Doctrine.
 3. Catechisms (Westminster Baptist Heidelberg) useful for teaching doctrine.
 4. Commentary (Luther Calvin, James M. Boice, Matthew Henry, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges) by a trusted theologian is a necessary Bible study tool
 5. Bible Dictionary, Greek Dictionary, Concordance

Closing

Scripture is the only trustworthy, authoritative, inspired word of God. Study it for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. The inspired standards in it are not changed by society. There are no other Holy/Inspired writings. Jesus Christ as taught scripture is the only source for our salvation.

Supporting Scriptures

- Exodus 24:4- ⁴Then Moses carefully wrote down all the Lord's instructions. Early the next morning Moses got up and built an altar at the foot of the mountain. He also set up twelve pillars, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- Deuteronomy 4:1-2- ¹"And now, Israel, listen carefully to these decrees and regulations that I am about to teach you. Obey them so that you may live, so you may enter and occupy the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. ²Do not add to or subtract from these commands I am giving you. Just obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you.
- Deuteronomy 17:19- ¹⁹He must always keep that copy with him and read it daily as long as he lives. That way he will learn to fear the Lord his God by obeying all the terms of these instructions and decrees.
- Joshua 8:34- ³⁴Joshua then read to them all the blessings and curses Moses had written in the Book of Instruction.
- Psalm 19:7-10- ⁷The instructions of the Lord are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. ⁸The commandments of the Lord are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are clear, giving insight for living. ⁹Reverence for the Lord is pure, lasting forever. The laws of the Lord are true; each one is fair. ¹⁰They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb.
- Psalm 119:11, 89, 105, 140- ¹¹I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. ⁸⁹Your eternal word, O Lord, stands firm in heaven. ¹⁰⁵Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path. ¹⁴⁰Your promises have been thoroughly tested; that is why I love them so much.
- Isaiah 34:16- ¹⁶Search the book of the Lord, and see what he will do. Not one of these birds and animals will be missing, and none will lack a mate, for the Lord has promised this. His Spirit will make it all come true.
- Isaiah 40:8- ⁸The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever."
- Jeremiah 15:16- ¹⁶When I discovered your words, I devoured them. They are my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God of Heaven's Armies.

The Bible Continued

- Matthew 5:17-18- ¹⁷“Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved.
- Matthew 22:29- ²⁹ Jesus replied, “Your mistake is that you don’t know the Scriptures, and you don’t know the power of God.
- Luke 21:33- ³³ Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.
- Luke 24:44-46- ⁴⁴ Then he said, “When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ And he said, “Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day.
- John 5:39- ³⁹ “You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!
- John 16:13-15- ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. ¹⁴ He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, ‘The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.’
- John 17:17- ¹⁷ Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth.
- Acts 17:11- ¹¹ And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul’s message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth.
- Romans 15:4- ⁴ Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God’s promises to be fulfilled.
- Romans 16:25-26- ²⁵ Now all glory to God, who is able to make you strong, just as my Good News says. This message about Jesus Christ has revealed his plan for you Gentiles, a plan kept secret from the beginning of time. ²⁶ But now as the prophets foretold and as the eternal God has commanded, this message is made known to all Gentiles everywhere, so that they too might believe and obey him.

The Bible Continued

- 2 Timothy 3:15-17- ¹⁵ You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.
- Hebrews 4:12- ¹² For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.
- 1 Peter 1:24-25- ²⁴ As the Scriptures say, “People are like grass; their beauty is like a flower in the field. The grass withers and the flower fades. ²⁵ But the word of the Lord remains forever.”
- 2 Peter 1:19-21- ¹⁹ Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place—until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts. ²⁰ Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding, ²¹ or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.

Bible Study Resources

- YouVersion Bible App
- The Bible Recap with Tara Leigh Cobble- App and Podcast
- The Bible Project- bibleproject.com
- Blue Letter Bible Commentary- blueletterbible.org
- Bible Hub Commentary- biblehub.com
- Know your translation

Quick Notes

- The Bible had to close because no more eyewitnesses existed. Canon was closed in 96 AD.
- God revealed. We received.
- All Scripture is God-breathed. Only these 66 Books.
 - 1. 39 Books in the Old Testament
 - 2. 27 Books in the New Testament
- 40 different authors over 1500 years across 3 continents
- The Bible is not just nice and happy. It is true and holy.
- Over 63k cross-references in Scripture



The Holy Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity is central to Christian theology and essential for understanding the nature of God as revealed in Scripture. The Trinity affirms that God is one in essence but exists eternally in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This doctrine distinguishes Christianity from other world religions and emphasizes the relational nature of God.

The Oneness of God in Scripture unequivocally declares that there is one God. This foundational truth is rooted in the Shema, a central confession of Jewish faith:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one” Deuteronomy 6:4

Isaiah 45:5 underscores this unity: “I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God.”

Christian theology affirms monotheism while also recognizing the triune nature of this one God.

Unity and Distinction

While each person of the Trinity is distinct, they are not separate. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit share the same divine essence. This unity is seen in passages like Matthew 28:19, which commands baptism “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

The Trinity Continued

The Three Persons of the Trinity

The Bible reveals that God exists as three persons who are fully and equally God, yet distinct from one another.

A. God the Father

The Father is the Creator and Sovereign over all. He is often seen as the initiator of divine action and the source of all blessings (Ephesians 1:3–6).

B. God the Son

Jesus Christ, the Son, is fully God and fully human. John 1:1–3 declares, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Jesus' divinity is affirmed in passages like Colossians 1:15–20 and Hebrews 1:3.

C. God the Holy Spirit

The Spirit is the presence of God within believers, empowering and guiding them. Acts 5:3–4 identifies the Holy Spirit as God, equating lying to the Spirit with lying to God.

The Trinity Continued

The Divine Processions within the Trinity

The concept of "processions" describes the relationships and origins of the persons within the Trinity:

A. Eternal Generation of the Son

The Son is eternally begotten of the Father. This means the Son's existence originates from the Father, but not as a created being. Instead, it is an eternal and necessary relationship. John 1:14 speaks of the Son as "the only begotten from the Father," and John 5:26 affirms that the Father has granted the Son life in Himself.

B. Eternal Procession of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son. This is seen in John 15:26, where Jesus describes the Spirit as "the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father." In Western theology, this is expanded by the doctrine of the "Filioque" (Latin for "and the Son"), affirming that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son (as seen in passages like Romans 8:9). These processions highlight the internal relationships within the Godhead while maintaining their co-equality and unity.

St. Augustine: "For to have the fruition of God the Trinity, after whose image we are made, is indeed the fullness of our joy, than which there is no greater."

The Trinity Continued

The Divine Missions

A. The Mission of the Father

The Father's mission is to send the Son and the Spirit. He is the source of all divine activity, initiating creation (Genesis 1:1) and the plan of redemption (Ephesians 1:3-6). The Father's sending role highlights His authority and love (John 3:16).

B. The Mission of the Son

The Son's mission is to accomplish redemption. He was sent by the Father to become incarnate, live a sinless life, die for humanity's sins, and rise again (Philippians 2:5-11). Jesus describes His mission in John 6:38: "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me." Through His atonement and resurrection, the Son reconciles humanity to God (2 Corinthians 5:19).

C. The Mission of the Spirit

The Spirit's mission is to apply the work of redemption. Sent by both the Father and the Son (John 15:26; John 16:7), the Spirit regenerates believers (Titus 3:5), empowers them for holy living (Galatians 5:22-23), and equips the church for mission (Acts 1:8). The Spirit's work continues Christ's mission by transforming lives and building up the church.

Conclusion

The doctrine of the Trinity is essential to the Christian faith, shaping our understanding of God's nature and work. By affirming one God in three persons, Christians embrace the mystery of God's self-revelation, drawing us into deeper worship and fellowship.

Worship

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

John 4:24

This is worship that springs from a sincere heart and lines up with the truth of God’s Word.

To worship in spirit and in truth “is first and foremost a way of saying that we must worship God by means of Christ.” And Jesus is the one who gives the life-giving Spirit, who produces rivers of living water in a believer’s soul. John 7:38-39

It’s the Spirit who brings life to our spirits and enables us to know, love, and worship God the Father through Jesus Christ. In other words, it takes God to worship God.

We begin by acknowledging our inability to worship God unless he draws us by his grace and reveals himself to us through his Word. We come by receiving a gift, not by doing a deed.

We don’t create worship

We respond to what we’ve received in Jesus Christ. Titus 3:4-5

True worship is always a response to God’s Word. His word defines, directs and inspires our worship.

Music is a part of worshiping God,
but it was never meant to be the heart of it.

To Worship God, we must EXALT Him in our Hearts and Actions

WORSHIP: to bow down, cast oneself on the ground. Romans 12:1

EXALT: to lift up. Psalm 34:1-3

To worship God is to humble everything about ourselves and exalt everything about him.

Exalting God In Our HEARTS Through Our...

- THOUGHTS -

At any moment we can simply ask, "Where is God in this picture?"

- LOVE -

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Mark 12:30

- FAITH -

Without faith, it is impossible to please him. Hebrews 11:6

- Exercising faith toward God puts his wisdom, power and faithfulness on display.

- GRATEFULNESS -

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights... James 1:17

- Our gratefulness points people to the source of our blessings.

- LONGING -

How long, O Lord? Psalm 13:1

- In that cry, we're expressing our confidence in God's sovereignty, justice, love for his church and creation, and his faithfulness to his promises. We know all our longings will ultimately be fulfilled by God when Jesus returns.

Exalting God in our ACTIONS Through Our...

- OBEDIENCE -

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. John 14:15

- Submitting to God's commands tells others that we love him and that his laws are good and worthy to be followed.
- Obedience is often fleshed out in specific relationships... Husbands are to love their wives, wives are to submit to and respect their husbands, children are to obey their parents, employers are to be just and fair, etc.

Worship Continued

- SPECIFIC PRAISE -

Praise the Lord! Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!

Psalms 106:1

- Rarely does Scripture exhort us to praise the Lord without spelling out why.
- In the Psalms, we see God praised for his Word, his worthiness and his works.

- GODLY SPEECH -

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Matthew 12:34

- Am I an Encourager or a Discourager? Am I a Praiser or a Complainer?
- When I speak the truth, do I do it out of Love?

- SERVICE -

- God gives us Abilities with which to serve. (1 Peter 4:10)
- God gives us the Desire to serve. (Philippians 2:13)
- God gives us the Strength to serve. (1 Corinthians 15:10)

- WITNESS -

Come see a man who told me all that I ever did. John 4:29

- Telling others the good news of the gospel is simply praising God in front of those who don't know him.

