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# NARRATIVE COMMENTARY

*On The ACOP Statement of Faith*

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# INTRODUCTION

Statements of faith are designed to be a succinct listing of the core tenants of faith of a church or religious body. By reading a statement of faith it is usually possible to quickly determine which theological “camp” the religious entity is part of.

What statements of faith say are important, but what they don’t say is often equally important. Statements of faith often use very nuanced theological language to describe a particular view on theological matters.

While we may understand what a statement of faith says, they can often leave us wondering what they mean. The Narrative Commentary on the ACOP Statement of Faith is designed to help you understand what we mean.

This narrative commentary is not designed to replace the statement of faith, but rather it is a document to use alongside the statement of faith for a fuller understanding of what ACOP believes.

In the Narrative Commentary, we provide a brief explanation or expansion on our statements of faith. We have also provided key scriptures from which the particular tenant of faith is drawn and for some points we have included a “For Further Study” section in which we have listed other resources that may be helpful in exploring the topic further.

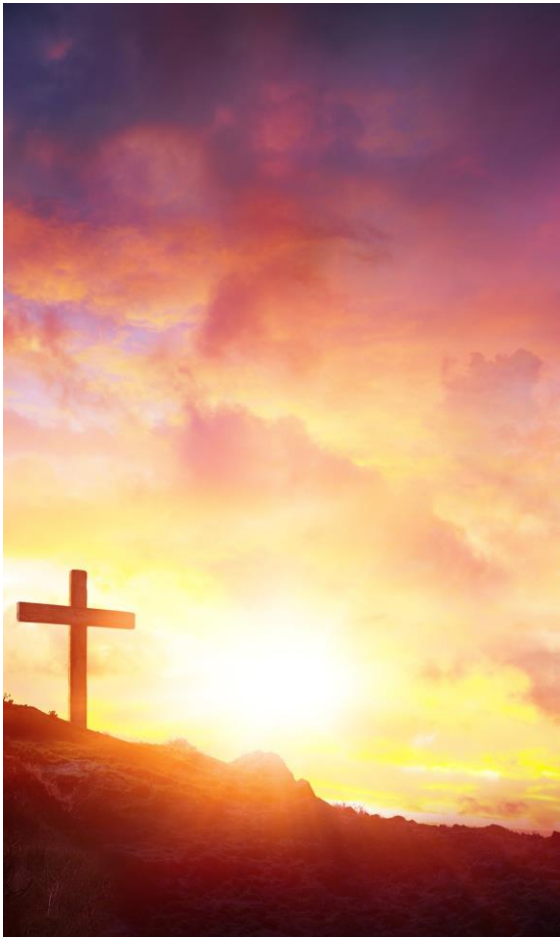
Finally, I want to acknowledge the assistance of Rev. Nik Amodeo in preparing this document. Nik’s theological precision and clear communication have made the Narrative Commentary a useable tool.

Wes Mills  
President

September 2021



# THE APOSTLES CREED



I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord.

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into Hell [1]; the third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic [2] Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

[1] Hades

[2] Universal



# STATEMENT OF FAITH

## WE BELIEVE THAT:

The Bible is the inspired, infallible, authoritative written Word of God.

In the eternal existence of one true God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In the Savior of men, the Lord Jesus Christ, conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, very God, and very man.

In the creation, test, and fall of man, as recorded in Genesis; his total spiritual depravity and inability to attain to divine righteousness.

That forgiveness of sin and eternal life is freely offered to all by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Salvation of sinners is by grace through faith alone, in the perfect all-sufficient work of Christ, who died for our sins, was buried and rose again the third day for our justification.



In Water Baptism of believers by immersion in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Baptism with the Holy Spirit as an experience subsequent to salvation with the scriptural evidence; namely, speaking in tongues.

In the gifts of the Holy Spirit as enumerated in the book of Acts and the Epistles.

In the Lord's Table as a memorial for believers.

In Divine Healing as practiced throughout the New Testament.

In the eternal life of the believer and the eternal punishment of the unbeliever.

In the Spirit-filled life. The Holy Spirit is the catalyst for sanctification and seeks to produce His fruit in the believer's life as their minds are renewed and they are conformed to the image of Christ.

In the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His Church.

In the sanctity of marriage, as a lifelong exclusive commitment between one man and one woman.

