

Starting Point

Church on a Hill | Lilburn, GA
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churchonahill.com

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Part One



THE CHURCH: Identity and Beliefs

WELCOME!

We're so glad you've chosen to join us for our Starting Point Lunch. Whether you're brand new or have been attending for a while, the purpose of this time is simple: to help you get to know who we are as a church and what it means to become a fully committed member here at Church on a Hill.

During this lunch, we'll walk through our mission, our beliefs, and what it looks like to follow Jesus together as part of a healthy, growing church family. We know people come from all kinds of church backgrounds—or no background at all—so we'll start with the basics: what is the church, and why does it matter?

WHAT IS A CHURCH?

Before we talk specifically about our church, let's start by clarifying what we mean by the word "church." The word comes from the Greek word *ekklēsia*, which means "assembly" or "gathering." That means a church is not a building—it's a body of believers who meet together regularly.

But a church isn't just any group of Christians hanging out. It's a local assembly of saved and baptized believers who gather regularly to worship and live in committed relationship with one another. They encourage, challenge, pray for, and serve one another. They share the physical bread of communion and the spiritual bread of Scripture together.

The church isn't a human invention—it was established and organized by Jesus himself. And its purpose? To be his hands and feet on earth, continuing his mission to advance the kingdom of God, push back darkness, and bring transformation through the power of the gospel.

Hebrews 10:24-25 - And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Acts 2:42 - They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

WHAT IS DISTINCT ABOUT *OUR* CHURCH?

Now that we've defined what a church is in general, let's take a moment to talk about what makes our church unique. While we share many core beliefs with other Christian churches, there are a few key things that shape who we are and how we function.

In short, Church on a Hill is an autonomous, congregational, doctrinally Baptist, and cooperative church.

Let's break that down:

1. We are an autonomous church.

Many churches today are members of a denomination to whom they are accountable and by whom they are ultimately controlled. Autonomous churches, on the other hand, are completely self-governed, operating independently from any other church or denomination.

Church on a Hill is an independent body of believers accountable directly to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the church. No religious hierarchy outside of our church dictates our beliefs or practices, but rather all human authority for governing our church resides within our church itself.

2. We are a congregational church.

In a congregational church, the gathered membership itself holds the ultimate governing authority, as opposed to one specific leader or even a board. At Church on a Hill, while pastors play a vital role in leading the church, the ultimate decision-making authority is held collectively by the entire congregation.

This collaborative decision-making process involves regular congregational meetings where members actively participate in discussions, voting, and leadership involvement.

3. We are a doctrinally Baptist church.

What this means, first and foremost, is that the Bible is our supreme authority on all matters relating to faith and practice. We do not hold the words or teachings of any Pope, creed, or even our own pastors, above the words of Scripture.

It's important to recognize, however, that many non-Baptist churches share our view on the authority of Scripture yet may differ in some of their doctrinal positions. In other words, Baptists are not the only Bible-believing Christians.

While we can regard many of these Christians as our brothers and sisters in Christ, a certain level of doctrinal harmony must exist for practical unity in worshipping and collaborating on mission together.

For this reason, our church adheres to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 as our shared confession of faith. This document was crafted to allow room for respectful differences in non-essential doctrines but to maintain specificity on matters crucial to our worship and beliefs.

Subscribing to this common confession of faith not only allows those who wish to join our church know clearly where our church stands but also enables us to collaborate seamlessly with other like-minded churches on mission. This doesn't mean that you personally need to subscribe to every tenet of Baptist doctrine to be a member of our church. It does mean, however, that all teaching, preaching, and leadership within our church will align with Baptist doctrine.

For your convenience, we have included the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 for you in the Appendix.

4. We are a cooperative church.

Though our church is autonomous, we freely choose to cooperate and strategically partner with other churches all around the world in agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. While some Baptist churches choose to be completely independent, we believe that we can do more together by partnering with others like-minded churches around us to better reach our city and world for Jesus.

As a member of the Southern Baptist Convention, our church regularly contributes to the Cooperative Program, a channel through which Southern Baptist churches pool their financial resources to fund various mission endeavors, theological education, and other cooperative initiatives.

Every year, we allocate a designated percentage of our general budget to this program, allowing us to play a vital role in advancing the Kingdom of God on a global scale. We also participate annually in promoting the Annie Armstrong Easter offering, supporting church plants here in North America, and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, supporting missionaries across the world.

