

Foundation of our Faith

Core Values and Beliefs

INTRODUCTION

In Acts, chapter 20, we read of the apostle Paul facing hardships and prison for the Gospel of Christ. He knew hard times were coming. He called the elders of the church at Ephesus together and tearfully poured out his heart. He knew for him that the end was near but he considered his life worthless if only he could complete his God-given task – to testify of the Gospel to the lost. In this meeting with the Ephesian elders, Paul gave them a very stern warning and he told them of their responsibility as elders and shepherds of the Lord’s church. He told them to watch and be faithful shepherds of the flock. He told them to protect the body of Christ, the church, from a very grave danger. Paul said that men would subvert the Truth, they would distort the Gospel, and some of these men would come from within the church itself, even calling them “savage wolves.” Paul pleaded with these elders – “Be on guard,” protect the Lord’s church and its true message – the Gospel. This was Paul’s mission statement for these church leaders.

2000 years later, the elders of each congregation of the Lord’s people have that same mission -- to be on guard, to maintain the purity of the Gospel message and to protect the flock – the Lord’s church.

Today, the Lord’s church is experiencing the effects of these challenges predicted by Paul. Many congregations are experimenting with every wind of “doctrine” and threatening the identity of the church and sending an unclear message to members and to the world. In an effort to comply with Paul’s charge and sound a clear message to our congregation, the elders at West 7th have included here a set of Core Values & Beliefs that represent the spiritual framework within which we strive to live and teach and worship a loving God. This basic foundation of our faith constitute our understanding of the New Testament which serves as a compass and guide as we seek to serve and lead this congregation. This information is not intended to be interpreted as a creed and also not to be considered exhaustive or comprehensive. We want to sound a clear message on many of the core principles that are taught in God’s message to us, the Bible.

We have made a good-faith effort to create concise statements on these selected topics that reflect our understanding of the Faith that the apostle Paul loved, taught, and gave his life for. These basic principles guide our thoughts and actions at West 7th as we exercise the authority and leadership entrusted to us as shepherds for this congregation.

The manuscript for these Core Values and Beliefs is also available on our church website.

DIVINE DEITY

Our faith and hope is based on the certainty of a supreme, divine deity -- God. We believe that, in the beginning, before there was anything and before there was time, there was God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We believe that the heavens and the earth were created by God. We believe that God created us to worship and serve Him and be blessed by Him as He is our Heavenly Father. We believe in the divine providence of God, the Father, and Giver of every good and perfect gift to meet our every need.

We believe that Jesus is God's one and only son, born of the virgin, Mary, to be the prophesied Messiah. Through His life and death, He became the Lamb, sacrificed once and for all for the atonement of our sins. We believe His atoning blood continues to cleanse us from our sins. We believe that He was crucified and died, was buried and arose from the grave as the Resurrected Savior becoming our hope for our own resurrection to live again eternally in Heaven.

We believe the Holy Spirit was also there in the beginning and was the creative force moving on the face of the earth. We believe this Spirit was sent to be the Comforter after Jesus returned to Heaven. We believe the Spirit lives in us, intercedes for us, and energizes us in our work for the Lord.

Gen 1-2	Eph 4:4-6	Jn 4:21-24	Heb 11:6	Mt 7:7-12	Jn 1:17
Mt 1, 3:16-17	Lk 1-2	Jn 4:25-26	Jn 1:29-34	I Cor 15:12-19	Jn 19-20
Lk 23-24	Jn 14:16-26	Eph 3:14-19	Col 1:28-29	Rom 8:26-28	

AUTHORITY: SUPREME AND DELEGATED

We believe that God is the Almighty, the All Knowing and the Ever Present source of all authority. We believe He delegates authority and gave all authority to Jesus. We believe that Jesus was listened to because He spoke the truth with authority. Jesus sits on the right hand of the throne of God and is the head of the church.

We believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant word of God to teach us His will. We believe in the authority of the Bible to instruct us and be our guide by teaching and example in all matters of life and godliness as it is a lamp and a light.

We believe the Bible instructs us how God has delegated authority to man in various roles. We believe the Bible instructs that Christ is the head of the church and that elders are given authority to shepherd each church as autonomous congregations. We believe the Bible teaches that the husband is the head of his wife and his home. We believe the Bible governs the authority and responsibilities of masters and workers in the work place. We believe that God

delegates limited authority to governments to rule over the civil affairs of men and that He used good and evil governments during Biblical and later times to work His will.