Singing

We are **CREATED** to Sing.

- Every person who can talk, can sing!

We are **COMMANDED** to Sing.

- There are 400 different references to singing in your Bible.
- There are 50 direct commands in the Bible to praise God through singing

Psalm 47:7 - Sing because God is the King of all the earth

Psalm 95:1 - Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation

Colossians 3:16 - Sing to God with gratitude in your hearts through
psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit

Ephesians 5:19 - Address one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart

We are **COMPELLED** to Sing

- 2 Corinthians 5:14-15
- Reasons to Give God Praise. Ephesians 1:3-14
- "...He did this so we would praise and glorify him."

Sin

The Doctrine of Sin: Understanding the Depth and Hope of the Gospel

Why Talk About Sin?

“If you do not understand sin, you do not understand salvation.” — R.C. Sproul

We'll look at:

- 1.What sin is and where it comes from,
- 2.How sin affects every human being,
- 3.How the gospel offers real hope,
- 4.How we respond in our daily lives.

Point 1: Sin Is Rebellion Against a Holy God

- Key Text: Genesis 3:1–7, Romans 3:23
- “Sin is any lack of conformity to, or transgression of, the law of God.” — The Baptist Faith and Message 2000, Article III

Point 2: Sin Affects Every Part of Us

- Key Text: Jeremiah 17:9, Ephesians 2:1–3 don't say BABY
- This is the doctrine of total depravity—not that we are as bad as we could be, but that sin touches every aspect of who we are: mind, heart, body, will.
- Imputed guilt: Adam's guilt is legally counted against us (Romans 5).
- Concupiscence: The inward tendency toward sin—we desire what we shouldn't.
- “Man is not only a sinner because he sins; he sins because he is a sinner.” — Thomas Schreiner

Point 3: The Gospel Confronts and Conquers Sin

- Key Text: Romans 6:23, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 John 1:9
- Sin brings guilt, shame, judgment, and separation from God.
- But God did not leave us in our condition. The gospel is not self-help—it's divine rescue.
- Jesus took our sin and gave us His righteousness.

Sin Continued

Point 4: How Should We Live in Light of Sin and Grace?

- Key Text: Romans 6:1–4, Galatians 5:16–17
- “Be killing sin or it will be killing you.” — John Owen
- The Christian life involves daily repentance and spiritual warfare.
- The presence of sin remains—but its power is broken.
- We must fight by the Spirit, with the Word, in community.

Conclusion: Sin Is Serious, But Grace Is Greater

- “He who understands the seriousness of sin will never treat the cross lightly.” — Charles Spurgeon
- Sin is not just a list of bad behaviors. It is a rebellion rooted in the heart, inherited from Adam, infecting every part of who we are.
- But Christ came for sinners. That’s the good news.

1 John 1:9 (ESV):

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Salvation

Opening:

I. Salvation- God's work in rescuing a sinner (by grace through faith) from condemnation, guilt and the pollution of sin, and restoring a sinner to a right relationship with Him, while making the sinner an adopted heir of eternal life.

II. Saved from what?

1. God's just wrath and judgement against sin. Romans 5:9, 1 Thes 1:10,5:9, Rom 1:18, 6:23, We are justified.
2. Sin- Matt 1:21, 1 John 3:5, We receive forgiveness.
3. Slavery to and dominion of sin Rom 6:1-23, We are redeemed.
4. Uncleaness- Ez 36:29, We are sanctified.
5. Satan- Col 2:15, Heb 2:14,15
6. This present evil world Gal 1:4, We are citizens of heaven.
7. Eternal death John 3:16, 17, We are adopted and inherit eternal life.
8. We are made new creations. 2 Cor 5:17.
9. We are reconciled to God Col 1:18-20
10. We are indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit 1 Cor 6:19-20, Eph 1:13

III. At the heart of the Gospel is Salvation by the atoning substitutionary death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ so that sinners could be spared God's just wrath. He did this by drinking the full cup of God's wrath in our place. This satisfied God's justice so God could be both just and the justifier of sinners (Romans 3:26). The cross is proof that God is both just and full of grace.

1. Isa 53:5,6: But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
2. Salvation is not that God overlooks our sin, in fact, it shows how deadly serious He is about sin. Heb 9:22 Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Salvation Continued

IV. Catalyst of Salvation

1. God's grace Eph 2:8, Titus 2:
2. It was always God's purpose. Gen 3:15, 2 Tim 1:
3. God's love Rom 5:8, 1 John 4:9,10
4. God's mercy Titus 3:5

V. Salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone.

1. Acts 4:12

Text:

The Order of Salvation by Union with Christ

From: Reformed Systematic Theology



- The Order of Salvation comes from Romans 8:30 and is not to be treated as if each element causes the next, God is the cause of all. Effectual calling, faith, and justification take place at the same moment.
- This is not to show a chronological order, but to show how God's grace fits together in His plan of salvation.

Salvation Continued

I. Effectual Calling

Rom 8:28-30- And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

II. Regeneration

John 3:3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- Regeneration refers to God's initial act to renew a sinner's heart, resulting in man's conversion when he actively turns to the Lord. A sinner is given a new heart and a new spirit by virtue of union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.
- The washing of regeneration is pictured in Christian baptism. Acts 22:16
- Titus 3:5,6 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior
- John 3:6 emphasizes that the totally depraved, spiritually dead sinner is powerless to change his condition. Apart from the miracle of regeneration, all he can do is produce more depravity and more death. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

III. Repentance unto Salvation

Acts 11:18 When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

Acts 20:20, 21 ...I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ

2 Cor 7:10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death

Salvation Continued

- Two sides of conversion: Repentance and Faith.
 1. Joel Beeke and Paul Smalley say it like this. “The call of the gospel invites and commands sinners to a twofold response: repentance and faith. Faith and repentance stand in essential unity, as two sides to one saving response to the Word of God. In the Bible conversion is sometimes described simply as repentance (Matt 4:7, Luke 5:32, 24:47, Acts 2:38, 26:20) or as faith in Christ (John 1:12, 3:15-18, Acts 10:43, 16:31). In other Scripture passages, faith and repentance appear together (Mark 1:15, Acts 11:21, 17:30-34, 20:21, Heb 6:1). Repentance from sin and faith in God’s mercy are in an organic relationship.”
- Without repentance there is no salvation.

IV. Saving Faith- Faith Alone in Christ Alone

Rom 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

Gal 2:16 knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Eph 2:8,9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

- This faith may exist in varying degrees so that it may be either weak or strong. Yet even in its weakest form, it is different in kind or nature (like all other saving graces) from the faith and common grace of temporary believers. Therefore, faith may often be attacked and weakened, but it gains the victory. It matures in many to the point that they attain full assurance through Christ, who is both the founder and perfecter of our faith. Hebrews 5:13, 14; Matthew 6:30; Romans 4:19, 20. 122 Peter 1:1. 13Ephesians 6:16; 1 John 5:4, 5. 14Hebrews 6:11, 12; Colossians 2:2. 15Hebrews 12:2.
- Saving Faith is:
 - A. Faith and Trust
 - The Hebrew words often used for faith in the Old Testament are aman (make firm, establish, be faithful, reliable), hiphil (believe), and batakh (trust, take refuge in).
 - The New Testament uses Greek word pisteuo (believe, faith), peitho (persuade, convince, to believe, have confidence in, or trust).
 - Beeke/Smalley- “Therefore, the Biblical words for faith communicate trust in the faithfulness of God, pictured as resting on Him, so that one’s confidence is in the Lord.”
 - So it would be scripturally sound to invite an unsaved person to place his faith and trust in the saving work of Jesus Christ as revealed in His Word.

Salvation Continued

B. Acknowledgment of Christ as both Lord and Savior.

- Rom 10:9 if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.
- Col 2:6,7 Therefore, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in Him, 7rooted and built up in Him, established in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

C. Good Work Producing

- Martin Luther-“ We are saved by faith alone, but faith that saves is never alone.”
- Eph 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.
- Matt 7:16-23 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ 23And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

D. Is in Christ Alone as Revealed in Scripture

- John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
- John 10:9 I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.
- Acts 4:12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

- Saving Faith is Not:

A. Mental Belief of the Facts

- James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!
- Acts 26:27 Agrippa believed the prophets but was not a Christian.

Salvation Continued

B. Superficial Emotional Commitment

- Luke 8:11-15 11“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. 13But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. 14Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. 15But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

V. Justification-To Declare Righteous- Answers the question “How can God excuse sinners and remain a just Judge?”

Romans 3:21-28 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

27Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

Westminster Larger Catechisms Q. 70. What is justification?

- Justification is an act of God’s free grace unto sinners, in which he pardoneth all their sins, accepteth and accounteth their persons righteous in his sight; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone.

1: To understand Justification, a right view of the human condition; totally depraved, guilty, and worthy of death. (Rom 1:18-3:20, 23)

Salvation Continued

Westminster Shorter Catechism: Q. 18. Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?

- The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

Q. 19. What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?

- All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

A. Rom 3:10-12 "There is none righteous, no not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together turned unprofitable; There is none who does good, no not one."

B. Rom 5:18 ... Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation

C. Rom 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

D. Eph 2:12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world

E. Romans 3 :20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

2: It's also necessary to understand justification is a right view of God's justice. If we can picture a human judge who has a criminal in front of him. It has been proven beyond any doubt that he is guilty, but yet the judge sets him free with no punishment. That judge would be unjust.

A. Prov 17:15 He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, Both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord.

B. God requires absolute perfect obedience according to the Law, a standard that no man can attain. 1 Peter 1:16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

C. Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death...

D. God would be an unjust judge if he allowed the guilty to be spared the wages of their sin, and He is never unjust.

E. He requires blood and death to atone for our sins. Heb 9:22 Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Salvation Continued

3: Justification is a legal/forensic verdict given by grace to guilty ones who have no legal claim of innocence and are “without excuse” before a holy and righteous Judge.

4. With this impassable chasm between our condition and God’s requirement of perfect righteousness, what Martin Luther called an “alien righteousness” becomes necessary. A righteousness from outside of us.

5. This is where the gracious doctrine of Imputation comes in.

- Rom 4:1-6 What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?
2For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.
3For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” 4Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.
5And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, 6just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.
- Impute- count or reckon.
- The doctrine teaches at the cross all of our guilt was transferred, accounted, imputed to Jesus Christ, and He satisfied (propitiated) God’s just wrath. Likewise His perfect righteousness was imputed to our account. So it is by Christ’s righteousness (a righteousness from outside of us/alien) that the righteous Judge declares us righteous.
- God in His sovereignty chose Faith Alone (faith plus nothing) as the instrument to transfer Christ’s righteousness to us.

