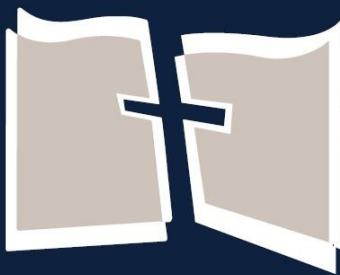


# What We Teach

A statement of Doctrine and Theology

West Chicago Bible Church  
West Chicago, IL

*Adopted June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017*



**WESTCHICAGO**  

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**BIBLE CHURCH**

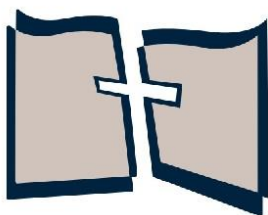
*All Scripture is breathed out by  
God and profitable  
for teaching,  
for reproof,  
for correction,  
and  
for training in righteousness,  
that the man of God may be  
complete, equipped for every good  
work,*

*2 Timothy 3:16-17*



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**WESTCHICAGO**  
**BIBLE CHURCH**

## PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

Through the generations, faithful men and women have studied the scriptures, set their minds on the precepts of God, and established guiding documents for the edification of the church and for the clarity of the doctrines of the faith. These documents, confessions, creeds, and decrees, when understood through the lens of the proper interpretation of scripture, have given the church a foundation by which regenerated children of God can systematically understand the "faith once and for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3)

Denominational Christianity has created a broad spectrum of differences in doctrine and practice, while also allowing those of varied conviction to make clear the essential doctrines of the faith that are required for salvation. Many denominations adopt their own guiding documents for the explicit purpose of uniting their local congregations under one confession or decree. Examples of this would be: The Westminster Confession of Faith, written in 1646 by the Westminster Divines, which today is upheld and taught by the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), The Baptist Faith & Message, written originally in 1925, revised in 1963 and again in 2000, which is the commonly adopted statement of faith for churches in the Southern Baptist Convention, as well as many others.

Because we belong to no denomination by which we may adopt the denominational confession or message of faith, it is incumbent upon the elders and members of West Chicago Bible Church (WCBC) to establish a clear and exhaustive declaration of doctrines, through our interpretation of the scriptures, so that the teachings of the church are clear in this generation and the next. It is the desire of the elders to record for current and future members of this congregation the beliefs, doctrines, and practices of this local church. This document is the manifestation of that desire.

The purpose and scope of this document is to clarify and further expound on the articles of faith, found in the church constitution, to provide clarity, depth, distinction, and overall guidance for the teaching, service, and ministry of the congregation of WCBC, both for our current generation, but also for those in the generations to come. We do not wish to supplant the authority or sufficiency of scripture for the guidance of the church. Instead, the intent is to soundly and clearly convey the doctrinal beliefs of this local assembly, that this document may serve as a guide for today, and for those who would come after us, to make resolute the interpretation of the scriptures and the teaching of the church.

To God alone be the Glory, as this local church seeks to faithfully interpret and live out the precepts of the Bible in faith and in practice.

The Elders of West Chicago Bible Church  
June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017



# WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN

Being a Christian is more than identifying yourself with a particular religion or affirming a certain value system. Being a Christian means you have embraced what the Bible says about God, mankind, and salvation.

We believe the following points are a necessary part of the beliefs of anyone who is a true follower of Jesus Christ.

**God Is Sovereign Creator.** Contemporary thinking says man is the product of evolution. But the Bible says we were created by a personal God to love, serve, and enjoy endless fellowship with Him. The New Testament reveals it was Jesus Himself who created everything. Therefore, He also owns and rules everything. That means He has authority over our lives and we owe Him absolute allegiance, obedience, and worship. (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Psalm 103:19)

**God Is Holy.** God is absolutely and perfectly holy, therefore He cannot commit or approve of evil. God requires holiness of us as well. First Peter 1:16 says, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (Isaiah 6:3; James 1:13)

**Mankind Is Sinful.** According to Scripture, everyone is guilty of sin: “There is no man who does not sin”. That doesn’t mean we’re incapable of performing acts of human kindness. But we’re utterly incapable of understanding, loving, or pleasing God on our own. (1 Kings 8:46; Romans 3:10-12).

**Sin Demands a Penalty.** God’s holiness and justice demand that all sin be punished by death: That’s why simply changing our patterns of behavior can’t solve our sin problem or eliminate its consequences. (Ezekiel 18:4)

**Jesus Is Lord and Savior.** The New Testament reveals it was Jesus Himself who created everything. Therefore He owns and rules everything. That means He has authority over our lives and we owe Him absolute allegiance, obedience, and worship. Romans 10:9 says, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.” Even though God’s justice demands death for sin, His love has provided a Savior who paid the penalty and died for sinners. Christ’s perfect life satisfied the demands of God’s holiness, Christ’s death satisfied the demands of God’s justice, thereby enabling Him to forgive and save those who place their faith in Him, and Christ’s resurrection conquered death so that all those found in him might hope in the resurrection to come (Colossians 1:16; Psalm 103:19; 1 Peter 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 3:26).