Finally, we don't just give to missions, but we also actively engage in mission trips and other cooperative events with the SBC, amplifying our impact for the Kingdom through hands-on involvement and collaboration.

WHO IS *OUR* CHURCH?

Church on a Hill is a community of Jesus-followers in Lilburn, united by a shared commitment to love Jesus, love one another, and push back darkness in our city and our world.

Our members come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, but we proudly stand together as one family—finding our unity not in preference or personality, but in the person and blood of Jesus Christ.

In Part Two, we'll take a closer look at our church's mission, values, and strategy, and what it really means to be a member here at Church on a Hill.

Part Two



THE CHURCH:

Mission and Membership

WHY DO WE EXIST?

Just before Jesus returned to Heaven, He gave His followers a clear mission—His final instructions and the blueprint for what the church is meant to do:

Matthew 28:19-20 - Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age.

At the heart of the church's mission is one clear calling: to make disciples of Jesus.

A disciple is someone who is led by Jesus, listens to his Word, and learns to live like Him. And while only Jesus can save a soul, the church has been entrusted with the responsibility—and the incredible privilege—of pointing people to Him and helping them follow his way.

OUR MISSION

We live in a world that feels increasingly cold and confused—where it's hard to know who to trust or what's really true. But over 2,000 years ago, Jesus boldly declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life.

He gave His life for us—dying in our place—and rose again three days later. And now, He offers mercy and eternal life to all who believe and trust in Him.

So here's how we define our mission:

We exist to help people **find truth** and **experience mercy** in Jesus.

In today's culture, many churches boldly proclaim truth but struggle to embody mercy. Others excel at extending grace but shy away from hard truths.

At Church on a Hill, we are committed to both. We want to be a church that teaches and lives out both the truth and mercy of Jesus—because that's exactly who He is.

John 1:14 - The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of *grace* and *truth*.

Ephesians 4:15 - Instead, speaking the *truth* in *love*, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

HOW DO WE CARRY OUT OUR MISSION?

Our mission statement answers the foundational question: *Why do we exist?*

But it doesn't yet answer the practical question: **How will we accomplish it?**

To fulfill our mission of helping people find truth and experience mercy in Jesus, we hold to five core values and follow a five-part strategy. These values and this strategy work hand-in-hand to shape everything we do as a church.

OUR CORE VALUES

These are our mission non-negotiables—the convictions we refuse to compromise in pursuit of our mission. They guide our decisions and fuel our daily actions.

1. It's all about **Jesus**, *not us*.
2. We do **life together**, not just church.
3. We are **participants**, not just spectators.
4. We make **disciples**, not just converts.
5. We **send**, not just assemble.

OUR STRATEGY

To live out those values and carry out our mission, we pursue five clear, intentional actions as a church. Our strategy is to create opportunities for people to:

1. **Worship** together at a *Gathering*.
2. **Connect** to community in a *Group*.
3. **Serve** Jesus and each other on a *Team*.
4. **Grow** in your faith through a *Class*.
5. **Go** down the street and across the world on a *Mission*.

WHY CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

In response to growing skepticism toward institutions, some churches today have moved away from the practice of formal church membership. But we believe meaningful membership still matters—and here's why:

1. Church membership makes your commitment to Jesus and His people visible.

It's one thing to say you love God and value the church—but membership gives you a tangible way to express that love and commitment.

Throughout the New Testament, we see no category for a Christian who isn't meaningfully connected to a local church.

Matthew 16:18-19 - On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

1 John 2:18-19 - They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.

2. Church membership gives you a voice and a role in the life of the church.

As a member, you're invited to voice your concerns, vote on important matters, and serve in leadership roles within the body.

Membership helps safeguard the spiritual integrity of the church by ensuring that those shaping and leading the church are faithful followers of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 6:14-15 - Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness . . . Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever

2 John 1:10-11 - If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take them into your house or welcome them. Anyone who welcomes them shares in their wicked work.

3. Church membership helps the church guard the peace and purity of the church.

In Matthew 18, Jesus gives clear instructions for handling conflict within the body of Christ. When private efforts at reconciliation fail and there is ongoing, unrepentant sin, He instructs us to “tell it to the church.”

But without a clear understanding of who is the church—who is truly committed and accountable—it becomes difficult to apply this teaching in any meaningful or orderly way.

Membership provides the structure needed to carry out Jesus’ commands, helping us pursue both relational peace and doctrinal purity together. It enables Christians to live out the biblical call to accountability within a church community.