6. Beeke/Smalley- “Justification is God’s gracious forensic declaration that guilty sinners are forgiven (and thus worthy of eternal life) both on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ received by faith alone.”

7. Justification is a change of status, from a guilty, condemned, hopelessly depraved sinner, to a forgiven, righteous heir of God.

8. Rom 5:1, 6-11 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Salvation Continued

9. Rom 1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

10. 2 Cor 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

VI. Salvation is Permanent

John 6:27-30 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29My Father, who has given them to me,^a is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. 30I and the Father are one.”

1. This doctrine is called Preservation/Perseverance of the Saints, Eternal Security or maybe once saved always saved.
2. It seems to me that at least in evangelical circles there are two extremes. Those who believe you are saved by faith apart from works, but you have to work to maintain your salvation or you can lose it (The Salvation Army), or those who believe once they are “saved” now they can live however they want without regard to God’s commands and they will still inherit eternal life (Easy believism/antinomians).
3. Scripture teaches that neither of these positions is correct.
4. The question is not will everyone who professes to be a Christian inherit eternal life, this clearly isn’t the case. Our Lord taught us in the Sermon on the Mount: Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ About the last days He says “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. 10And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. 11And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. 13But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”
5. John 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.
6. John 10:27-29 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29My Father, who has given them to me,^a is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. 30I and the Father are one.”

Salvation Continued

A. Some would object saying” this does not say that a person can’t chose to walk away and remove himself from God’s hand”.

B. Beeke/Smalley- “Any attempt to insert the possibility of damnation into the text contradicts Christ’s promise [they shall never perish]. Second, Christ literally says [no one is able] to take them from the Father, excluding all people and powers, even the person tempted to fall away.

11.Phil 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

12.Jude 24, 25 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, 25To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

13.1 Peter 1:3-12 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4to an inheritance [b]incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.6In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been [c]grieved by various trials, 7that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8whom having not [d]seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.10Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

14.Another objection may go something like this, “What about the apostates, those who fall way?

- I believe the Apostle John answers that in 1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.
- Those who seem to follow for a time but fall away into final and complete apostasy were never truly in the family of Christ (Judas Iscariot).
- They may have made a profession of faith however it was not genuine.

VII. Adoption

1 John 3:1,2 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God;

- After being justified in the court of God's justice, He now takes us into His household as children.
- We can now approach Maker of heaven and earth as a beloved child approaches a benevolent Father. Matt 6:9 Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
- Adoption is both a change of status and a change of relationship through our union with Christ.
- Adoption includes our inheritance as sons and we are co-heirs with Christ.
- Heb 12:5-8 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reproved by him.
6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.”

7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons

- Other Scriptures: Luke 15:11-32 (the prodigal son), Matt 5:9,16, 43-48, 6:4-6, 7:7-11, 23:9, Luke 12:32-33, John 17:23, 20:17, Gal 3:26-29, 4:1-7, Rom 8:14-16, Eph 1:4-6 5:1-2, 2 Cor 6:16-7:1, 1 Peter 1:14-17, 1 John 3:1-10

Sacraments

Our goal is for all of us to clearly understand what we believe and why. Everything we believe, and every truth we follow is directly founded in Scripture.

The word sacrament literally means holy thing.

Sacrament is a Catholic word that many people use interchangeably with ordinance. We do not use it very often because in the Catholic world, where the term came from, it held a different meaning. Catholics refer to multiple sacraments that each impart divine grace into our lives. In other words, by partaking in the Lord's Supper, Baptism, and a host of other actions they label as holy, a person actually receives God's grace.

Let me say this a different way, because I do not want us to be misguided. Originally, when sacraments were introduced in the Catholic Church, they were means by which a person could inherit God's divine favor. So, by taking the Lord's Supper, by being Baptized, and by performing over three hundred sacramental works, a person could inherit salvation. This is still a Roman Catholic belief today; however, many of our trusted theologians and scholars have broken from that view over the last thousand years.

St. Augustine, in the 5th century described a sacrament as 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace.' In other words, when we participate in a sacrament, a holy action, we are outwardly displaying God's inward favor in our lives, not receiving God's saving work from the sacrament.

Catholics hold to seven sacraments that provide salvation. They are Baptism, The Lord's Supper, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Marriage, and Holy Orders. The problem with these seven sacraments, these seven holy things, is that Jesus did not command them all, and as Greg said last week, salvation is all about Jesus. The perfect life Jesus lived, the horrendously sacrificial death He died and the defeat of death, sin and the grave, are what allows salvation to be possible. Jesus never said that marriage is a saving act. You can be a Follower of Jesus and still be single. Jesus Himself was not married. You can be sick without being anointed by a priest and still be a Follower of Jesus. Even though the Bible makes it an option for us, it is never commanded by Jesus.

We must build everything we do on the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is The Way, The Truth and The Life, so when we begin to question if an outward action is Christlike or not, we must first see what Jesus said about it. Next, did His closest followers write about it in the Bible? Did the people who knew Him best have any wisdom on the subject? Did the early Church engage in that particular action?

That is why the Baptist Faith and Message does not use the term sacrament, and instead calls The Lord's Supper and Baptism ordinances, meaning that they are symbolic acts of obedience commanded by Christ. Listen to what the Baptist Faith and Message says- Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

Jesus never personally said, and He never demanded us as His Church to observe Baptism and the Lord's Supper as a means to salvation. They are simply signs and means which express and strengthen our faith as The Church. We stay in step with Jesus by observing them, because they help us relate to one another as God's Church, and they literally make us more like Jesus, because He participated in both when He walked the Earth. This is a great quote I read this week- When celebrating the sacraments, [we must] be ready to allow the symbol and ritual to shake us, to enliven us, to question us and to recognize the depth of its meaning.

When Jesus died and returned to Heaven, where He sits at this very moment at the right hand of God, the early Church began to observe the Lord's Supper and Baptism in their new community of faith. And that brings up another point, that the sacraments we hold to were not meant to be practiced outside a community of Believers. In the New Testament, after Jesus, they are almost always observed in a local church community, and we need to be very conscious of that.

Now, will someone die and go to Hell who takes communion at their house by themselves? No, because communion did not save them in the first place. Will someone miss Eternal Life in Heaven because they were baptized in a pond without their whole local church present? No, because baptism did not save that person in the first place. However, the sacraments mean more when we observe them with God's Church, because they challenge us to be more like Jesus as we are bound together by our shared experience and bound to Jesus as we trust and obey His actions.

The Lord's Supper

Throughout history, The Lord's Supper has gone by three main titles: The Lord's Supper, Communion and The Eucharist. They all refer to the same bread and juice/wine. The Lord's Supper was first done in remembrance of when Moses led Israel out of Egypt in the times of their enslavement to Pharaoh.

In Exodus chapter 12 we read the specifics. God gave Moses instructions that on the tenth day of the first month of their year, a family was to select a one-year-old male sheep that was without blemish. For a few weeks, that family was to take care of that sheep, until the fourteenth day of the month when they were to slaughter the animal and rub its blood on the doorframes of their homes. This turned the death angel away from their home and they would be rescued/saved.

God then commanded that a festival be observed every year around that time, as a weeklong remembrance of God's deliverance for His Children from Pharaoh and Egypt. He tells them to add unleavened bread into their celebration. So, for hundreds of years, from the time of Moses until the time of Jesus, the Jews recognized Passover in this way. It symbolized when God delivered them from bondage in Egypt.

But when Jesus came on the scene, that all changed and became very personal and much more specific. On the night when Jesus was betrayed by Judas, He and His closest Disciples were observing Passover in what we now call The Upper Room. But instead of reminding His Disciples about Egypt, Jesus speaks the words we read from 1 Corinthians 11:23-25- On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread ²⁴ and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it."

So, Jesus announces Himself as the true Passover Lamb, who will save His People permanently from their sins and eternal death. The bread we eat now represents the body of Jesus that was broken and crucified for our sins, and the juice now represents the blood of Christ that was spilt for our forgiveness. By partaking of the Lord's Supper, we are remembering the death of Jesus the Messiah.

Sacraments Continued

This is a sacrament, a holy remembrance, so there is a warning given when we observe. Here it is from 1 Corinthians 11:27-29. I read these verses every time we take the Lord's Supper, so these words should not be unfamiliar to you.²⁷ So anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.²⁸ That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup.²⁹ For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself.³¹ But if we would examine ourselves, we would not be judged by God in this way.

One of the key elements of taking The Lord's Supper is a time of commitment and repentance, and the whole sacrament is a remembrance of what Christ did for us and a celebration of what we receive as a result of His sacrifice. It also turns our attention to His return in the future.

Before we move on, I want to give us a few terms that come up when The Lord's Supper is discussed. First is Real Presence. Real Presence is the belief that the real presence of Jesus' body and blood are really present in the elements of the Lord's Supper- the bread and juice. That somehow, somehow, Jesus' blood is in the wine and Jesus' actual body is in the bread. This is the view of: Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians and Methodists. Although Methodists are feuding about many beliefs right now.

Inside the concept of Real Presence are two terms that are worthy of mentioning.

Transubstantiation is the belief that the bread and wine are physically transformed into the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus, they just look like bread and wine. The last term is consubstantiation. Proponents of consubstantiation believe that Jesus' body and blood are really present in the bread and wine, but the bread and wine are not totally transformed into Jesus' body and blood. I know it is confusing.

Just know that when Jesus said the words we hear in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29- This is my body and this is my blood, He did not mean that the bread and juice are His physical body. How do we know that? Because Jesus' physical body was one hundred percent human like you and I today. Jesus' body died and the Bible says that He is seated at the right hand of God. I know this sounds gross, but Jesus does not cut off pieces of His flesh and drain drops of His blood every time we take communion. That just does not make sense.

Baptism

The sacrament of Baptism has been a hot topic for hundreds of years. Some believe that the Bible says Baptism is necessary for salvation, while others believe Baptism is not necessary to inherit eternal life. Some religions allow certain followers to be baptized for dead people when they question if they would go to Heaven or not. Some religions will baptize babies or little children as a sort of covenant between the child and God.

Instead of going into every detail that could be true, I want to go to the original source of Baptism, Jesus Himself. The first Baptism mentioned in the Bible was done by John the Baptist, or John the Baptizer. John was preparing the way for Jesus. He understood that and proclaimed that message. You can read that in Matthew 3:5-6- 5 People from Jerusalem and from all of Judea and all over the Jordan Valley went out to see and hear John. 6 And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River. Repentance unto faith in Jesus is a prerequisite of being baptized.