**The Character of Saving Faith.** True faith is always accompanied by repentance from sin. Repentance is agreeing with God that you are sinful, confessing your sins to Him, and making a conscious choice to turn from sin and pursue Christ and obedience to Him. It isn’t enough to believe certain facts about Christ. Even Satan and his demons believe in the true God, but they don’t love and obey Him. True saving faith always responds in obedience (Luke 13:3,5; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; Matthew 11:28-30; John 17:3; 1 John 2:3; James 2:19; Ephesians 2:10).

# THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

We teach that the Bible is God's written revelation to man. Therefore, the 66 books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit constitute the full and authoritative Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:7-14; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4).

We teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12-13; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

We teach that the Word of God is an objective and clear revelation, verbally inspired in every word, absolutely inerrant (without error) in the original writing, infallible (correct in every way), true in everything it proclaims, and, above all, God-breathed. (2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16)

We teach that God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit guided the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man without error in the whole or in the part (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21).

We teach the literal, grammatical, historical interpretation of Scripture, which means that in the original writings, the precepts of God are made clear, and they are binding upon humanity.

We teach that, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies sound, hermeneutical methods of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, and to recognize



that proper application is needed in each generation. The truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of what the truth of scripture is. (John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20)

## GOD

We teach that there is but one living and true God, an infinite, all-knowing Spirit, perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – each equally deserving worship and obedience, yet different in role and function. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 1 Corinthians 8:4; John 4:24; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

### *God the Father.*

We teach that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace. He is the Creator of all things. As the only absolute and omnipotent Ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption. His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. (Psalm 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9; Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36)

As Creator He is Father to all men, but He is spiritual Father only to believers. (This is explained in greater depth in the section titled: Salvation) (Ephesians 4:6; Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18)

He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass. He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events. In His sovereignty He is neither the author of sin, He does not give approval of sin, nor does He ever deny the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures. He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own; He saves from sin all who come to Him through Jesus Christ; He adopts as His own all those who come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (Ephesians 1:11; John 1:12; 1 Chronicles 29:11; 1 Peter 1:17, Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47; Ephesians 1:4-6; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5-9).

## ***God the Son.***

We teach that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine attributes, and in these He is coequal and coeternal with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9).

We teach that through Jesus Christ, God the Father created all things according to His own will, and through Jesus all things continue in existence and in operation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2).

We teach that in the incarnation (God becoming man) Christ surrendered only the exercise of certain attributes of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind. In taking on human flesh, the attributes of deity, while still present, were veiled in the finite nature of humanity. In His incarnation, the eternally existing second Person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God-Man. We hold this doctrine by faith, realizing that it is impossible to fully describe this divine truth in human words. (Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9)

We teach that, in the incarnation, the second Person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the fullness of coexistence with God , "emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men", yet never divesting Himself of His divine attributes (Philippians 2:5-8).

We teach that Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness, becoming God and man equally in the same moment of time. (Micah 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9-10; Colossians 2:9)

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born; that He was God incarnate; and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom (Isaiah 7:14;

Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26-35; John 1:1, 14; Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24).

We teach that on the basis of the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Romans 3:25; 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18; John 1:12).

We teach that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-31; Romans 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

We teach that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that God has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Jesus' bodily resurrection is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

We teach that Jesus Christ will return to receive the church, which is His Body, unto Himself at the rapture, will return with His church in glory, and will establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20).

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22-23):

- Believers (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10)
- Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (Matthew 25:31-46, 7:21-23)
- Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15)

We teach that as the Mediator between God and man, the Head of His Body the church, and the coming universal King, who will reign on the throne of David, Jesus is the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (1 Timothy 2:5; Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18; Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31-33; Matthew 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31; Matthew 7:21-23; John 3:17-19).

### ***God the Holy Spirit.***

We teach that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity, including intellect, emotions, will, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, and truthfulness. In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (1 Corinthians 2:10-13; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Corinthians 12:11; Hebrews 9:14; Psalm 139:7-10; Isaiah 40:13-14; Romans 15:13; John 16:13; Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17).

We teach that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will of God the Father in and through all mankind. We recognize His sovereign activity in creation, the incarnation, the written revelation, the work of salvation, and the work of sanctification (Genesis 1:2; Matthew 1:18; 2 Peter 1:20-21; John 3:5-7; Romans 15:15).