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"In the eternal existence of one true God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."



## WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

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A Statement of Faith is a helpful document which quickly summarizes the key truths, essential beliefs, and important marks of identity for a community of believers. By examining a church or denominational statement of faith one can locate that community's theological tradition and emphases.

The Apostles Creed, which originated in the first century, is one of our earliest known traditions similar to this modern idea of statements of faith. For centuries the Apostles Creed, and others after it, have provided a foundation from which to articulate, teach, and uphold Christian orthodoxy. It remains a unifying standard for congregations around the world today.

Although the Apostle's Creed is an excellent summary of foundational Christian beliefs, most Christian traditions and denominations seek to summarize the same core biblical beliefs in language that suits their context, while also highlighting special emphases. Our ACOP statement of faith illustrates a strong commitment to the core biblical beliefs of the Christian faith. This document provides short summaries of our key beliefs, a range of biblical references for each, and recommended reading. It also defines our identity as Evangelical and Pentecostal believers.



# "THEOLOGICAL TRIAGE"

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In this document, we believe it is important to outline which beliefs are essential and which express our Fellowship's particular doctrinal distinctives. The following terms from Rev. Dr. Al Mohler's article on "Theological Triage" clarify the difference between essential beliefs and supporting doctrines: [1]

- ♦ **Dogma or core beliefs.** These are the critical points of Christian orthodoxy: the beliefs that make one a Christian. These are the **essential, 'first-order' fundamental truths** of the faith. To deny these is to deny the Christian Faith. To hold these beliefs means that one is a disciple of Christ—e.g.: biblical authority, Trinity, Jesus' incarnation, atoning death, and historical resurrection, etc.
- ♦ **Doctrine or Denominational Distinctives.** These are **important 'second-order' beliefs** and concepts that shape our understanding and are often central to the identity of that particular Christian tradition. Various Christian groups may differ on these matters, and still hold one another as fellow Christians, but will likely not be affiliated with the same denomination. This is where the majority of church splits and denominational disagreements occur. Some will hold that 'second-order' doctrines are actually of 'first-order' importance, leading to all kinds of debate—e.g.: the mode, method, and meaning of water baptism, baptism in the Holy Spirit, etc.
- ♦ **Personal Beliefs.** These are **'third-order' ideas**. Believers may differ over these and still remain in close fellowship, even within the same local congregation. (e.g.: sequence of 'end times' events).
- ♦ **Personal Preferences.** These are **merely one's opinions** or cultural norms. Included in this area are things like worship style, dress codes, and local customs for that particular congregation or individual.

[1] R. Albert Mohler Jr., "A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity", <https://albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity>; Internet, accessed 12 May 2020.

# "THEOLOGICAL TRIAGE"

## CONTINUED...

Many theological debates arise because of where a particular group 'orders' their beliefs. Is one's stance on the ordination of women a first-order essential belief, or a second-order denominational distinctive? Is it a first-order essential belief to understand the resurrection as a historical reality, or is it passable to think of the resurrection as a spiritual analogy and still truly be a Christian believer? What about one's approach to the Bible? Baptism? Spiritual gifts?

It's important to articulate which beliefs are essential, and which, however important and dearly held, are 'second' or 'third-order' doctrines.

When conflicts arise, we do well to remember what is of primary importance and what is not. Doing so articulates biblical faithfulness and helps us to function together in unity. Furthermore, it allows one to identify areas of continuity and discontinuity with other Christian traditions.

### **Twin Errors: Theological Liberalism & Theological Fundamentalism**

The ACOP statement of faith affirms our core beliefs. It also illustrates how we are neither theologically liberal nor fundamentalist in approach. We consider both extremes to be dangerous. As Mohler notes in his article:

The error of theological liberalism is evident in a basic disrespect for biblical authority and the church's treasury of truth. The mark of true liberalism is the refusal to admit that first-order theological issues even exist. Liberals treat first-order doctrines as if they were merely third-order in importance, and doctrinal ambiguity is the inevitable result.