What happened before the people were baptized? They confessed their sins. Baptism is not salvation and salvation is not baptism. Like the Lord's Supper, Baptism does not save anyone. It is an outward show of inward cleansing that has already happened. How do we know that baptism is not required to enter Heaven? I think the best example is the thief on the cross from Luke 23. Do you remember that one thief trashed Jesus while the other proclaimed Him Messiah? When that thief proclaimed Jesus as The Messiah, Jesus told him that if he wanted to inherit eternal life, he would have to jump down off his cross real quick and find a lake. No. Jesus told him that that very day, Jesus and he would meet one another in paradise.

So what does the word baptize mean anyway?

We get our word baptize from the Greek word baptizo. Baptizo literally means to immerse, submerge or overwhelm in water. Something or someone is baptized only when they are made fully wet or soaked in water. King James I was King of England in 1611 when he had the Bible translated into, what was then, contemporary English. But King James was Catholic, and the Catholic Church was big on infant baptism. And because the English Monarchy was considered spiritually divine and able to punish anyone who disagreed, translators hesitated to translate baptizo into a new word or phrase. They simply made up a new word, and it is still the word we use today- baptize. We have to go back to the original Greek to find the meaning of baptizo.

Sacraments Continued

I love Matthew's account of the baptism of Jesus. We literally read the meaning of Baptism in Matthew's text. Here it is from Matthew 3:13-17- 13 Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?" 15 But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." So John agreed to baptize him. 16 After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."

There are a few truths that I want to pull from these verses. First, we see the importance of Baptism. How important is Baptism? Well first of all, Jesus was baptized. Listen, take the whole world and leave me Jesus, and I will be just fine. When I find out that Jesus did something, I am going to make it a part of my life. If I read some obscure Scripture one day that no one else had ever discovered, and that Scripture said that every Thursday afternoon at 2:00 on the dot Jesus had a peanut butter and jelly sandwich on white bread, then you can bet your bottom dollar that every Thursday afternoon at 2:00 on the dot you would find me eating a peanut butter and jelly sandwich on white bread.

Jesus was baptized, and He was fully God. So, if He was fully God, why did Jesus need to be baptized? Did you hear Jesus' answer when John asked Him why He [Jesus] needed to be baptized? Jesus said that it must happen to fulfill all righteousness or to carry out all that God required of Him. Jesus, God's Son, was baptized because it showed everyone watching that He was righteous. And by displaying that righteousness, He was carrying out what God required of Him, outwardly displaying His inward transformation.

Notice something else, that Baptism was so important that all three members of The Trinity were present. Anytime we see all three members of The Trinity in one place at the same time, we know that whatever is happening is of utmost importance.

We find this in verses 16 and 17. God the Father was the voice from Heaven, God the Holy Spirit was the descending dove, and God the Son was Jesus in the water, who did what? Yes. He came up out of the water. He was baptized, fully immersed, in the water. You cannot come out of something without first going into that something. Jesus was fully immersed and that is the primary reason we fully immerse when we baptize.

Last, there are several Scriptures in the Bible that talk about Baptism. When we read those individually, we can make them say anything we want; but, know that because of Jesus' example, and when all Baptism Scriptures are looked at as a whole, the order is Salvation and then Baptism, which is an outward show of our inward decision to follow Jesus.

Sacraments Continued

Here is a list of key Scriptures on both Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Matthew 3:13-17.

Matthew 26:26-30.

Matthew 28:19-20.

Mark 1:9-11.

Mark 14:22-26.

Luke 3:21-22.

Luke 22:7-22.

John 3:23.

Acts 2:38-42.

Acts 8:35-39.

Acts 16:30-33.

Acts 20:7.

Romans 6:3-5.

1 Corinthians 10:16-21.

1 Corinthians 11:23-29.

Colossians 2:12

Heaven

In this round of Christian Essentials, we want to focus on two places mentioned in Scripture. These two places are both very real, and also very mystical and mysterious. We do not know everything about Heaven and Hell. If God wanted us to know everything, He would have told us. And what we do not know, we trust that we do not need to know. If we did need to know, God would have told us.

For starters, Heaven and Hell are two very real places where people will spend eternity. Some people think that if a Christian dies, he/she will go to Heaven to live eternally, and if a non-Christian dies, he/she will die in Hell; but, the Bible is very clear that Hell is eternal, just like Heaven. Heaven is eternal life. Hell is eternal dying. Heaven is a very broad topic that we could spend unlimited time on, but let's focus what the Bible says about Heaven.

In the process, we will also learn what the Bible does not say about Heaven. That is almost equally as valuable, because lots of people have made up lots of things about Heaven that just are not true. Some of these things come from a good heart, in an effort to make sense of Heaven in our temporary minds, but we cannot believe everything we want to believe just because it makes us feel good.

Here is what we do know. From Genesis to Revelation, Heaven is mentioned hundreds of times. Old Testament authors and prophets wrote about it. Jesus talked about it. New Testament authors included it. And God gave a man named John, the same John who wrote four other books in the New Testament, a very detailed vision into Heaven, which we will take a look at.

Let's begin with a common misconception, that you probably already understand. In Scripture, Heaven the place is different than the heavens in general, even though the same word is used for both. The Bible uses two main words when it talks about Heaven. One is in Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament, and the other is in Greek, the original language of the New Testament. Both words are each used more than two hundred times. The Old Testament Hebrew word used is a variation of shamayim [shah-MAH-yeem]. The New Testament Greek word is a form of ouranos [oo-ran-os']. They can mean anything from the skies above our heads to where God the Father sits on His throne.

Here are a few examples. The first verse in the Bible reads this way. Genesis 1:1- In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The writers of Psalms also mention the heavens. Psalm 19:1- The heavens proclaim the glory of God. Here is one from Jesus in the New Testament. Matthew 13:31- The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field. One more from Paul in the New Testament. Colossians 1:16- for through him [Jesus] God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. I say all that to say that context is key to understanding what the Bible says about Heaven.

Heaven Continued

Like anything in Scripture, we need to look deeper than one word in one verse. We should ask questions like: who said it, who were they talking to, does it take place within a larger story. When in doubt, read two verses before and two verses after. This is a great Bible study method, and a healthy practice for studying anything in Scripture. Reading a few verses before and a few verses after helps us understand the whole context. Doing this with Heaven will give us all the insight we need to determine if the Bible is talking about Heaven the place or the heavens in general.

The first thing I want us to see about Heaven the place is that Heaven is where God lives. In Deuteronomy 26:15, Moses is giving God's commands to the People of Israel, when he stops and speaks to God. Now look down from your holy dwelling place in heaven and bless your people Israel and the land you swore to our ancestors to give us- a land flowing with milk and honey. God dwells in Heaven. We also see this when Stephen was murdered in Acts 7:55-56- ⁵⁵ But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God's right hand. ⁵⁶ And he told them, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!"

At this very second, God the Father is sitting on His throne in Heaven, with God the Son, Jesus, at His right hand. He is looking down on His creation, loving us, longing for the day when we will once again walk hand-in-hand with Him in complete perfection and purity. God resides in Heaven, waiting for the perfect moment to send Jesus back to get His Children.

Also in Heaven at this very second, Jesus is at the right hand of His Father, interceding for us. He is taking our prayers and making them make sense to God the Father. God sees His Faithful Followers through the lens of Jesus, and He hears us through the voice of Jesus. From Heaven, Jesus is keeping the world spinning, maintaining the seasons, holding the planets in their orbit and helping the sun to shine, giving warmth and light and life to us all. This is taking place in Heaven, around the throne of God right now.

Now, we understand thrones because earthly kings have thrones. Even our presidents, rulers and prime ministers have a place where they govern from. God's Heavenly throne is His place of authority. Long before God gave John the Revelation of Heaven, God gave the Prophet Daniel a glimpse into Heaven. Listen to what Daniel saw in Daniel 7:9-10. Visualize Daniel's words here- ⁹ I watched as thrones were put in place and the Ancient One sat down to judge. His clothing was as white as snow, his hair like purest wool. He sat on a fiery throne with wheels of blazing fire, ¹⁰ and a river of fire was pouring out, flowing from his presence. Millions of angels ministered to him; many millions stood to attend him. Then the court began its session, and the books were opened.

That is some kind of throne room right there. Not the average wall paneling with a simple jury box and witness stand like what we have in our courtrooms. God's throne is in Heaven, a place of prominence, where He holds all authority.

Heaven Continued

Now, we trust the Biblical authors. What they say is absolutely true. But, we get our best information about anything from an eyewitness. So, is there an eyewitness in Scripture who experienced Heaven? Who lived there? Well, yes. Jesus. He is the only true eyewitness of Heaven. So, did Jesus say anything about Heaven? Yes He did.

Let's stay with the throne of God for a minute. In the middle of Jesus' teachings, sits a verse that is interesting on God's throne in Heaven. Matthew 5:34-³⁴ But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, 'By heaven!' because heaven is God's throne. We should respect Heaven. God's throne is a sacred place. It is holy and undefiled, just like Heaven where it sits. Because God cannot look upon sin, He needs a place where He can exist in pure and perfect holiness. That is Heaven. Where everything makes sense and wisdom is magnificently and supernaturally wise. Where there are no questions, because all questions are answered before they are asked. No doubts. No fears. Nothing to distract us from living in perfect harmony with God.

To help us understand Heaven a little more, Jesus spoke several parables. Jesus, who existed with God in the beginning. Jesus, who came down to Earth from Heaven. Jesus, who knew Heaven well, because He was an eyewitness of the place. In His parables, Jesus did His best to describe a place that cannot be described in words that our feeble minds understand. Jesus did His best to explain Heaven in Earthly terms that you and I can grasp. Matthew does a great job of recording these for us in Matthew chapter 13.

The first is The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds. In this parable, Jesus says that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. But the enemy planted weeds among the good seed. At harvesttime, workers will separate the weeds from the good plants. Jesus explains this parable in Matthew 13:41-43-⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will remove from his Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² And the angels will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!

At the end of the world, angels will separate Believers from non-Believers. Jesus confirms this later in Matthew 13, when He tells The Parable of the Fishing Net. That's interesting, right? God's angels will have a hand in bringing God's Children to Heaven. And did you hear in verse 41 that the angels will remove all evil and even everything that causes evil? Translation? There is no sin in Heaven, and there is not even a desire to sin. There is no temptation, so we will not be tempted, nor will we want to give into anything that goes against God and perfection. In Heaven, our hearts and minds will be perfectly pure and holy.

Heaven Continued

Two parables of Jesus from Matthew 13 are alike: The Parable of the Mustard Seed and The Parable of the Yeast. In both of these, Jesus describes the Kingdom of Heaven as something small, a mustard seed and a small speck of yeast, that then grows into something larger, a grand garden and a loaf of bread.