Rom 13:1-2 Mt 28:18-20 Mt 7:28 I Pet 3:21-23 Eph 5:22-23 II Tim 3:16-17
Heb 4:12-13 Ps 119:105 Tit 1:5-9 Eph 6:1-9 I Tim 3:1-7 I Tim 5:17-21
Hab 1:1-11

DOCTRINE

We believe the Bible is the sole basis for our teaching. The Bible is profitable for doctrine and encourages us to rightly divide the word of truth. It is through this truth that we know and are set free to enjoy the security and assurance the Scriptures afford and to understand our relationship with God on our journey to an eternal home with Him. A central doctrine in this regard is the doctrine of salvation.

We believe that man is born pure and sinless and safe from condemnation. However, ultimately man succumbs to his own desires and sins, separating himself from God and is no longer safe. From man's initial fall in the Garden of Eden, God had made a plan of salvation to redeem, or buy back, his soul to return him to a safe state. We believe that the Bible teaches that a sinner must hear the word of God that teaches him how to live and realize how he has transgressed God's will. When he believes these teachings and the fact of his sin and his being in jeopardy of condemnation, he must repent of those sins that separate him from God and confess them as well as confessing his belief that Jesus is his Lord and submit to living under His will. We believe the physical act of baptism culminates this process of redemption as a washing away of sins as well as a burial of the old sinful man and the raising of a new man again sinless and in a safe state. We do not believe that man is permanently safe from condemnation since man can again succumb to his own desires, once again sinning, and being in jeopardy of condemnation. However, through confession and repentance, his sins are forgiven on an ongoing basis. He is to live in accordance with God's will as he grows in the grace and knowledge of God.

This plan is motivated by God's love for us and is based on grace and not works that man should boast. The redeemed Christian, in response to God's grace, is to live a life of good works as a manifestation of his faith and his understanding of God's will in his life understanding that there is forgiveness available when he falls. We believe that when we walk in the light, Jesus' blood continues to cleanse us and keep us safe.

We believe that the church spoken of in the New Testament is Christ's church and belongs to Him. Christ is the head of the church and the church is the bride of Christ. This church is made of men and women who have been baptized for the remission of their sins. Since it is made up of imperfect people, the church will not be perfect though its role is to edify and teach and bring

Christians to perfection and completeness. We believe Christ will come again to take His redeemed people to Heaven.

We believe that Scripture teaches that each congregation of the Lord's church is autonomous and is to be overseen by qualified elders or shepherds assisted by qualified deacons. We believe the Scripture authorizes these appointed positions of leadership and responsibility and limits them to men. We believe the Scripture teaches that women have major key roles in the work of the church but that these roles do not include holding these appointed leadership positions.

We believe that, as the father disciplines the son he loves, that elders are authorized to discipline members of the church living lives of unrepentant sin who do not respond to teaching, reproof and admonition motivated by love and the desire to bring this sinner back to the Lord's way of their life.

II Tim 3:16-17	Heb 4:12	II Tim 2:15	Jn 8:31-32	I Jn 1:10	Mt 18:1-4
Jms 1:12-15	Rom 10:12-15	Jn 3:16-17	Acts 16:31	Heb 11:16	Jn 6:44-51
Mt 10:32-33	Rom 10:9	I Jn 1:5-9	Rom 3:21-30	Acts 2:37-47	Rom 6:1-8
Col 2:12	I Pet 3:21	Phil 2:12	II Pet 3:17-18	Eph 2	Mt 16:17-19
Eph 5:23	Rev 21:9	I Tim 3:1-13	Tit 1:5-9	Heb 12:4-13	I Cor 5

WORSHIP

In our worship, we assemble in holiness before God, who seeks and desires our praise. We worship in a spirit of thankfulness, reverently glorifying God as our creator, savior, and sustainer, and we exhort one another to faithfulness and fidelity.

We worship in spirit and in truth with love and joy in our hearts to encounter, commune with and praise the God who has saved us. Our worship is designed, organized, and constructed according to worship principles revealed in the New Testament.