Fundamentalism, on the other hand, tends toward the opposite error. The misjudgment of true fundamentalism is the belief that all disagreements concern first-order doctrines. Thus, third-order issues are raised to a first-order importance, and Christians are wrongly and harmfully divided. [2]

Within ACOP we want to remain biblically faithful and avoid the twin errors of theological liberalism and theological fundamentalism. We recognize a diversity of thought and opinion within our fellowship at the level of personal beliefs and even second-order doctrines. That said, we are bold to proclaim our commitment to the essential tenets of Christian faith and life: those core beliefs which the Church has passed down through the centuries.

In today's cultural climate, this stance may be seen as 'traditional', 'conservative', and 'evangelical'. Whatever the label, our commitment is to Jesus Christ and our aim is to hold true to the orthodox confession of the historic Christian church and the inspired revelation of God's Word in Holy Scripture.

[2] Ibid.

## WE ARE EVANGELICAL & PENTECOSTAL:

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The terms 'Evangelical' and 'Pentecostal' can be prone to vague definitions. We will remedy that here.

'Evangelicalism' is perhaps best described by David W. Bebbington who identifies four main qualities which embody evangelical convictions and attitudes. [3]

- ♦ **Biblicism:** a particular regard for the Bible—e.g. as the source of essential truth.
- ♦ **Crucicentrism:** a focus on the atoning work of Christ on the cross.
- ♦ **Conversionism:** the belief that human beings need to be converted.
- ♦ **Activism:** the belief that the gospel needs to be expressed in effort.

Therefore, as Evangelicals we believe:

- ♦ **The Bible is God's Word:** our authority in all matters of faith and life (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
- ♦ **Jesus died on the cross and rose again to save us from sin and death** (John 3:16).
- ♦ **Christ invites all to repent and believe in Him to receive forgiveness and salvation** (1 Jn 1:9).
- ♦ **We are called to share the good news of God's love in Jesus with the world** (Matt. 28:16-20).

Pentecostalism is a modern, charismatic, renewal movement with its own distinct practices and doctrine—specifically an emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, and the gifts of the Spirit. It is a movement which transcends denominations and has global Influence. Pentecostalism is restoring the experiential dimension of the Spirit's presence to a significant segment of the worldwide church. [4]

[3] Bebbington, David W. (1989). *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*. London: Unwin Hyman. pp. 2–17. See also: Noll, Mark A. (2003). *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press. p. 19.

[4] John W. Wyckoff (Ph.D., Professor of Bible and Theology, Chair, Church Ministries Division at Southwestern Assemblies of God College), *Systematic Theology*, Chapter 13 "The Baptism in the Holy Spirit", Logion Press, 1995, p. 454.

# WE ARE EVANGELICAL & PENTECOSTAL:

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Therefore, as Pentecostals we believe:

- ♦ In the experience and presence of God the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the church. Biblical Christian faith is not just intellectual or ritual but includes a dynamic relationship with the Living God who dwells within us (1 Cor. 3:16, 2 Cor. 6:16, Ezek. 36:27).
- ♦ In the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11, Acts 2:38), and in spiritual gifts as described in the New Testament (1 Cor. 12-14, Eph. 4:11-13).

Our Evangelical and Pentecostal heritage and culture is evident in how ACOP has articulated its Statement of Faith and theological emphases.

## **Putting It All Together**

In the following pages, you will find a brief summary for each of our core beliefs and doctrinal distinctives. Each point is provided with relevant scripture passages and suggested reading for those interested in studying further.

Our hope and prayer is that this project will help bring increased clarity as we articulate our core Evangelical and Pentecostal emphases and embark on our second century as a Christian movement.

As a fellowship of churches, from a variety of cultures, backgrounds, and experiences, we are united in our thoroughgoing commitment to the core essentials of the Christian faith, our salvation in Jesus Christ, our life in the Spirit, and our calling to extend grace and ignite hope in Canada and around the world.

## BIBLE CITATIONS, DISCLAIMER & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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### **English Standard Version (ESV)**

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

### **New International Version (NIV)**

Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

### **New Living Translation (NLT)**

Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

### **For Further Study:**

A variety of books have been suggested as helpful for further reading or research in each of the following sections. Please note that these books and their authors are not officially endorsed by ACOP, nor do they necessarily reflect the official position of ACOP.

# THE BIBLE, GOD'S WORD

(CORE BELIEF)

The Bible is God's divinely inspired written revelation of who he is and what he has done in redemptive history. It is true, powerful, authoritative, and life-giving: a sure foundation for understanding God and living in Him.