The final parable in Matthew 13 is a two-fer. The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl. Again, Jesus again describes the Kingdom of Heaven as something small that has a huge impact. A pearl is discovered in a field by a man and another by a merchant of fine objects. Both of these men sold what they had to obtain the pearls. Why? Because Heaven is worth the sacrifice.

All of these parables of Jesus lead to one point. Heaven is a future destination, and it is also a present reality. When God made the Garden of Eden, everything was perfect. It was Heaven on Earth. God walked with His creation in total perfection until sin entered the world because mankind gave into temptation. Now, because of the life of Jesus, we represent God to the world around us. You and I are representatives of Heaven, right here on Earth. We are a part of the Kingdom of God. We spread the word about Jesus like planted mustard seeds, like yeast in bread, like pearls and objects of high value.

And we do it all because Heaven is worth it! We strive to live lives worthy of our Creator, because what we will gain in Heaven will be worth all the faith we can muster and all the temptation we say no to. Every time we honor God with our lives, we are helping the Kingdom of Heaven be seen on Earth. We are storing up treasures in Heaven where moth and rust cannot destroy- Matthew 6:20 and Luke 12:33.

All this will lead to us being rewarded in Heaven one day. Heaven is our destination and our reward! 1 Peter 1:4 confirms this- ⁴ and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. The eternal reward of Heaven will be well worth our temporary sacrifice here on Earth.

So, what is the reward we will receive one day? We will read in a minute what God showed John in Revelation, but here is a summary of the physical aspects of Heaven that Christians will one day experience. These are from Revelation 21 and 22. We will walk streets of Gold in a new city that has never been lived in. There will be no death, no sorrow and no pain. Everything will be brand new. There will be a new crop of food for us to eat each month. Food will never run out. Water will never run dry. Heaven will be full of precious stones that sparkle and shine. There will be gates made of pearl that we enter and exit through. There is a crystal river full of life. In John 14:2, Jesus tells us that Heaven is full of mansions, full of rooms, with plenty of room for all of us. We will not be crowded, and we will run free.

Heaven Continued

Another reward is that there will be no sickness, and you and I will have brand new bodies, free from decay and decline. Listen to Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 5:1-5- ¹ For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. ² We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. ³ For we will put on heavenly bodies; we will not be spirits without bodies. ⁴ While we live in these earthly bodies, we groan and sigh, but it's not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us. Rather, we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life. ⁵ God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit.

Now that is a reward! Bodies that do not get tired and rundown. Bodies that cannot be held back by tiredness or broken bones or anxiety or depression. Heavenly bodies made by God Himself! Eternal life! Did you hear in verse 3 that we will not be spirits floating around? That is a common misbelief. We will live eternally in fresh bodies. Those are awesome rewards, and we should look forward to them, but they are not the ultimate reward.

Our ultimate reward in Heaven is living in the presence of God. You see, we are given new bodies when we are born on Earth, but those bodies are susceptible to sickness. When we are young, we can work and not get tired. But we grow old and wear down more quickly. Young minds are not focused on dying, but death becomes a reality as we get older. But not in Heaven. And what makes that possible? The presence of God.

Without God's presence, Heaven would just be another place that starts great and ends badly. God's presence in Heaven maintains perfection. God's presence in Heaven holds the purity standard. He and He alone sustains Heaven. So the physical rewards are powerful, and we look forward to them, but the spiritual reward of God's presence trumps all the physical ones. God's presence holds it all together for us. God with us, Emmanuel, makes Heaven worthwhile.

Right now, Jesus is preparing Heaven. John 14:1-3- ¹ "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. ² There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? ³ When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.

In the meantime, we wait, trusting in God and also in Jesus that He is telling us the truth. We trust that Heaven is for real, and that there is more than enough room for everyone. Because Jesus said it, we believe that Jesus is in full preparation mode. He is working on getting Heaven ready to be the eternal living place of all His Faithful Followers. When Heaven is ready, we will get to see it. When Heaven is ready, Jesus will come back and take us there.

Heaven Continued

And get this. God created our beautiful world in six days, but Jesus has been working on Heaven for over two thousand years. And the Earth is beautiful isn't it? We are surrounded by mountains, oceans, rivers, flowers, rocks, trees, and on and on. It makes me wonder what Heaven will be like. How beautiful will Heaven be? Sometimes we cannot find the words to describe the glory of Earth, so there is absolutely no way we can fathom Heaven. Maybe that is why Jesus Himself and the Bibles' authors just could not help us fully understand.

1 Corinthians 2:9 tells us- "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." That is so true, but at the same time, God gave a man named John a vision that fills in some of the holes for us.

I want us to read Revelation chapter 21 together. In it, John described what he saw. I will stop and make a few observations as we read. Revelation chapter 21- ¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. The first thing we see is that Heaven will be on Earth. The New Jerusalem will descend to an Earth that has been purified from all unrighteousness. So you and I will live eternally on this planet? Yes. But Earth will have been made brand new. Let's continue.

³ I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." ⁵ And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." ⁶ And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. ⁷ All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children. ⁸ "But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." ⁹ Then one of the seven angels who held the seven bowls containing the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come with me! I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰ So he took me in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It shone with the glory of God and sparkled like a precious stone—like jasper as clear as crystal. ¹² The city wall was broad and high, with twelve gates guarded by twelve angels. And the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates. ¹³ There were three gates on each side—east, north, south, and west. ¹⁴ The wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵ The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. ¹⁶ When he measured it, he found it was a square, as wide as it was long. In fact, its length and width and height were each 1,400 miles.

Heaven Continued

Let's pause there. As a visual, one wall would go from Tucson, AZ to Destin, FL. North from Destin to the north side of Lake Superior. From Lake Superior west to Great Falls, Montana. Then back down to Tucson.

¹⁷ Then he measured the walls and found them to be 216 feet thick (according to the human standard used by the angel). ¹⁸ The wall was made of jasper, and the city was pure gold, as clear as glass. ¹⁹ The wall of the city was built on foundation stones inlaid with twelve precious stones: the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ The twelve gates were made of pearls—each gate from a single pearl! And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass. ²² I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light. ²⁴ The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory. ²⁵ Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there. ²⁶ And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city. ²⁷ Nothing evil will be allowed to enter, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

That is what the Bible says about Heaven. Now, you might be saying, “Yeah, but...” I know. I feel you. With all these details, we still have questions, but we need to be comfortable with that. That is where our faith comes in. There is so much more we could discuss; but if we understand as best we can what we just read, we will have gained a solid understanding of where God's Children will spend eternity.

Psalm 16:11	Hebrews 12:22	Psalm 33:13–14
Psalm 23:6	Ezekiel 1	Isaiah 66:1
Ecclesiastes 12:7	Isaiah 6:1–7	Matthew 6:9
Daniel 12:2–3	Daniel 7	Acts 7:55–56
Matthew 5:12	Acts 7:55–56	Hebrews 8:1
Matthew 7:21	2 Corinthians 12:2–4	Revelation 4:1–11
Matthew 25:34	Revelation 1–5	Psalm 103:19
Luke 23:43	Isaiah 65:17	Isaiah 14:13
John 14:2–3	Isaiah 66:22	Daniel 7:9–10
2 Corinthians 5:1	Romans 8:18–23	Matthew 5:34
Philippians 3:20	2 Peter 3:13	Hebrews 1:3
1 Peter 1:3–5	Revelation 21–22	Revelation 5
John 3:16	Revelation 21:1–27	Matthew 6:19–21
John 5:24	Revelation 22:1–5	Matthew 19:29
John 6:40	1 Corinthians 2:9	Luke 12:33
Romans 6:23	Hebrews 11:10, 16	Colossians 1:5
Titus 1:2	Genesis 1:1	1 Peter 1:4
1 John 5:11–13	Psalm 19:1	Revelation 22:12
Genesis 28:12	Nehemiah 9:6	Matthew 3:2
Job 1:6	Jeremiah 10:12	Matthew 5:3, 10, 12
Psalm 68:17	Colossians 1:16	Matthew 7:21
Daniel 7:10	Deuteronomy 26:15	Matthew 19:23–24
Matthew 18:10	1 Kings 8:30	Matthew 25:1–13
Luke 2:13–14	Psalm 11:4	

Hell

Coming Soon

Humanity

The goal of Christian Essentials is to dive deep into doctrines that are essential in a Christian's life.

Biblical doctrines are teachings and instructions that God puts forth as true in His Word. So far we have covered topics like: What is sin? What happens at salvation? Who is the Trinity? What does the Bible say about Heaven and Hell? What is baptism? Why the Lord's Supper?

In this round of Christian Essentials we are going to cover: the Doctrine of Man, the Doctrine of The Church and the Doctrine of Christian Mission. In other words: why were we made and what is our purpose on Earth, why The Church, and what is our mission as Believers in Christ and members of His Church?

Let's get started with the Doctrine of Man. The Doctrine of Man is also known as the Doctrine of Humanity. We are not just talking about males, but everyone on Earth- all of mankind. There are whole seminary courses on this subject. Countless papers, articles and whole books have been written on this topic, so tonight will not be all-encompassing. However, I hope you this will give you a great grasp on the Doctrine of Humanity as a whole. If someone asks you how we got here and what we are here for, you will be able to confidently answer them.

Boiling it down to its simplest aspects- The Christian doctrine of humanity sees the human person as made by God, in God's image, fallen through Adam's historical sin, formed for vocation unto God, and redeemable in and through the God-man, Jesus Christ.

First, God made man and woman. Genesis 1:27- So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Saying that God made us male and female means several things. It means that we did not descend from monkeys. It did not take us twenty-five million years to become human beings. The Trees Down Theory, which holds that we used to swing in the trees and one day made our way down to Earth is completely false.

The Bible describes our creation in Genesis 1:26-28- ²⁶Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." ²⁷ So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸ Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."

Humanity Continued

God created us. We did not evolve from apes. Also, notice that God only created two genders. Modern science has this skewed. According to medicinenet.com, there are seventy-four genders, including but not limited to: male, female, agender, cisgender, transgender, agenderflux, ambigender, amicagender, autigender and bigender. Listen, this is not what the Bible says. When God created humans, He made us male and female. Everyone on Earth is either male or female.

The Bible calls the first man Adam. A-dam is Hebrew for man. Adam was made by God's own hand and breathed into by the Lord. Genesis 2:7-⁷ Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person. Then, God looked at His creation and saw that man needed a partner perfectly molded for him. Genesis 2:18-¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him." So, God made Eve from Adam and Adam called her Eve, which sounds like the Hebrew word for life-giver. Chavvah. Khav-VAH- (khav-vaw').