Matthew 18:17 - If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

1 Corinthians 5:12-13 - What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked person from among you.

4. Church membership opens the door to intentional care, encouragement, and support for your walk with Jesus.

Christianity is not just a *private* relationship with Jesus—it’s a *personal* one that is meant to be lived out in community with God’s family.

Membership is about mutual commitment: A church commits to care for the life of a believer, and the believer commits to walk faithfully with that church.

Hebrews 10:24-25 - And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.

Acts 2:42 - They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

WHAT ARE MEMBERSHIP EXPECTATIONS?

Every meaningful club or organization that requires membership expects something of its members.

In the same way, church membership comes with shared expectations and commitments—not as a burden, but as a joyful part of belonging to a gospel-centered community.

Our membership expectations are simple and clear. They're outlined in the membership covenant below:

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

Having been brought by God's grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and having been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as profession of our faith, and being in agreement with and desiring to support this Church's mission, doctrine, and leadership, we now enter into covenant with this church family.

In doing so, relying on His gracious aid, we solemnly and joyfully commit ourselves to God and to one another to do the following:

- We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:23-25).
- We will pray for and submit to the leadership of this Church (Heb. 13:17-18).
- We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry and the expenses of the church (2 Cor. 9:6-7, 2 Cor. 8:1-5).
- We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1-3).
- We will, when we move from this place, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word (Acts 18:27-28).

READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

We would be **honored** to have you join our family through church membership. There's no secret handshake or special ritual to join—just three simple steps:

1. Affirm our membership covenant
2. Allow us to confirm your profession of faith in the gospel and your baptism
3. Be publicly affirmed as a member at the end of a Sunday worship gathering

While anyone is welcome to attend our services, join in our ministries, and grow with us, only those who believe and trust in the gospel of Jesus for salvation can become members of the church.

Because of this, part of our membership process is a personal interview with one of our pastors. This conversation helps ensure that, before becoming a member, you truly understand, believe, and have responded to the gospel according to Scripture.

We don't assume that all churches teach the gospel faithfully—or that everyone who identifies as a Christian has truly understood and embraced the good news of Jesus.

That's why Part Three of these notes walks through the gospel and the biblical response to it. You're welcome to read through this on your own in preparation for your membership interview—or if you'd prefer, one of our pastors would be happy to walk through it with you.

Whether you've followed Jesus for decades or are just beginning your faith journey, the next step is simple:

We'll schedule a **membership interview** where you can talk with a pastor about your faith, ask any questions you may have, and explore what it looks like to take this next step.

In just a moment, we'll pass out a response card. Please check all boxes that apply to you, write clearly, and return the card to the class leader before you leave today.

Thank you so much for being part of this Starting Point class!

Whether or not you decide to pursue membership today, we're truly honored that you gave us your time. If you have questions about our church, our beliefs, or the next step in your faith—we're here for you.

Part Three



THE GOSPEL: Identity and Reponse

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The gospel is the core of who we are and all we do as a church. The word *gospel* literally just means *good news*. But it's not just any good news. It's the good news of the redemption and recreation of mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Let me explain all that using three circles.

Circle 1: God's Design

We see beauty, purpose and evidence of design all around us. The Bible tells us that God originally planned and created a world that worked perfectly, where everything and everyone fit together in harmony. God made each of us with a purpose, to extend his glory and to enjoy his gifts.

Genesis 1:27-28 - So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 1:31 - God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.



However, life doesn't work when we ignore God and His original design for our lives.

Humans selfishly insist on doing things our own way. The Bible calls this **sin**. We all sin and distort the original design for our lives and for this world.

We tend to blame the evil in our world on others around us, but the reality is that the evil in our world is *in us* and *because of us*.

After the very first humans, Adam and Eve, sinned and were kicked out of paradise and communion with God, every human since has followed in their footsteps and is guilty of breaking God's law.

The consequence, or the penalty, of sin is **death**. This means both *physical* death but also *spiritual* death, or what the Bible calls the second death.

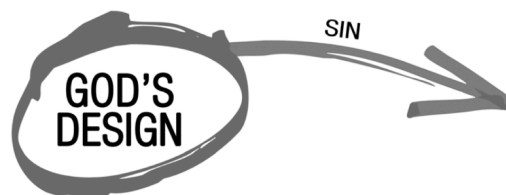
Physical death means that our souls are separated from our bodies. Spiritual death means that our body and souls are separated from God, in this life, and for all of eternity.

Genesis 2:17 - But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.

Romans 5:12 - Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.