We teach that the work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost, when He came from the Father as promised by Christ to initiate and complete the building of the Body of Christ, which is His church. The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 14:16-17; 15:26; 1 Corinthians 12:13; John 16:7-9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers for service, and seals unto the day of redemption (1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13) those whom He graciously regenerates.

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher, who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible. Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21; John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 1 John 2:20, 27).

We teach that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

We teach, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today, and that the miraculous gifts of Jesus and the Apostles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth and as

builders of the church in the New Testament Era. Thus, these gifts were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers outside of this apostolic group. (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:1-4). (For further understanding of the gifts of the Spirit in the life of a believer, see heading entitled: "The Church")

## MAN

We teach that man was created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9).

We teach that God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God. In glorifying God, man will worship God in spirit and in truth, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and love his neighbor as he would love himself. (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11, Romans 12).

We teach that in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, mankind lost its innocence, incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death, became subject to the wrath of God, and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost. Man's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8).

We teach that, because all of humanity comes from Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all people of all generations, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All men and women are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12).



# SALVATION

We teach that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19; John 6:63-66).

*Regeneration.* We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given. It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God when a sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in repentance and faith to the divine provision of salvation by hearing the Word of God as revealed in the gospel message (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5; John 5:24; Rom 10:17; Matthew 4:17).

We teach that genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits in keeping with repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works are the proper evidence and fruit of regeneration, and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God. This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10; Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10; 2 Corinthians 3:18, Romans 12:1-2; Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3).

*Election.* We teach that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2).

We teach that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part or to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith, and all who come in faith the Father will receive (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17; John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8; John 1:12-13).

We teach that election should not be viewed as being based merely on abstract sovereignty, but upon the divine will in accordance with the purpose for humanity. God is truly sovereign, but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love. This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 9:11-16; Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9).

***Justification.*** We teach that justification before God is an act of God by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins and confess Him as sovereign Lord. This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us. By this means God is enabled to "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 8:33; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11; Romans 3:20; 4:6; Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 3:26).

**Sanctification.** We teach that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification, is therefore declared to be spiritually holy, and is therefore identified as a saint before God the Father and Jesus the righteous judge. This sanctification is fixed and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that there is also, by the work of the Holy Spirit, a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the fixed standing the believer enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17, 19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23).

We teach that, because sanctification is progressive, every saved person is involved in a daily conflict – the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh – but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. This struggle remains with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended, until the believing person dies and enters into the presence of Jesus, awaiting the final judgement of God. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. While complete removal of sin is not possible in the human flesh, the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9, 1 Corinthians 10:13).

**Security.** We teach that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever. (John 5:24; 6:37-

40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24).

We teach that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, and which is evidenced by the fruit of a redeemed life. (Romans 6:15-22; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, 25-26)

*Separation.* We teach that separation from sin is clearly called for throughout the Old and New Testaments, and that the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days apostasy and worldliness shall increase. (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

We teach that scripture clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (Titus 2:11-14; 2 Tim 1:7; 1 John 5:12-13).

We teach that separation from all religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God. We teach that all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate a lifelong pursuit of holiness, which proceeds from hearts full of joy and adoring love of God. We are to seek obedience to God's word, which is a product of continual adoration and praise, and to strive to never bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 12:1-2; Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11, Eph 4:1; 1 Tim 6:14).

We teach that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness that reflects the teaching of the Beatitudes and a continual pursuit of holiness (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-2; Matthew 5:2-12; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:1-10; 1 Peter 2:9-12).

## THE CHURCH

*Universal Church.* We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body, the church, the bride of Christ, of which Christ is the Head (1 Corinthians 12:12-13; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-8; Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18).

We teach that the purpose of the church is to glorify God by building itself up in the faith, by instruction of the Word, by fellowship, by keeping the ordinances and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world. The church accomplishes these means by regularly gathering together for worship and teaching, which serves to equip the saints for the work of ministry, both within the body and also in the world (Ephesians 3:21; Ephesians 4:13-16; 2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17; Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3; Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42; Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:42).

We teach that the formation of the church, the Body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

We teach that the church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in this present age. The church is distinct from Israel, a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 2:11-3:6; 1 Corinthians 10:32; Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32).

*Local Church.* We teach that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures and that the members of the one spiritual Body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (Acts

14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25).

We teach the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations. However, for the sake of advancing the gospel, it is appropriate and scriptural for true churches to cooperate with one another for the presentation and propagation of the faith. (Titus 1:5).