We also need to realize that God did not need to create us. He was not lonely. He has existed from eternity past, He did not all of a sudden need a friend. God created us so that His glory would be on display. Man and woman are the only created beings who were made in God's image. You may have heard the term Imago Dei. Imago Dei is a Latin phrase which means- the image of God. That we were made in the image of God means that you and I are like God and that we represent Him to the world. In humans, we catch a fading but real glimpse of the glory of the One who made us.

God formed you and I from nothing, for His glory, to display His glory and His glorious image to the rest of His creation. He made us male and female, so if we lived in a male only or female only society, we would be missing the whole image of God. 1 Corinthians 11:11-12-¹¹ But among the Lord's people, women are not independent of men, and men are not independent of women.¹² For although the first woman came from man, every other man was born from a woman, and everything comes from God. We need each other to survive and thrive, and our purpose is to glorify God in everything.

Owen Strachan from The Gospel Coalition says this- The fact that the man and woman are made in God's image prepares them to fulfill the dominion mandate by filling the earth with children, ruling over the creation, and stewarding it to the glory of their maker.

So, God made man and woman, and God gave man and woman a job. Genesis 1:26-²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." God did not make us to sit idly by. He formed us to work. We are the crowning work of His creation, and gave us, man and woman, a job to do. God created us to take care of the rest of His creation.

Humanity Continued

In 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13, Paul warns his readers back then, and you and I today, to not sit idly by. Idleness leads to sloth and laziness, and laziness leads to evil. In that passage, Paul even makes the bold statement, “If you don’t work, you don’t eat.” Because we were made in God’s image, and because God is a God of action, we should be examples of hard work, determination and accomplishment to the world around us. May it never be said of us that we lazily slid by in life, expecting other people to take up our slack. We were created to work. May we be about it!

God formed Adam and Eve, placed them in the perfect Garden of Eden, gave them a task to accomplish, and for an unknown length of time, Adam and Eve walked in perfection with their Creator. Can you imagine? Pure peace, enjoyable work, complete freedom, pleasurable relationships, abiding and walking with God? That is what Heaven will be like one day and Adam and Eve lived in Heaven on Earth.

God made man and woman, God gave man and woman a job, man and woman fell short. Adam and Eve were free, but not free to do whatever they wished. Inside freedom comes responsibility and God gave Adam and Eve freewill to choose for themselves. When Adam and Eve crossed God’s Divinely marked boundary, when they overstepped God’s Divine limits, they sinned. This is what many call The Fall of Man.

Now, some people think this is an allegory, a myth, a truth in poetic language that is not literal. Listen, this is a slippery slope. We cannot take these few verses from the Bible, claim they are not literal, but claim that others are literal. If we can play the myth card about the events surrounding creation, then we can play it with any other part of the Bible. When Adam and Eve fell short, it happened just like the Bible describes in Genesis chapter 3. Adam and Eve were made in the image of God but were no longer fulfilling the image and glory of God.

Genesis chapter 3 chronicles the awful tragedy of when sin entered the world, and perfect Eden ceased to exist. Genesis 3:1-7- The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”² “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied.³ “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”⁴ “You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman.⁵ “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”⁶ The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too.⁷ At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

Humanity Continued

Adam and Eve were sinless, but God allowed them the opportunity to sin because He desired for His prized creation to choose Him. True love is not marked by forced servitude. God has angels and spiritual beings who do His bidding. You and I were created differently, with the ability to choose either to glorify God or not to glorify God. God gave Adam and Eve the power to resist temptation, but they chose to give in. And when that happened, the human race became tainted. We were made for God's glory, made to exist in perfect communion with Him, but we became a fallen race in that moment. And when we fell, we fell hard, and we fell all the way. We were totally helpless because of our sin.

Genesis 3:16–19- ¹⁶ Then he said to the woman, “I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.” ¹⁷ And to the man he said, “Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. ¹⁸ It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return.”

Childbearing, pregnancy pains. Women desiring control. Men enforcing their dominance. The ground cursed. Provision now difficult to achieve. Working no longer pleasurable. Physical death. With all this came also a fear of God, a shame because of sin, a hiding from God's presence, and finally God threw Adam and Eve out of The Garden and placed an angel with a flaming sword to guard it, making sure that His prized creation could never come back. Genesis 3:23-24- ²³ So the Lord God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. ²⁴ After sending them out, the Lord God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

This is the world you and I live in today. Because Adam and Eve sinned, we inherited that sin nature, and we inherited the consequences of their sin. Romans 5:12- ¹² When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. Romans 3:10-13- ¹⁰ As the Scriptures say, “No one is righteous—not even one. ¹¹ No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. ¹² All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one.” Romans 3:23- ²³ For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. The Bible is abundantly clear on this fact.

And our ultimate punishment for our sin is both physical death and eternal death. The entire nature of humans: mentally, morally, spiritually, physically, is sadly affected by sin. Also, our understanding is darkened. We are now all totally helpless to find God on our own. We are totally dead in our sin. Not partially, not halfway.

Ephesians 4:18- ¹⁸ Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him.

Humanity Continued

Jeremiah 17:9-⁹ “The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? Romans 7:18-¹⁸ And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t. I cannot stress enough to you that on our own, we are utterly destitute of any Godlike qualities which meet the requirements of God’s holiness. In our nature, no human person does good—not even one. We are completely and wholly defiled. But watch this. When Adam and Eve sinned, the image of God in us became distorted, but it was not totally lost.

God made man and woman, God gave man and woman a job, man and woman fell short of God’s glorious standard, but God provided man and woman a way out. Ever since The Fall, our souls have been longing to return to a right relationship with our Creator. Ever since then, our souls have been longing for perfection. We were made for it, and because we no longer have it, we deeply want it back.

In Book One of his Confessions, Augustine said it this way- Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee. God made us for Himself, and we will know no peace until we rest in the Lord. So, knowing that His crowning achievement in creation could no longer have a relationship with Him, instead of walking away from us, God made a way back to us. He sent Jesus. The Fall of Man was not an oops that God did not account for. Everything was always leading to Jesus.

Jesus was born of woman, became one hundred percent human, lived a human life, but did it sinlessly when we could not, died a horrendous death, and through His death and resurrection, we can now be back in right-standing with our Creator, in perfect rest and peace eternally. Isaiah 53:6-⁶ All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all. By Jesus’ death, we are given an abundant life here on Earth, and eternal life in Heaven one day. Romans 5:16-¹⁶ And the result of God’s gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man’s sin. For Adam’s sin led to condemnation, but God’s free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. Matthew 11:28-²⁸ Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

Just like we all inherited death because of Adam’s sin, we all inherit life because of Jesus! The image of God restored! Colossians 1:15-¹⁵ Christ is the visible image of the invisible God... Where we fell short, Jesus excelled! What we messed up, Jesus cleaned up! When we sinned, Jesus saved! When we gave up, Jesus stepped up! When we caved to temptation, Jesus overcame temptation! And now, we claim the promise from 1 Corinthians 15:49-⁴⁹ Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man. By placing our faith in Jesus, we will one day be able to walk again with our Creator in perfection. The Doctrine of Humanity would be empty and incomplete without Jesus.

So, what do we do while we await eternal life with God the Father? We do our best to do what Adam did not. We work for the Lord. We bear His image well. We say no to temptation. And 1 Corinthians 10:31-³¹ So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. That is the Doctrine of Humanity. 56

The Church

The People of God from Creation to New Creation

The doctrine of the Church, commonly called ecclesiology, is the theological study of the identity, nature, leadership, mission, worship, and destiny of the people of God. The word ecclesiology comes from the Greek word *ekklēsia* (ἐκκλησία), meaning assembly or congregation, and *logos*, meaning study or doctrine. Ecclesiology asks several important questions: What is the Church? Where did it come from? What relationship exists between Israel and the Church? Who possesses authority within the Church? What is the role of pastors and elders? What makes a church healthy? Most importantly, how does Jesus Christ relate to His Church?

A biblical understanding of the Church cannot begin with modern congregations, denominations, or church structures. It must begin with God's purpose to create a people for Himself and trace that purpose through the entire biblical story. The Church is the covenant people of God, established through God's saving work, centered upon Jesus Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, governed by the Word of God, and commissioned to worship God and make disciples. Throughout Scripture, Jesus is the central thread. He is the Prophet who speaks God's Word, the Priest who reconciles His people to God, the King who rules over them, and the Chief Shepherd who leads and protects His flock.

The Church in the Old Testament

The story of God's people begins with creation. In Genesis 1:26–28, human beings are created in the image of God and commissioned to exercise dominion over creation. Humanity was created to live under God's authority, enjoy His presence, represent His character, and display His rule throughout the world. The doctrine of the Church therefore begins with God's desire to have a people who belong to Him.

Sin fractured this relationship in Genesis 3. Humanity rebelled against God and was driven from His presence. From that point forward, the biblical story becomes the story of God redeeming and restoring a people to Himself. This purpose takes form in God's call of Abraham. In Genesis 12:1–3, God promises Abraham a land, a people, divine blessing, and blessing that will ultimately extend to all nations. Genesis 17:7 further records God's promise: "I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you."

The Church Continued

This covenant formula—“I will be their God, and they shall be my people”—appears repeatedly throughout Scripture. It is reflected in Exodus 6:7, Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 37:27, 2 Corinthians 6:16, and Revelation 21:3. God’s purpose is not to rescue disconnected individuals but to create a covenant people who know Him, worship Him, and live in His presence.

This covenant identity becomes more developed in Israel. At Mount Sinai, God declares in Exodus 19:5–6 that Israel will be His “treasured possession,” “a kingdom of priests,” and “a holy nation.” Israel belongs to God, is called to holiness, and is given a priestly role among the nations. Peter later applies this same language to Christians in 1 Peter 2:9–10, describing believers as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.”

The Old Testament often describes Israel as the assembly or congregation of the Lord. The Hebrew word *qahal*, meaning assembly, was sometimes translated in the Greek Old Testament with *ekklēsia*, the same word later translated as “church.” This does not mean that Israel and the New Testament Church are identical in every respect, but it does demonstrate significant continuity between God’s Old Covenant people and His New Covenant people.

Another central Old Testament theme is God’s presence. In Exodus 25:8, God commands Israel, “Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.” The tabernacle and later the temple represented God’s dwelling among His covenant people. This theme can be traced across Scripture as Eden, tabernacle, temple, Christ, Church, and new creation.