Romans 3:23 - All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death.



Circle 2: Brokenness

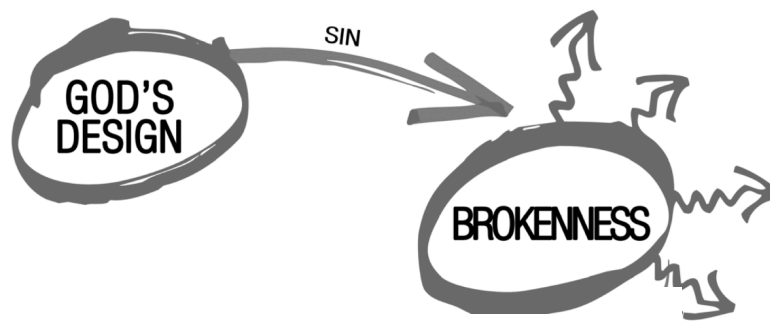
Sin leads to a place of brokenness. When we look at the world we live in, we only see remnants and shadows of the beautiful work which God designed and intended for us to enjoy. Sin is the cause of the brokenness in the world all around us and the brokenness in our own lives as well.

Whether or not we admit that we are a part of the problem, when we realize that life is not working, we begin to look for a way out. The brokenness in us and around us leads us to a place of realizing our need for something greater.

We tend to go in many directions trying different things to figure out how to fix the brokenness. What are some different ways that people try to either fix or escape this brokenness?

Romans 1:25 - They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served something created instead of the Creator.

Proverbs 14:12 - There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.



Circle 3: Gospel

At this point, we need a remedy, some good news. This is precisely the good news that God gave to us the Bible and the church to tell us about.

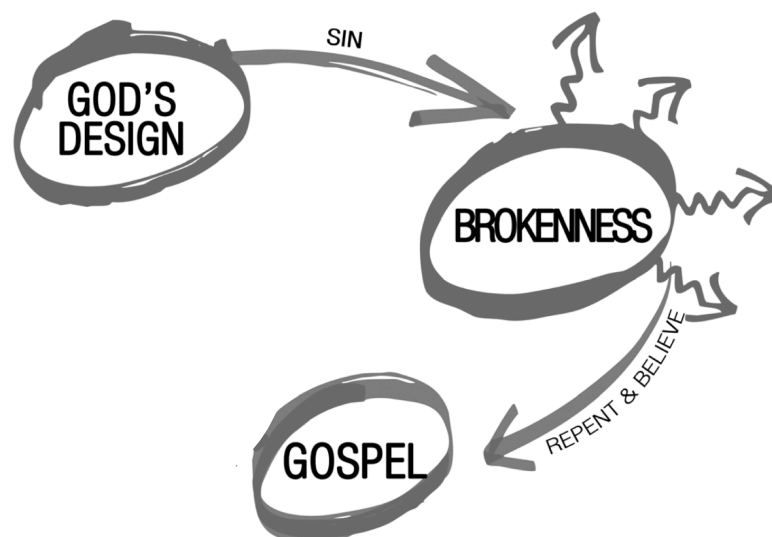
The gospel, meaning "good news," is that, because of His love for us, God did not leave us alone in our brokenness to get out of it on our own.

But Jesus, God himself, entered into human flesh nearly 2,000 years ago, being born of a virgin so that he did not inherit and share our sin nature. He lived perfectly according to God's design, healing the sick and broken, and declared that God was coming back to reign and rule as King on the earth once again.

But sin so hardened us against God that we rejected and killed Jesus, crucifying him on a bloody cross. Yet this was Jesus's plan all along.

Jesus came to rescue us, to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. He did this by taking our sin to the cross with him, nailing it to the cross, thus paying the penalty of our sin in full by his death.

After three days, Jesus then rose from the dead to provide the only way for us to be rescued from sin and death. By rising from the dead, he conquered sin and death once and for all, so that all who are in him may also have power over sin and the grave and live forever with him.



Romans 5:8 - But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 Peter 3:18 - For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

Colossians 2:14 - Having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

RESPONDING TO THE GOSPEL

The gospel is the good news of the salvation of humanity through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God himself come down in human flesh.

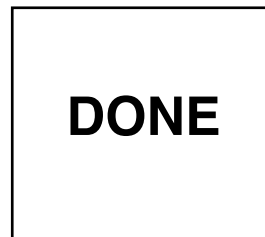
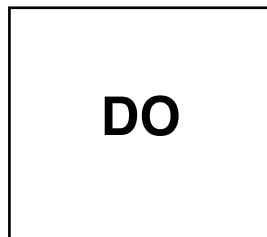
Jesus's death is good news because, by dying our death for us, he paid the penalty for our sins in full and then rose from the dead so we too can defeat death and live again with him for eternity.