Faithful men lead our worship assembly each first day of the week. The human voice and the human heart alone offer praise to our Creator through songs of faith. We celebrate our Lord's sacrificial death by observing His Memorial Supper each Lord's Day. We approach our Creator's throne of Grace through collective prayer, we practice exhortation and create spiritual growth through study of God's inspired Word, and we cheerfully contribute our financial gifts to the Lord's work in our assembly upon each first day of the week.

Heb 10:25	Mk 7:6-8	Acts 20:7	Jn 4:23	Heb 12:28
I Cor 16:2	Psa 29:2	I Cor 11:2	Psa 100:2-5	Eph 5:19

CHRISTIAN HOLINESS

We embrace the commitment to lead righteous, holy, transformed lives as an expression of obedient faith to the living God who has freely given us redemption, reconciliation, and salvation through Jesus Christ. We have been created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness and to be imitators of His love and compassion. We are called to live in the world but not to live like the world.

Jesus died so that we can be dead to sin and alive to righteousness. We have been bought with a precious price and are therefore responsible for glorifying God in our body, our spirit, and our lives. The Christian's resources are to be instruments of righteousness as we seek to present our lives as a living sacrifice to our Creator. Our lives should embody the fruit of the spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The marriage covenant is the sacred union designed and authorized by God through which a man and a woman become one flesh, for life. This divine union can be broken only by infidelity or death.

The Christian home is the God ordained institution for the propagation of faith, love, and spiritual values in life. Each family member has God-given roles and responsibilities of leadership, submission, and co-operation so that the family unit may function effectively in the world and in the church, with love and respect for righteous living.

Gen 2:24

I Cor 6:20

Eph 4:33-24

Mt 19:5-9

I Pet 2:24

2 Cor 6:14-18

Rom 6:13

Gal 5:22-23

Rom 12:1-2

Deut 11:19

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

The Scriptures teach that the church, the Lord's body, is a spiritual family unit composed of all believers who have been obedient to the Gospel call and are walking daily in the Lord's love and light. Fellowship is extended to believers who have conformed their lives to God's will, as revealed through the Holy Scriptures.

Through commitment to purity of doctrine and faith, we strive to enhance the unity of this body of believers. We endeavor to avoid destructive divisions but instead to be of one mind, one spirit, one heart, and one body, as we follow Christ Jesus and glorify God, our Creator.

Following the example of our Lord Jesus, we exercise brotherly love, compassion, and forgiveness, which is the bond that binds us together and is the evidence that God lives in us.

Through continual mutual encouragement, we seek to be like-minded, united in spirit and purpose, humbly serving God. Because Christ died for all, we are forbearing and do not judge our brother in disputable matters, rather we practice Godly constraint, esteeming our brother in honor.

Eph 4:14-16	Col 3:12-14	I Tim 4:1-7	I John 4:1	Matt 7:15-20
Jn 13:34	Col 2:4-8	Rom 15:5-6	Rom 16:17-18	Phil 2:1-3
II Pet 2:1-3	I Cor 1:10	I Jn 1:6-7	Rom 14:1-13	Jude 3-4
Eph 4:3				

FORCES OF DARKNESS

We believe that Satan and his angels are real and active today. They seek to destroy our lives by tempting us to make choices that damage our relationship with God. His continual desire is to bombard the human soul and tear our families and our faith away from God.

Satan is the father of lies. He even lies through others by saying that God is not real and therefore Satan is not real. He is a master at deceiving each one of us. We are more vulnerable to Satan's deception than to any of his other schemes. When he tempts us, we usually know it, but when he deceives us, we don't always realize it. Satan's gradual deception and transformation of our minds through television, movies and other media have caused our world to accept divorce, homosexuality, abortion and materialism as acceptable change. Satan has gradually convinced us that some sins are now acceptable.

Satan will use his influence in any way possible to attack the Lord's church. He is the author of division and disunity among Christians. He delights when we argue among ourselves. He wants us to worship in ways that please us and are not authorized by God's word and he delights when we are uncertain about our beliefs.

Satan's influence on earth will end at the final judgment. Satan is destined to final defeat at the hands of God's own Son and to the judgment of an eternal Hell, a place prepared for Satan and his angels.

God has not left us here to face Satan alone. God offers us protection and hope. He hears our prayers and has encouraged us to put on the full armor of God to help stand against the devil's schemes and trickery. He has provided us the security of his church and the help of fellow Christians to encourage one another.