John 1:14 declares that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” The language of dwelling carries tabernacle imagery. God, who symbolically dwelt among Israel, personally comes among His people in Jesus Christ. Paul later tells the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 3:16, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” Finally, Revelation 21:3 announces, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.” The doctrine of the Church is therefore closely connected to the presence of God among His people.

Within Israel’s life, three important offices develop: prophet, priest, and king. The prophet represented God before the people by proclaiming His Word. The priest represented the people before God through sacrifice and intercession. The king governed God’s people under divine authority. Yet each office ultimately proved incomplete. Prophets died, priests offered sacrifices repeatedly, and kings often failed. The Old Testament therefore creates expectation for a greater Prophet, greater Priest, and greater King.

Jesus fulfills all three offices. Deuteronomy 18:15 anticipates a prophet like Moses, and Acts 3:20–23 identifies this expectation with Christ. Hebrews 1:1–2 explains that while God formerly spoke through prophets, “in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.” Jesus is not another prophet; He is God’s supreme revelation.

The Church Continued

Christ also fulfills the priesthood. Psalm 110:4 declares, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” Hebrews 4:14 identifies Jesus as the “great high priest,” while Hebrews 10:12 explains that Christ “offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins.” Old Covenant priests repeatedly offered sacrifices, but Jesus offered Himself once for all.

Finally, Christ fulfills the office of king. God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:12–16 anticipated an enduring Davidic throne. In Luke 1:32–33, Gabriel announces that Jesus will receive “the throne of his father David” and that “of his kingdom there will be no end.” Matthew 28:18 records Jesus' declaration, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” The Church therefore exists under the reign and authority of Christ the King.

The Church in the New Testament

The New Testament brings the doctrine of the Church into greater clarity because Christ, toward whom the Old Testament pointed, has come. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus declares, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” This statement establishes several foundational truths.

First, Christ is the builder of the Church. Second, He guarantees its continuation. Third, the Church belongs to Him. Jesus does not say “the church,” but “my church.” The Church exists because Christ has determined to redeem, gather, preserve, and sanctify a people for Himself.

The cross stands at the center of the Church's identity. Acts 20:28 refers to “the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.” The Church is fundamentally a blood-bought people. It is not created primarily by cultural similarity, tradition, political agreement, shared interests, or charismatic personalities. It exists because Jesus Christ purchased a people through His death.

Ephesians 5:25 likewise states, “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” Christ does not save isolated individuals who later decide whether they want to associate with other Christians. His saving work creates a people. The gospel is personal, but it is never private.

Pentecost in Acts 2 marks a decisive moment in the life of the New Covenant people. The risen Christ pours out the promised Holy Spirit, Peter preaches the gospel, thousands repent and are baptized, and a visible Christian community develops. Acts 2:42 describes the believers as devoted “to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

This gives a fundamental pattern for church life: Word, fellowship, ordinances, and prayer. The Spirit-filled Church is not primarily characterized by novelty but by devotion to the ordinary means God has established for the growth and worship of His people.

The Church Continued

The New Testament uses numerous images for the Church. In 1 Corinthians 12, the Church is the body of Christ, emphasizing unity and diversity. In Ephesians 5, the Church is the bride of Christ, emphasizing Christ's covenant love. In Ephesians 2, believers are described as a temple, emphasizing God's indwelling presence. First Timothy 3:15 calls the Church the household of God, while 1 Peter 5 describes it as God's flock. First Peter 2:9–10 describes believers as the people of God.

These images remind us that the Church cannot be reduced to an institution or organization. It certainly has leadership, order, doctrine, and structure, but the Church is fundamentally a people before it is a program. It is a covenant community united to Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

The early Church understood this corporate character of Christianity. Ignatius of Antioch, writing near the beginning of the second century, famously wrote, “Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic Church.” In this context, “catholic” means universal rather than specifically Roman Catholic in the later denominational sense. Ignatius also emphasized ordered church leadership involving overseers, elders, and deacons.

His writings demonstrate that early Christianity was never conceived as an individual relationship with Jesus disconnected from the Church. Christians understood themselves as belonging to a visible, worshiping, doctrinally accountable community centered on Christ.

The Church Today

Any discussion of the contemporary Church must begin with the question of authority. Colossians 1:18 declares that Christ “is the head of the body, the church.” Jesus Christ alone is the Head of the Church. The pastor is not the head, the congregation is not the head, and the denomination is not the head. Every legitimate form of human authority within the Church exists under the authority of Christ.

This is closely connected with the description of Jesus as the Chief Shepherd in 1 Peter 5:4. Christ is the Chief Shepherd, pastors and elders are undershepherds, and the congregation is God's flock. This distinction is essential for understanding pastoral ministry. Pastors do not own churches. They are temporarily entrusted with the care of people who belong entirely to Jesus Christ.

The New Testament uses several overlapping terms for pastoral leadership. The Greek word *presbyteros* means elder, *episkopos* means overseer, and *poimēn* means shepherd or pastor. Passages such as Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5–7; and 1 Peter 5:1–2 indicate that these terms describe overlapping aspects of the same pastoral office. “Elder” emphasizes maturity, “overseer” emphasizes supervision, and “pastor” emphasizes shepherding care.

The Church Continued

Acts 20:28 provides one of the clearest descriptions of pastoral responsibility. Paul commands the Ephesian elders, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock.” He reminds them that the Holy Spirit has made them overseers and charges them to care for the Church of God. Pastoral ministry is therefore fundamentally stewardship.

This challenges celebrity-oriented models of ministry. The central question for a pastor cannot be, “How large did my ministry become?” The biblical question is, “Was I faithful with Christ's sheep?” Faithfulness, rather than popularity or visibility, is the fundamental measure of pastoral ministry.

Scripture gives pastors several responsibilities. They must preach the Word according to 2 Timothy 4:1–5, teach sound doctrine and refute error according to Titus 1:9, shepherd God's people according to 1 Peter 5:1–4, protect the flock according to Acts 20:28–31, devote themselves to prayer according to Acts 6:4, equip believers for ministry according to Ephesians 4:11–16, model Christian character according to 1 Timothy 3:1–7, and care for souls according to Hebrews 13:17.

Pastoral ministry is therefore fundamentally a Word-centered, prayer-dependent, disciple-making, soul-shepherding ministry. Administration and programming may be necessary aspects of modern church life, but they are secondary to the pastor's biblical calling.

The qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 also demonstrate the importance of pastoral character. Paul emphasizes self-control, faithfulness, gentleness, hospitality, family leadership, reputation, spiritual maturity, and ability to teach. His focus is striking because he does not begin with charisma, creativity, stage presence, or organizational success.

God is more concerned with a pastor's character than his charisma. Talent may gather a crowd, but character determines whether a man can faithfully shepherd one.

Pastors do possess genuine authority, but this authority is always delegated. Hebrews 13:17 speaks of leaders who “keep watch over your souls” and will “give an account.” First Peter 5:3 nevertheless warns elders against “domineering over those in your charge” and commands them to be examples to the flock. Biblical pastoral authority is therefore exercised through Scripture, teaching, example, persuasion, prayer, discipline, and shepherding. A pastor never possesses authority to contradict the Chief Shepherd.

The Essential Characteristics of a Healthy Church

A healthy church is first characterized by biblical preaching. Second Timothy 4:2 commands pastors to “preach the word.” God’s Word governs God’s Church. The pulpit should therefore not become primarily a platform for the pastor’s opinions, personality, entertainment, or political commentary. The Church gathers to hear God’s Word faithfully explained and applied.

A healthy church must also possess sound doctrine. Titus 1:9 requires church leaders to hold firmly to trustworthy teaching so that they can instruct others and refute error. Doctrine is not an academic concern. What a church believes about God, Christ, salvation, Scripture, humanity, and holiness will inevitably shape its worship, discipleship, ethics, and mission.

The Church must also remain gospel-centered. First Corinthians 15:1–4 summarizes the gospel around the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The gospel is not simply the entrance into Christianity before believers move on to something deeper. The gospel remains central throughout the entire Christian life.

A healthy church also observes baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Matthew 28:19 places baptism within the Great Commission, while 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 presents the Lord’s Supper as an ongoing proclamation of Christ’s death. These ordinances visibly proclaim the gospel and identify believers with Christ and His people.

Prayer is another essential mark. Acts 2:42 records the early Christians’ devotion to prayer. Prayer reveals dependence upon God. A church may possess excellent facilities, talented staff, technology, and programs, but without prayer it can easily become dependent upon human ability rather than divine power.

A healthy church is also committed to fellowship. Acts 2:42–47 describes believers sharing worship, meals, generosity, and spiritual life. Christianity is not designed to be lived in isolation. Hebrews 10:24–25 therefore warns believers not to neglect meeting together.

Healthy churches require biblical leadership. First Timothy 3 and Titus 1 provide qualifications for elders and deacons, demonstrating that church leadership must be rooted in godly character and doctrinal faithfulness.

Healthy churches also practice church discipline. Matthew 18:15–20 presents a process for confronting sin with the goal of repentance and restoration. Biblical discipline is not primarily punitive. It protects the congregation, encourages holiness, and seeks to restore those who have wandered.

The Church Continued

A healthy church must also be committed to discipleship. Ephesians 4:11–16 explains that Christ gives leaders to the Church “to equip the saints for the work of ministry.” Pastors are not called to perform all ministry while the congregation watches. They are called to equip believers so that the entire body grows toward maturity in Christ. Healthy churches produce disciples rather than spectators.

Finally, healthy churches are committed to mission. Matthew 28:18–20 commands believers to make disciples of all nations, while Acts 1:8 calls the Church to bear witness to Christ to the ends of the earth. Mission is not one program among many. It arises from the identity of the Church itself.

Historically, Christians have summarized some of these characteristics through the language of the marks of the Church. The Protestant Reformers particularly emphasized faithful preaching of God’s Word and proper administration of the sacraments or ordinances. The Augsburg Confession of 1530 describes the Church as the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments rightly administered. This reminds modern Christians that churches should ultimately be evaluated by faithfulness to Christ rather than popularity, size, or cultural influence.

The Gathered and Scattered Church

The Church is both gathered and scattered. Hebrews 10:24–25 commands believers not to neglect meeting together. The Church gathers for worship, preaching, fellowship, prayer, the ordinances, and mutual encouragement.

Yet the Church also scatters into homes, workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, cities, and nations. It gathers for worship, Word, fellowship, prayer, and equipping, and then scatters for mission, witness, vocation, service, and disciple-making.

The Church therefore does not have a mission. Christ sends His Church on mission. Matthew 28:18–20 begins with Jesus declaring, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” The Great Commission flows directly from the kingship of Christ. Because Jesus possesses all authority, His people go to all nations, make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to obey everything He has commanded.