But the question is: *what now?* If Jesus died for the sins of all humans, then are all people saved now automatically? Or is there something that we must do in response to what Jesus did?

DONE, NOT DO

For many, the natural response to what Jesus did on the cross for them is to want to do their part, pay their fair share, and earn their way into God's favor.

Perhaps our thinking here has been influenced by other world religions, even some that claim to follow Jesus. The truth is, you can categorize every single religion in the world into one of two basic categories: *do* or *done*.



The *do* religions say that if you **do** (fill in the blank) then God will accept you. If you are spiritual or religious enough, if you treat others right, or if the good you do outweighs the bad, then God will be pleased with you.

The fact is that every major religion in the world can be put into this category *except* for true Christianity. Each has a different name for God and a different list of rules to follow, but they all teach that in order to be accepted by God, you must *do* something.

However, the gospel does not demand that we *do* anything to earn our salvation. In fact, there is nothing we can do to earn God's favor and merit our own salvation.

And the good news of the gospel is that we *don't have to*! True Christianity teaches that everything that was necessary for our salvation was already **done** by Jesus on the cross and at the tomb.

Isaiah 64:6 - All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.

Ephesians 2:8-9 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

According to Scripture, nobody is good enough to merit God's favor and earn their salvation. So the question is, how do people attain salvation from Jesus? What is the proper response to the gospel according to Scripture?

In short, there is an inward response and an outward response.

INWARD RESPONSE: REPENTANCE AND FAITH

Simply hearing this good news is not enough, but like any gift, we must receive it. As our three circles illustration demonstrates, the only way escape our brokenness and receive God's free gift of salvation through the gospel is to *repent* and *believe*. These are not two separate actions, a step one and step two, but rather two sides of the same coin.

To **repent** means to turn around or change directions. This emphasizes from what we are turning, including our sin, unbelief, and anything else in life that we idolized or looked to for salvation. To **believe**, or to have faith, is more than just a general belief in God, but it is to trust in Jesus and his finished work on the cross alone for salvation.

Repentance and faith in Jesus are the one and only means to salvation. The moment we sincerely repent and believe in Jesus, we receive eternal life in Jesus, are adopted into the family of God, and made forever citizens of God's Kingdom.

Mark 1:14 - "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Acts 3:19 - Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out.

John 1:12 - Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

John 3:16 - For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

OUTWARD RESPONSE: BAPTISM

While repentance and faith are inward, invisible responses to the gospel, Jesus prescribed baptism as the initial sign to visibly express our repentance and faith in Him. Baptism is our public pledge to God of faith and obedience to Him, that we are trusting in Him alone to save us and that He is now the Lord of our life.

When we are immersed into the water, we are identifying with Jesus's death and recognizing that the old us is now dead. When we rise from the water, we are claiming that we too have been raised with Jesus to life eternal and have been made new by Him.

Baptism is not a magical ritual which grants salvation to those who are dunked. Rather, baptism is like a wedding ceremony. You can technically get married without having a wedding, but this usually only happens under special circumstances. If you truly love and are unashamed of the one you are to marry, you would desire to publicly declare your love and commitment to them with all of your friends, family, and the whole world.

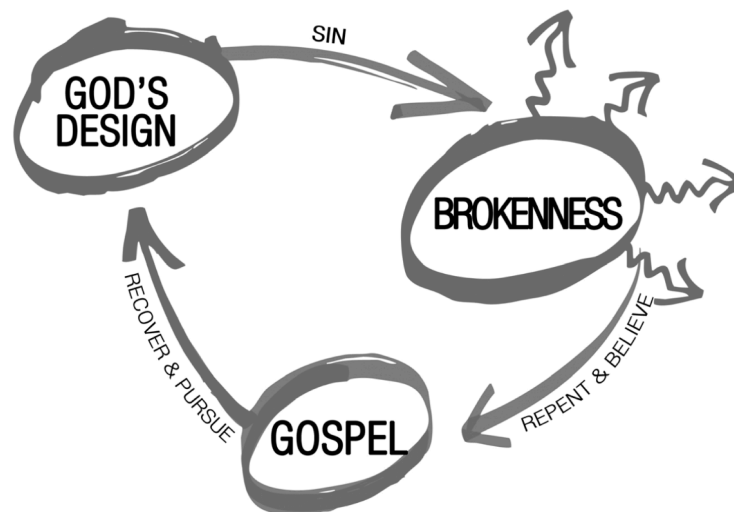
Likewise, you can technically be saved and not be baptized, but this usually only happens under special circumstances (i.e. thief on the cross; saved on death bed). If we truly love and are unashamed of Jesus, we should desire to publicly declare that through baptism.