## Key Scriptures:

### Deuteronomy 6:6-7 (ESV)

6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

### Psalms 19:7-9 (ESV)

7 The law of the Lord is perfect,  
reviving the soul;  
the testimony of the Lord is sure,  
making wise the simple;  
8 the precepts of the Lord are right,  
rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the Lord is pure,  
enlightening the eyes;  
9 the fear of the Lord is clean,  
enduring forever;  
the rules of the Lord are true,  
and righteous altogether.

### 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

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

### Proverbs 2:1-5 (ESV)

2 My son, if you receive my words  
and treasure up my commandments with you,  
2 making your ear attentive to wisdom  
and inclining your heart to understanding;  
3 yes, if you call out for insight  
and raise your voice for understanding,  
4 if you seek it like silver  
and search for it as for hidden treasures,  
5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord  
and find the knowledge of God.

## For Further Study:

- Scott R. Swain: "10 Things You Should Know about Systematic Theology." Crossway Articles. Oct. 8, 2017: [crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-systematic-theology](https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-systematic-theology); Accessed Jan. 8, 2020.
- Kevin DeYoung: Taking God at His Word: Why the Bible Is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What That Means for You and Me. Crossway Books, 2016.
- Richard Foster: Life with God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Transformation.
- Eugene Peterson: Eat this Book.
- Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart: How to Read the Bible for All its Worth.
- Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart: How to Read the Bible Book by Book.
- Phillip Comfort: The Origin of the Bible.
- Stanley Grenz & Roger Olson: Who Needs Theology?
- Stanley Grenz: Theology for the Community of God, 379-403.
- J. Scott Duvall & J. Daniel Hay: Journey into God's Word: Your Guide to Understanding and Applying the Bible.

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"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching..."

# THE TRIUNE GOD OF GRACE

(CORE BELIEF)

We believe in One True Living God, revealed in the Bible as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is the source of life and being. He reveals himself relationally to be holy, good, loving, and faithful. He is transcendent—above and other than creation—yet also immanent—active and present to his creation. God lacks nothing and is, in Himself, a perfect community of self-giving love.

ACOP denies both tritheism, “a distorted belief in three different Gods” [5] and modalism, a trinitarian heresy that does not view the Father, Son, and Spirit as ‘persons in relation’ but merely as three modes of the one divine person of God. [6] We affirm the historic Christian confession of the Trinity—one God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

## Key Scriptures:

### John 1:1-5, 14 (ESV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

### Genesis 1:1 (ESV)

1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

### Deuteronomy 6:4 (ESV)

4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

**See also:** Isaiah 57:15; John 20:21-22; Galatians 4:4-6; Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:1-2

[5] Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki & Cherith Fee Nordling, Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), s.v. “tritheism”, 116.

[6] Ibid., s.v. “modalism”, 79.

## For Further Study:

- ♦ Simon Chan: Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life, 40-55.
- ♦ Eugene Peterson: Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places.
- ♦ Stanley Grenz: Theology for the Community of God, 27-122.
- ♦ Philip Graham Ryken & Michael Lefevre: Our Triune God: Living in the Love of the Three-in-One, 2011
- ♦ Phillip Yancey: What’s So Amazing About Grace
- ♦ Randy Alcorn: Hand in Hand - The Beauty of God’s Sovereignty and Meaningful Human Choice
- ♦ Jerry Bridges; The Discipline of Grace: God’s Role and our Role in the Pursuit of Holiness

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"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."



# HUMANITY'S PURPOSE, CREATION, AND FALL

(CORE BELIEF)

We believe that humanity was created by God and made in his image. [7] To bear God's image means that we are called to live and work in participation and faithful loving communion with God. To bear God's image also means that human beings have innate value, dignity, and worth. God's design is that humanity lives and dwells in harmony with God, one another, and his creation. We believe in the fall of humankind and that the reality of sin now plagues our world, separates us from God, and leads to both physical and spiritual death.

## Key Scriptures:

### Genesis 1:27-31 (NIV)

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." 29 And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

## Key Scriptures:

### Genesis 3:1-6 (NIV)

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

### Psalms 8:3-6 (ESV)

3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4 what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? 5 Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. 6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet.

[7] For more about image-bearing see Appendix



# HUMANITY'S PURPOSE, CREATION, AND FALL

CONTINUED...

