

# What We Believe

## *How we know God...*

We believe God can be known because He wants to be known. It is within His nature to know us and He has hard-wired us, in turn, to want to know Him. Ecclesiastes 3:11 tells us that God has set eternity in our hearts. Many people know a great deal about God without really knowing Him intimately and deeply. The brilliant J.I. Packer, long time Professor of Theology at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, once asked a series of great questions, “What were we made for? What aim should we set ourselves in life? What is the ‘eternal life’ that Jesus gives? What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight, and contentment, than anything else?” He answered with three significant words, “Knowledge of God.” (Packer, *Knowing God*, pg. 29) ***There are three fundamental ways we believe we can come to know God.***

First, God reveals Himself to people everywhere through ***observing His general revelation through creation.*** General revelation is simply the idea that God reveals Himself in a very generic way through what He has created. Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.” The Apostle Paul echoes that view in Romans 1:20, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made so that men are without excuse.” So, we can know God generally through looking long and hard at what God has created.

Second, we can know God more concretely ***through exploring His written Word, the Bible,*** and receiving it as the Holy Spirit teaches and enables us to understand it and live it out. The Bible is God speaking His truth to us in human words. We will talk more about the nature of Scripture in a moment (See ***What the Bible is...***). Through the Bible, we hear God’s articulate voice as we take the intentional time to listen to Scripture read, preached, and taught; as we read it for ourselves, study it, memorize it, meditate upon it, and obey it.

Third, we come to know God ***through embracing His special revelation, the Living Word, Jesus Christ.*** General revelation is helpful and it is true, but it is insufficient to bring us to the place where we can know that God put on flesh, lived among us, loved us, died for us on a cross for our sins, and triumphantly rose again. This third way of knowing God comes through looking carefully, respectfully, and obediently at the life of Jesus (John 1:1&12-14).

## *Who God is...*

We believe God is one being in three persons – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19; Acts 2:38-39; and 2 Cor. 13:14), co-existing in perfect community and harmony. All of creation finds its source in Him (Gen. 1:1; Job 41:11; Ps. 50:10-12; Jn. 1:1-2; and Rev. 4:11). He holds everything together and is in the process of redeeming everything (Col. 1:17 and Rom. 8:19-22). God loves us and longs for us to be in relationship with Him (1 Jn. 1:3). He is all knowing, all powerful, everywhere, and exists eternally (Exo. 3:14-15; Ps. 90:1-6; Isa. 40:13-14; 66:1; Rom. 11:33-36; and 1 Tim. 6:15-16).

## *Who Jesus is...*

We believe Jesus is “God in the flesh.” He existed in the beginning with God (Jn. 1:1 & 14). He was born of a virgin, lived without sin, died for our sin, rose again, and is Savior and Lord (Mt. 1:18-20; Lk. 2:11&52; 23:23-24; 23:53; Heb. 5:8-9; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; and Col. 1:15-20). He, alone, makes salvation possible (Acts 4:12). He ascended into heaven where He is now our high priest, intercessor, head of the Church, and has all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt. 28:18; Acts 1:9; Rom. 8:34; Col. 1:18; and Heb. 4:14-5:10). He will return for a second time, gather His followers, and judge those who have rejected Him (Mk. 13:32-37; Acts 1:9-11; Tit. 2:13; and Heb. 9:27-28).

## ***Who the Holy Spirit is...***

We believe the Holy Spirit is the active presence of God in the world, always seeking to glorify Jesus (John 16:13-15). He lives individually within those who believe in Jesus and corporately in the Church (1 Cor. 6:19 & 3:16-17). He convicts people of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come (John 16:5-15). He is our Comforter, Guide, Teacher, Helper, and the One who gives us spiritual gifts for service and changes us into the likeness of Jesus (Jn. 14:15-17; 15:25-26; Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:1ff; 1 Cor. 12:1-11; and 2 Cor. 3:18).