Mission is fundamentally Christological. The Church goes because Christ reigns, teaches because Christ has spoken, and makes disciples because all nations belong under His authority. It goes confidently because Christ promises to remain with His people “to the end of the age.”

The Eschatological Church

Ecclesiology must finally look beyond the present age. The Church has a future and a destination. Revelation 7:9–10 describes “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” standing before the throne and worshiping the Lamb.

The mission begun in Genesis reaches its fulfillment in Revelation. God has His people. Christ has His bride. The nations worship the Lamb. God’s plan does not end with struggling local congregations but with a glorified people gathered eternally in His presence.

This future hope is connected with the Church as the Bride of Christ. Ephesians 5:25 declares, “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” Churches are filled with sinners, leaders sometimes fail, and congregations can become unhealthy. Yet Christ has not abandoned His Church.

He loves His bride. He died for her. He sanctifies her. He preserves her. He shepherds her. And He will return for her.

Conclusion: Everything Returns to Christ

The doctrine of the Church begins with God’s desire to dwell among His people and ends with God’s redeemed people dwelling eternally in His presence. Throughout the Old Testament, God raises up prophets, priests, and kings, but each office ultimately points beyond itself to Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the Prophet who perfectly reveals God. Hebrews 1:1–2 teaches that God has spoken decisively through His Son. The Church therefore lives underneath His Word.

Jesus is the Priest who offers the final sacrifice and continually intercedes for His people. Hebrews 7:25 teaches that He always lives to intercede for those who draw near to God through Him, and Hebrews 10:12 declares that His sacrifice for sin was offered once for all.

Jesus is the King who possesses all authority. Matthew 28:18 declares that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Him. The Church therefore does not invent its own mission, doctrine, morality, or identity. It receives them from Christ.

Jesus is the Chief Shepherd. John 10:11 calls Him the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep, while 1 Peter 5:4 calls Him the Chief Shepherd before whom every earthly shepherd will ultimately appear.

The Church Continued

Finally, Jesus is the Head of the Church. Colossians 1:18 declares that He is “the head of the body, the church.” The doctrine of the Church is therefore ultimately Christological. The Church receives its identity, authority, life, mission, and destiny from Him.

The Church is His body, His bride, His flock, His temple, His household, and His people. He purchased her, builds her, governs her, shepherds her, sanctifies her, sends her, and will one day return for her.

The central question for the modern Church is therefore not, “How can we become more impressive?” but, “How can we become more faithful to the Christ to whom the Church belongs?”

The Church is a people belonging to God, purchased by Christ, indwelt by the Spirit, governed by the Word, shepherded under Christ's authority, gathered for worship, sent for mission, and awaiting the return of her King.

Mission of The Church

Let's look at the essential doctrine of Missions. Sometimes we call this evangelism. The theological term that we will use is: The doctrine of Missiology.

Why Missiology?

I think a good question to ask is: Why missions? We've looked at Salvation and man and the Church! Sin and Heaven! BIG things. Now why should we discuss missiology?

The Baptist Faith and Message says this: It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

In other words, missions is vital to the Church and furthering the Kingdom of God. Jesus repeatedly commanded it. In the Old and New Testament, missiology is a reoccurring theme. But on a really practical level, if missiology is close to the heart of God, missiology should be close to our heart as well.

God doesn't wish that any should perish, but that all would come to a knowledge of the truth, and that should be our wish too.

What is Missiology?

The IMB, the International Mission Board, defines the missiology like this:

The Mission of God is God's plan to display His glory among the nations by redeeming a people from every nation, tribe, people, and language, transforming them increasingly into the image of Jesus Christ, unifying them into one body through the Church, and empowering them by the Holy Spirit to be gospel witnesses.

If you've been a Christian for sometime, you are familiar with missiology, at least to a degree. For many of us, the thought of evangelism can be challenging or uncomfortable. But, missiology, person evangelism, is absolutely essential. This is how we reach people... with the story of Jesus.

Understanding the Gospel Message

But before we can understand the missiology- we need to understand the Gospel. Gospel literally means "good news". The Gospel is the message that Jesus, the Son of God, came to save the world from our sin!

Genesis chapter 3, tells us about the fall of humanity and the spread of the sin curse. Human nature is sinful nature. We left God at the altar and chose our mistress called sin and we have been enjoying it every since. But, there are GREAT consequences to our actions. Sin is more than a mistake or a fun Saturday night. The Bible says that the wages of sin is DEATH. Sin earns us a fractured relationship with a holy God. It means that we have a debt that we can never pay back.

But we reason we ourselves: I can work and do good and be good and pay my tithe and teach Sunday School and raise my hands in worship and help people cross the street and pay my taxes and vote the right way and fulfill the American dream and I can raise my kids to say please and thank you, and I can go to college and help this world with my gifts and talents.

But at the end of the day, my sin debt didn't leave. And at the end of my life it is an eternity separated from God in a place called Hell. You may think that's a little extreme, but it is reality.

We think too lightly about sin. And we shouldn't. This is mankind's problem! We all have a sin debt. And we can all try and do what's right, but the Bible is clear: We cannot remove it and we can't pay it. But God, full of grace and full of truth, had a plan. A plan to redeem mankind.

The plan is the Son of God. The plan is Jesus.

God stepped into time. Jesus was born into this life as a baby! The One who spoke the universe into existence... learned to talk. Do you see that? The One who hovered above the waters in the beginning....had to learn to walk. Not only that, but He lived a perfect, God-honoring life, accused of wrong, and killed on the cross.

The perfect One is killed and He pays for the sins of the guilty. The Lamb of God is sacrificed and He pays for, or atones, for the sin of the world! Jesus came so you might be set free from your sins, that YOU would have a relationship with the Holy God, and that You would spend an eternity with Him.

This is God's plan for salvation! And it works! Through Jesus, we can have the forgiveness with sin, and we will be adopted into the family of God! If you are a Christian: That's great! The 2,000 year old message spread to you! You had the sin disease, you were presented with the cure, and you partook! It is a miracle from Heaven that a wretched sinner can be saved and be given a new future!

What is the Christian's Job?

Jesus says this in Matthew 28:18-20: 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Jesus tells His followers exactly what He wants them to be doing. Go to the World, Make disciples, baptize them, and teach them all that Jesus taught.

Did you know this wasn't only a command to the original disciples? God has chosen every believer to be instrumental in spreading the gospel. This is the job of EVERY Christian, it's the job of the Church to reach the world!

This isn't only your mission, this is the mission of the Church!

2 Types of Calls

1: THE GENERAL CALL

Every Christian has been given the title of missionary. A missionary is someone who dedicates their life to sharing God's plan of salvation to the world. Obedience isn't optional. He is Lord and this is His plan.

God has called all of His Children to be witnesses to His plan of salvation! You and me, everyone who bears the name, you also bear this title. The Apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, says: 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.

Paul is addressing Church members in this passage. That is significant. Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; Every Christian is an ambassador of Christ!

Charles Spurgeon said it like this: "Every Christian is either a missionary or an impostor."

A call to follow Jesus is also a call to be a witness for Jesus, a missionary.

2: THE VOCATIONAL CALL

There are a select few who have been given a special vocational call to the mission field. Calls to vocational missions are discerned and affirmed in community in the local Church through prayer and Bible-study as they examine the Christian's gifts and abilities.

As Southern Baptist, we support nearly 7,000 full-time missionaries all over the world through the cooperative program. God is still calling Christians to Mission field today.

Are Words Necessary?

Why do we have to VERBALLY preach the Gospel: It has been said before: "Preach the Gospel at all times- and if necessary- use words." This sounds sweet. But it's unbiblical and unhelpful.

The Apostle Paul says in Romans 10:13-17. 13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

The spreading of the Gospel takes place through words. To be clear- they are backed up by the way you live your life- but we need to be verbally be presenting the Gospel. Remember this is God's plan to reach the world!

God is the one who chose the preaching of the Gospel to reach the world! This is good news! It's not just A way to reach the lost, it is the BEST way to reach the lost.

Who Are We Trying to Reach?

Who are we supposed to reach? Matthew 28: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations

This Gospel is for every people group, every nation, every language, everyone.

Mission Continued

Many Christian Universities and Seminaries teach missionaries to share the Gospel in a contextual way.

Contextualization is the process of sharing the unchanging message of the Bible in a way that local people can clearly understand and hear within their own culture and language, without changing or watering down the actual truth. This stems from the idea that no one should have to learn a new language in order to hear the Gospel. In other words, if a Missionary is going to Taiwan, we shouldn't expect everyone we encounter to learn English so they can understand the message. Instead, you should learn their language, and bring the Gospel to their culture.

The central idea behind this is that Gospel isn't tied to a culture, language, or group of people. The Gospel crosses language and nations and the globe. The Gospel is for everyone. Every Christian has been given a command to share this Gospel message with their family, neighbors, and community.

And don't lose heart- You aren't doing this alone, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit empowers you to accomplish this mission,

This is Acts 1:8- 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

This isn't a solo-mission. It's the mission of every Christian and its the mission of the Church!

Summary and Final Thoughts

1.) What is Missiology?

The Mission of God is God's plan to display His glory among the nations by redeeming a people from every nation, transforming them into the image of Jesus Christ, unifying them into one body through the Church, and empowering them by the Holy Spirit to be gospel witnesses.

2.) Who is Supposed to be a missionary?

Every Christian has been empowered by the Holy Spirit to be a bold witness for the sake of the Gospel.

3.) Who are we trying to reach?

We want to reach family, friends, neighbors, and the ends of the Earth.

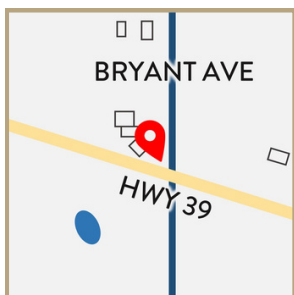
Some Final Encouragement

In the Book of Acts, Peter and John are incredible witnesses for Jesus! It really should be encouragement for us. Everyone they see, they share the message of the Gospel! But, the guys in charge do not like it. They get in trouble with the law.

This is Acts 4:18-20: 18 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”

Christians, you are to be a missionary. If you've seen and heard, we need to share. So let me ask you: How are you engaged in reaching the world for Jesus? On a scale from 1-10, how well are you doing on mission? What do you need to do better? Who has God placed in your life that you could be intentionally reaching for Christ?

This document was written by our Pastoral Staff and trusted Church Elders/Members of Union Hill Baptist Church. Please do not copy without asking.



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OUR MISSION

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to know God, reach in
to build community &
reach out to love
like Jesus.

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