Ezek 28:14-17	I Pet 5:8	Lk 22:31	Acts 13:10	II Cor 2:11
II Cor 11:13-15	I Thess 3:5	I Jn 3:8	I Thess 2:8-12	Rev 12:7-10
Eph 6:10-18				

ETERNITY IS REAL

God created each one of us in His image to exist forever. His desire is that all persons will accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior so that they can experience a wonderful eternal life by living with Him forever in Heaven.

God has prepared a place for Satan and his angels called Hell. It is the destiny of those who reject Jesus Christ and His teachings. It is a place of fire, torment and weeping and gnashing of teeth. Those who go to Hell will share the company of the wicked, most evil, perverted and cruel people who have ever walked on the face of this earth. It is a place that will forever be separated from God, full of total darkness. Those in Hell will forever be in the outer darkness.

God has also prepared a place called Heaven for those who accept Christ Jesus. The beauty and magnificence of Heaven will be far greater than any of our expectations. We will forever be in the presence of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit with no earthly sickness, no aches, no pains, no disease, no suffering, no tears, no worry, no evil and no Satan. Heaven will be a wonderful existence with God that will never end.

Since the ultimate goal of every Christian is to spend eternity with God in Heaven, it is the responsibility of each one of us to share the good news of Jesus with others. God wants everyone to be saved. He has enlisted each believer to help bring others into a right relationship with Him. Because the harvest is plentiful, we must focus more of our daily efforts to reach the unsaved.

Gen 1:27

Mt 25:31-46

Rev 20:15

Rev 21:4

Mt 22:13

Mt 9:37-38

Mt 28:19-20

Mk 16:15-16

Conclusion

In these brief statements, we speak of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit and their power to create us and the vast universe in which we live--unbelievably wonderful and complex yet elegantly simple. We speak of Almighty God, the source of all authority, who has revealed Himself with authority in the bodily revelation of His Son, the living Word, Jesus, to experience life as we do and show us how to live it right, as well as through the written word, the Bible. This remarkable Book so eloquently interweaves the story of God's infinite and unfailing love for us with the expectations He has for us to submit to His authority and His commands clearly revealing by word and example the consequences for those who do submit and for those who do not.

We speak of relationships with our fellowmen, our work, our beloved families, our brothers and sisters in the Lord's church and to our Father. We speak of His instruction to us about how to worship Him continually as we live our lives as well as when we assemble together to praise Him and edify each other. We speak of our charge to live holy, righteous lives transformed by

renewed minds and actively manifested in our family relationships as husbands love their wives as Christ loved His church, as men model the concept of fatherly love and providence as God loves us and as women embrace their unique and honored roles. We speak of the power of fellowship as we challenge, support and forebear with each other showing respect, compassion and esteem for each other with the goal of provoking each other to love and good works and living in the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

We speak of the reality of powerful forces of evil that seek to destroy our bodies and souls and Satan's deceptions that delude us into thinking that wrong is right and rational and that right is wrong and even dangerous. Finally, we speak of the reality of eternity. We believe in eternity and in God and in Heaven. We also believe in eternal torment and in Satan and in the reality of Hell. If Satan and Hell are not just as real as God and Heaven, there would be no need for the Bible to warn us, no need for atonement since there would be no adverse consequence of sin, no need for the church to stand against the forces of evil that seek to prevail against it and no need for the bodily sacrifice of God's only Son and the shedding the His atoning blood since sin would not matter.

This presentation has focused on the foundation of our faith and blessed assurance. Your shepherds desire your safety. We pray that you will study the manuscript of these presentations each word of which is grounded in the scriptures referenced. We pray that you will continue to feel safe under the leadership of this congregation and the commitment we have to following God's Word in ordering the affairs of our lives and of this church. But, the important issue at this moment is your soul's safety. We speak of great things--a mighty God, a loving Savior, an indwelling Spirit, a faithful fellowship, a victorious church and a real eternity. What really matters is you-- "Are YOU safe?" If you are not a redeemed Christian, you are not safe. If you have been redeemed, i.e., bought back by the atoning blood of Christ, but have sold out again to the wiles and the deceptions of a very real Satan, you are no longer safe. Do not be deceived—if you are not safe, you know it in your heart and mind. Your elders want you to be safe. We are accountable for your soul's safety. If you are safe, rejoice; but if you are not, you can find the safety that can only be found in having your sins taken away.