## ***Who people are...***

We believe all people were created in the image of God (Imago Dei). Every person, from the moment of life, is in the image of God and therefore, someone to be loved, nurtured, protected, and developed. All people are precious in His sight, but sin has now separated all of us from Him (Isa. 53:6; 64:6-7; Rom. 3:23; 5:12-21; 6:23; and 1 Jn. 1:8). Faith in Jesus, based on what He did for us at the cross, is the only way for people to be reconciled with God (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:8-12; and Rom. 3:25-26). Salvation, offered through Jesus is based on grace, and not merit. We cannot save ourselves (Eph. 2:8-9). God offers this salvation to every person. We are free to accept or reject His salvation gift (Jn. 3:16-18; 1 Tim. 2:3-4; and 2 Pet. 3:9). Faith in Jesus calls for yielding and conforming our lifestyle to His will (repentance and obedience). Baptism, as an act of faith, by immersion, demonstrates our response to God's gift (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:26-38; Rom. 6:1-4; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:11-12; and 1 Pet. 3:21). Anyone who is a born again child of God (experienced a second birth – Jn. 3:1-18) has the firm assurance and living hope that they will spend eternity with God in the new heaven and the new earth (1 Pet. 1:3-12; 1 Jn. 5:11-13; and Rev. 21:1-4).

## ***What the Bible is...***

We believe the Bible, the Old and New Testament Scriptures, is the uniquely inspired Word of God (2 Tim. 3:14-17 and 2 Pet. 1:15-21). It is the rule of faith and practice for Christians. It is without error or contradiction. We seek unity in matters of faith, freedom in matters of opinion, and love in everything (Jn. 13:34-35). It is through Scripture that we know God's will and Christ's authority. The Bible accomplishes all that God intends for it to accomplish (Isa. 55:10-11; Jer. 20:9; and Heb. 4:12).

## ***What the Church is...***

We believe the Church is the body of Christ on earth, His Bride, and the community of believers throughout the world (Eph. 4:4-6; 5:22-33; Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-30; and 1 Tim. 3:15). The local church is the hope of the world. When anyone surrenders by faith to Jesus, that person is added to His Church. In addition, when anyone is added to Christ's Church, he or she becomes a part of the priesthood of all believers. This implies that every Jesus-follower is now a serving minister in and through the church (1 Pet. 2:9-10). The Church's supreme mission is to make disciples (Mt. 28:18-20) and its cultural mandate is to care for the world God has created (Gen. 1:26 and 2:15). Membership at Garden City Church of Christ is extended to anyone who is a member of Christ's Church. This means anyone who is a member at GCCC has accepted God's salvation gift in Christ by faith. We simply seek to follow this expression of faith, as we understand it, in the New Testament:

- Believe and Confess Jesus as Lord and Savior (Acts 16:31 and Rom. 10:9-10).
- Repent (Mt. 4:17 and Acts 3:19).
- Be baptized by immersion (Mt. 3:13-17 and Acts 2:38-41).
- Grow in Christ (2 Cor. 10:15; Eph. 4:16; 1 Pet. 2:2; and 2 Pet. 3:18).

## ***How believers promote unity...***

We believe that Christians are discouraged from bringing civil lawsuits against other Christians or the church to resolve personal disputes. We believe the church possesses all the resources necessary to resolve personal disputes between members (1 Cor. 6:1-8; Eph. 4:31-32).

## ***What the Church does...***

We believe that God has given the church a great commission to proclaim the Gospel to all nations so that there might be a great multitude from every nation, tribe, ethnic group, and language group who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. As ambassadors of Christ we must use all available means to go to the foreign nations and not wait for them to come to us (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:20).

## ***The Church and the future...***

We believe in that *blessed hope*, the personal, imminent return of Christ (Ps. 89:3-4; Dan. 2:31-45; Zech. 14:4-11; 1 Thess. 1:10, 4:13-18; Titus 2:13; Rev. 3:10; 19:11-16; 20:1-6). This congregation also believes in the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:46; John 5:28, 29; 11:25-26; Rev. 20:5-6, 12-13). We believe that the souls of the redeemed are, at death, absent from the body and present with the Lord, where in conscious bliss they await the first resurrection, when spirit, soul, and body are reunited to be glorified forever with the Lord (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; Rev. 20:4-6). We believe that the souls of unbelievers remain, after death, in conscious punishment and torment until the second resurrection, when with soul and body reunited, they shall appear at the Great White Throne Judgment, and shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, not to be annihilated, but to suffer everlasting conscious punishment and torment. (Matt. 25:41-46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:19-26; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Jude 6-7; Rev. 20:11-15).