## Key Scriptures:

### Romans 3:10-12 (ESV)

10 As it is written:

“None is righteous, no, not one;

11 no one understands;

no one seeks for God.

12 All have turned aside; together they

have become worthless;

no one does good,

not even one.

### Romans 3:23-24 (ESV)

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

See also: Romans 5:12-14; 1 John 1:8

## For Further Study:

- ♦ Simon Chan: Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life, 56-76.
- ♦ Stanley Grenz: Theology for the Community of God, 125-178 (on human nature), and 181-211 (on sin).
- ♦ John Walton: The Lost World of Genesis 1.
- ♦ Johnathan Wilson: God’s Good World.
- ♦ Kenneth Boa: Conformed to His Image

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"What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?"

# JESUS AND REDEMPTION

## (CORE BELIEF)

We believe Jesus Christ is the divine, incarnate Son of God, the Lord and Saviour of humanity, fully God and fully man. We believe that his life, death, resurrection, and ascension are historical events. He died for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day for our redemption.

We believe that salvation and eternal life are a gift we receive by grace through faith alone, through the all-sufficient atoning sacrifice of Jesus. When we repent, believe, and confess Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour we receive God's forgiveness. We are reconciled to God, freed from slavery to sin, adopted as his children, and made a new creation.

### Key Scriptures:

#### John 1:1-5, 14 (ESV)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

#### Colossians 1:15-20 (NIV)

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

### Key Scriptures:

#### Romans 10:9 (ESV)

9 If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

#### Romans 5:8, 10 (ESV)

8 God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 10 For 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.

#### Ephesians 2:8-10 (ESV)

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

**See also:** John 3; Romans 5; Galatians 4; Ephesians 1

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### For Further Study:

- Stanley Grenz: Theology for the Community of God, 243-255.
- Gordon. T. Smith: Beginning Well.
- Mary L. Coloe: God Dwells With Us.
- Luke Johnson: The Writings of the New Testament.
- Phillip Yancey: The Jesus I Never Knew

# THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

(DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIVE)

We believe in the indwelling, empowering, and sanctifying presence of God the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. The Spirit is the catalyst for our spiritual formation in Jesus, cultivating Christ-like living. He grows in us a desire to love God and love one another, to grow in prayer, scripture, and spiritual practice, to seek compassion and justice for the poor and oppressed, and to embark on the mission to make disciples as we share the Gospel.

## Key Scriptures:

### On the Holy Spirit:

#### John 14:16-18 (ESV)

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. 18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

#### Acts 1:8 (ESV)

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."

#### Acts 2:2-4 (ESV)

2 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance...

**See Also:** Ezek 36; Titus 3:5; Acts 1-2, Rom 8:9-10.

## Key Scriptures:

### On the Christian Life:

#### Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

#### 2 Timothy 1:9 (ESV)

9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.

#### Ephesians 4:32 (ESV)

32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

#### Matthew 28:19 (ESV)

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.

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"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..."

# THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

CONTINUED...



## For Further Study:

- ♦ Stanley Grenz: *Theology for the Community of God*, 357-376, 405-458.
- ♦ Gordon Fee: *Paul, the Spirit & the People of God*.
- ♦ Gordon Fee: *God's Empowering Presence*.
- ♦ Richard Foster: *Celebration of Discipline*.
- ♦ N. T. Wright: *After You Believe*.
- ♦ Ken Shigematsue: *God in my Everything*.
- ♦ Mark Buchanan: *The Rest of God*.
- ♦ Ruth Haley Barton: *Sacred Rhythms*.

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Be kind to one another,  
tenderhearted, forgiving  
one another, as God in  
Christ forgave you.

# THE CHURCH, THE PEOPLE OF GOD

## (DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIVE)

The Church is the missional, discipling, Spirit-filled, people of God—worldwide and centuries-deep—who, together with Christ our Head, are one Body tasked with the call to proclaim and live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ in love.

### Key Scriptures:

#### **Ephesians 2:14 (ESV)**

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.