On the cross, Jesus said "I do" to you, publicly declaring his love and commitment to you. Faith is us declaring "I do" back to Him in our hearts and minds, repentance highlights our future exclusivity towards Jesus as our Lord, and baptism is the wedding ceremony, the setting where we publicly declare for all to hear that Jesus is our Lord and Savior now and forever.

Acts 2:38 - Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

1 Peter 3:21 - And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Acts 22:16 - “And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.”



FULL CIRCLE

The gospel is about more than God giving humans a free ticket to Heaven. Yes, Jesus died so our relationship with him would be restored and that we would be reconciled to him.

But salvation is also about God restoring and recreating that which was broken by sin, fashioning it again in his image.

The kingdom of God is not just where believers will one day go after death. It's what Jesus inaugurated here on earth in his life, death, and resurrection and is continuing to build right now in and through the lives of his followers to push back spiritual darkness, reclaim the world for himself, and recreate it again according to his design.

Whereas sin marred God's image in us and led to us to abuse God's grace, the gospel allows us to recover and pursue God's design for our lives and in our world.

When we repent, believe, and are baptized, God recreates us into his image so we can rightly represent him, properly enjoy the good gifts he's given to us, and live out our true meaning and purpose in this world.

Luke 17:20-21 - Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed . . . because the kingdom of God is in your midst."

Romans 6:3-4 - Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

2 Corinthians 5:17-18 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

FAITH WORKS

Living according to God's design as his ambassador isn't something we have to guess at how to do. God gave us Scripture, not only so we can know him and live with him forever in Heaven, but also so we can know how he has designed us to live while here on earth.

Following God's design, or what Scripture calls doing "good works," doesn't earn us God's favor or merit salvation. But that doesn't mean that good works are unimportant for followers of Jesus. No, we are not saved *by* good works. But we are saved *for* good works.

In other words, salvation isn't just about *transference* to Heaven upon death, but also being *transformed* into a proper citizen of Heaven until death. Paradise, what Adam and Eve had in the garden of Eden, and what the kingdom of God is restoring, is not just about *where* we are but also *who* we are, or what God makes us.

Faith "works" in that it alone justifies us before God. But faith also "works" in that it demonstrates itself by works. Christians don't do good works to be accepted by God; we do good works because we are *already* accepted by God and seek to live for the purpose for which he created us.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

James 2:17-18 - Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.

Ephesians 2:8-10 - For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Romans 4:4-5 - Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.

So what do I do now?

Again, there's nothing you need to or can *do* to be saved from your sins. Rather, we receive God's gift of salvation by believing in what Jesus did for us on the cross and in the tomb and trusting in him alone to save us.

There are no magical words to pray, aisle you must walk, altar at which you must kneel, or hand you must shake in order to receive Jesus as your Savior. It's an inward response of the head and heart that we express by being baptized into Christ.

If you have yet to repent and believe on Jesus for salvation, consider what is holding you back, and what are the consequences for either rejecting God's gift or remaining in indecision. If you repent and believe, but have yet to be baptized, we would be thrilled to talk with you about getting you scheduled to be baptized.

If you still have questions, that's okay too! This is a big decision. In fact, *it's the biggest decision of your life!* We don't want you to make any decision simply out of feeling pressure from us. If you would like, consider this the beginning of a conversation rather than the end of one, and know that we are here to help you and walk alongside you in this journey.

Appendix



The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 *Our doctrinal statement of faith*

I. The Scriptures

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.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

II. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

A. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11.; 20:1.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

Genesis 18:1.; Psalms 2:7.; 110:1.; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1- 20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

C. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12;

24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

III. Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

V. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its two scriptural offices are that of pastor/elder/overseer and deacon. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

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.

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

VIII. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

IX. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

X. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the

earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

XI. Evangelism and Missions

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.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

XII. Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

XIII. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

XIV. Cooperation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such

cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

Exodus 17:12; 18:17.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

XV. The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16, 43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

XVI. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the

practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

XVII. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

XVIII. The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.