#### **Ephesians 4:4-6 (ESV)**

4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

#### **Ephesians 4:15-16 (ESV)**

15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

#### **Colossians 1:18 (ESV)**

18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

#### **1 Corinthians 12:13 (ESV)**

13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

#### **Ephesians 1:22-23 (ESV)**

22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

### Key Scriptures:

#### **Ephesians 2:19 (ESV)**

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

#### **Acts 20:28 (ESV)**

28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

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### For Further Study:

- Stanley Grenz: Theology for the Community of God, 461-505
- Ross Hastings: Missional God, Missional Church.
- Leith Anderson: Dying for Change
- Rick Warren: Purpose Driven Church
- Alton Garrison: A Spirit Empowered Church

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"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."

# WATER BAPTISM

(DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIVE)

Baptism is an outward expression of an inward work of the Holy Spirit. Baptism doesn't make you a follower of Jesus, but it publicly identifies you as one. Water baptism by immersion is the biblical method of baptism because it symbolically represents the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

As Jesus concluded his earthly ministry, he authorized the Disciples to make disciples through baptism. Throughout the book of Acts, we find the Disciples fulfilling this command of Jesus.

When the Disciples directed people to be water baptized, they were proclaiming that they had been authorized by Jesus to baptize new disciples.

## Key Scriptures:

### Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

### Acts 2:38 (NIV)

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.

### Romans 6:4 (ESV)

4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

## Key Scriptures:

### Colossians 2:12 (ESV)

Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead

### Colossians 3:17 (ESV)

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**See Also:** Acts 8:12,16; Acts 10:48; Acts 19:5; Acts 22:16

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"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

# THE LORD'S TABLE

## (DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIVE)

On the night that Jesus was betrayed He instituted a sacrament that we call the Lord's Table. This practice is also known as the Lord's supper, the last supper, holy communion, and the eucharist.

We believe that the elements of communion are symbolic representations of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. This meal was established as a commemorative act to remember the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross. Believers are to prepare for communion by examining themselves before partaking. The Lord's table is also a time for us to ensure we are in right relationship with our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

By participating at the Lord's table, we also proclaim our belief in the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Key Scriptures:

#### Luke 22:14-20 (ESV)

Institution of the Lord's Supper

14 And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. 15 And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." 17 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. 18 For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." 19 And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 20 And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

#### 1 Corinthians 10:16 (ESV)

16 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

### Key Scriptures:

#### 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (ESV)

23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

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### For Further Study:

- Stanley Grenz: Theology for the Community of God, 511-540.
- N.T. Wright: The Meal Jesus Gave Us.
- Gordon T. Smith: A Holy Meal.
- Gordon T. Smith (Editor): The Lord's Supper: Five Views

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And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."



# BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS

(DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIVE)

We believe our journey in Christ begins when the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our human spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is an experience subsequent to salvation, with the scriptural evidence, namely, of speaking in tongues.

We believe that spiritual gifts such as healing, prophecy, and tongues, are still an important part of the Church's life and witness for ministry today. The Spirit gives these gifts to present-day believers just as they were given to the early church.

## Key Scriptures:

### Romans 8:9 (ESV)

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact, the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

### 1 Corinthians 12:4-14 (ESV)

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. 12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. 14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many.

## Key Scriptures:

### Acts 8:14-17 (NIV)

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. 15 When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

### 1 Corinthians 12:27-31 (ESV)

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

**See also:** Acts 19; 1 Corinthians 13-15.



# BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS

CONTINUED...



## For Further Study:

- ♦ Stanley Grenz: Theology for the Community of God, 27-122.
- ♦ Gordon Fee: International Commentary on New Testament - I Corinthians
- ♦ G.S. Mclean: On the Baptism of the Holy Spirit
- ♦ Jack Hayford: The Gift of Tongues - The Beauty of Spiritual Languages
- ♦ William Menzies & Robert Menzies: Spirit and Power - Foundations of Pentecostal Experience
- ♦ R.T. Kendall: 40 Days with the Holy Spirit

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"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you."

# SOCIAL ISSUES: THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE & MARRIAGE

(CORE BELIEF)

Our understanding of the Christian faith in Christ as revealed in the Bible compels us to uphold the following truths: We uphold the sanctity of marriage as a lifelong exclusive covenant commitment between one man and one woman.

We believe in the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death, and therefore do not participate in or support the practices of abortion, euthanasia, or physician-assisted suicide.

## Key Scriptures:

### Genesis 1:26-27 (ESV)

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

### Psalms 139:13-16 (NLT)

13 You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb.  
14 Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.  
15 You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.  
16 You saw me before I was born.  
Every day of my life was recorded in your book.  
Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

### Exodus 20:13 (ESV)

13 "You shall not murder.

## Key Scriptures:

### Ephesians 5:25-33 (ESV)

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

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## For Further Study:

- ACOP White Paper on Human Sexuality
- Mark Mittelberg: The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask (With Answers).
- Stanley Grenz: Welcoming but not Affirming.
- Stanley Grenz: Sexual Ethics.
- Wesley Hill: Washed and Waiting

# CHRIST'S RETURN, THE RESURRECTION, AND THE CONSUMMATION OF ALL THINGS

(CORE BELIEF)

We believe in the personal, visible return of Jesus Christ; the bodily resurrection of the just and unjust; the eternal life of the believer, and the eternal punishment of the unbeliever.

We believe in the consummation of God's Kingdom fully arriving with the New Heavens and New Earth when the redeemed will live in resurrected bodies, in a new transformed creation, and God himself will dwell with us.

## Key Scriptures:

### Isaiah 26:19 (ESV)

19 Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise.  
You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!  
For your dew is a dew of light,  
and the earth will give birth to the dead.

### Isaiah 65:17 (ESV)

17 "For behold, I create new heavens  
and a new earth,  
and the former things shall not be remembered  
or come into mind.

### Ecclesiastes 12:14 (ESV)

14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

### Romans 8:19-21 (ESV)

19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

## Key Scriptures:

### Matthew 25:46 (ESV)

46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

### Revelation 21:1-4 (ESV)

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

**See also:** 1 Cor 15:12-22; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev 21 & 22.

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## For Further Study:

- Stanley Grenz: Theology for the Community of God, 571-658.
- N.T. Wright: Surprised by Hope.
- Richard Baxter: The Saints' Everlasting Rest.

## APPENDIX:

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### On 'image-bearing':

"Image-bearing" is ancient, near eastern, premodern temple language. In pagan temples, the deity would have a graven image or idol which represented the deity and which worshippers would work to 'animate' to fill with the 'breath' of their deity.

The idol is to 'image forth' the deity in a tangible way, and also 'gather' the worship of the devout unto the deity. This background information is helpful for interpreting the image-bearing passages in Genesis. Rather than positing a graven image in his creation-temple, Yahweh molds human beings, both male and female, to be his living image-bearers in his creation.

Amazingly, God fills his image with his own very life-giving breath (Hb. ruah or 'spirit', 'wind'). Thus, to be an image-bearer is to be truly alive and truly human in God! Our calling to 'be fruitful and multiply', and to fill the earth and 'keep it' means that our calling as image-bearers is to live out the character of God, his love, compassion, justice, mercy, grace, kindness, etc. in his creation-temple.

We image forth God when we act with self-giving love in God's mission of culture-making: seeking the shalom and flourishing of the God-with-humanity project. It also denotes a priestly function: human beings are called to gather the praises of creation unto God. We should read the giving of the Holy Spirit in John and in Acts with this in mind: the Word of God, Jesus, breathes now the gift of the Holy Spirit into his new creation people (the church). This is an intentional echo to Genesis, and rich with meaning.

The Fall, understood in this context, is humanity's decision (both historically and ever since) to 'know good and evil'—which means not to image forth God's definitions of what is good and evil, but to seek to define good and evil according to our own desires and devices. In this way to 'eat the fruit of the tree' is a conscious decision we make to be in open rebellion against God and to seek to 'become like God', as the snake puts it, by usurping our God-given image-bearing status and seeking to be like God Himself: defining good and evil as we see fit.

To renounce our createdness and turn our backs on God as the source of life (this is to 'sin' or 'miss the mark') means we are set on a path to spiritual death. Thankfully, God, in His grace, has launched a rescue operation to restore his image-bearing cosmos-gardeners back to Himself, and reconcile all things through Jesus Christ.

Through his incarnation, Jesus becomes the perfect, sinless image-bearer Himself, who can pay the price for our sin, and ultimately defeat the power of death and Satan through his resurrection. It's little wonder then that we get reference to Mary mistaking the Risen Lord as a gardener—his resurrection is indeed the dawning of a new creation, and as mentioned already, he will soon fill his new people with his Holy Spirit: a direct echo of Genesis 1-2.