***Local Church Leadership.*** We teach that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereign providence, as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders (also called bishops/overseers, pastor/shepherds, and pastor-teachers) who must meet biblical qualifications. We teach that the office of elder is clearly given to qualified men who desire the task of oversight and teaching (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18; 1 Tim 5:17; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

We teach that deacons administer the service of the church, taking care of the needs of the congregation, and allowing the elders to devote themselves to the ministry of the Word and prayer. (Acts 6:4)

We teach that elders and deacons lead or rule as servants of Christ and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership as they submit to the authority of Christ and the scriptures (1 Timothy 5:17-22; Hebrews 13:7, 17).

We teach that each local church, through its elders and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should determine all other matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and

government. Elders are given the task of interpreting the scriptures, teaching the congregation, and defending the truth against false teachers and false teachings (Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Jude 3).

***Local Church Function.*** We teach the importance of discipleship, mutual accountability of all believers to each other, as well as the need for discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture. These practices are all possible through a sound commitment to the local church and the leadership of the elders. (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2; Matthew 18:5-14; Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16).

We teach the calling of all saints to the work of service, both within the local church for the sake of building up the body of Christ, but also in the world at large to serve “the least of these” (Matthew 25:40; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12; Revelation 22:12).

***Spiritual Gifts.*** We teach the need of the church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts, which includes some chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry, as well as giving unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:7-12; Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

We teach that there were two kinds of gifts given to the early church: *miraculous gifts (sign gifts, apostolic gifts)* of divine revelation and healing, given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles’ message; and *ministering gifts (equipping gifts)*, given to equip believers for edifying one another. With the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture becomes the sole test of the authenticity of a man’s

message, and confirming gifts of a miraculous nature are no longer necessary to validate a man or his message. Miraculous gifts are counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive even believers. The only gifts given today are ministering gifts given for the edification of the church, the body of Christ, which do not include divine revelation (Hebrews 2:3-4; 1 Corinthians 13:8-14:12; Revelation 13:13-14; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Romans 12:6-8).

We teach that no one possesses the gift of healing today, but that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1-6; John 5:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15).

**Ordinances.** We teach that two ordinances have been commanded to the local church:

**Baptism and the Lord's Supper** (Acts 2:38-42).

Christian baptism by immersion is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life. It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible Body of Christ (Acts 8:36-39; Romans 6:1-11; Acts 2:41-42).

We teach that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of Christ's death until He comes again, and should be always preceded by solemn self-examination. We also teach that, whereas the elements of Communion are *only representative* of the flesh and blood of Christ, participation in the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ, who indwells every believer, and so is present, fellowshiping with His people (1 Corinthians 11:28-32; 1 Corinthians 10:16; Luke 22:19-20).



## ANGELS

*Holy Angels.* We teach that angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they are created to serve God and to worship Him (Luke 2:9-14; Hebrews 1:6-7, 14; 2:6-7; Revelation 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9; Isaiah 6:1-7; Revelation 18).

*Fallen Angels.* We teach that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator, by taking numerous angels with him in his fall, and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:1-14; Genesis 3:1-15).

We teach that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man; that he is the prince of this world, who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isaiah 14:13-14; Matthew 4:1-11; Revelation 12:9-10; Romans 16:20; Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10; Job 1).

## LAST THINGS

*Death.* We teach that physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness, that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ, that there is a separation of soul and body, and that, for the redeemed, such separation will continue until the rapture, which initiates the first resurrection, when our soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord. Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 6:9-11; Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:21-24; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Revelation 20:4-6; Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35-44, 50-54; 2 Corinthians 5:8).

We teach the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (John 6:39; Romans 8:10-11, 19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:14; Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:13-15).

We teach that the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the second resurrection, when the soul and the resurrection body will be united. They shall then appear at the Great White Throne Judgment and shall be cast into hell, the lake of fire, cut off from the common grace of God forever (Luke 16:19-26; Revelation 20:13-15; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:11-15; Matthew 25:41-46, Rev 21:8; Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

*The Rapture of the Church.* We teach the personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ to translate His church from this earth and to reward believers according to their works (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Titus 2:13; John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-5:11; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

*The Tribulation Period.* We teach that the tribulation period of 7 years will be marked by the righteous judgments of God being poured out upon the world, and that these judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth. At that time the Old Testament and tribulation saints will be raised and the living will be judged. This period includes the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy. (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 9:27; 12:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 16; Matthew 24:27-31; 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Daniel 12:2-3; Revelation 20:4-6; Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24:15-31; 25:31-46).

*The Second Coming and the Millennial Reign.* We teach that, after the tribulation period, Christ will come to earth to occupy the throne of David and establish His messianic kingdom for 1,000 years on the earth. During this time the resurrected saints will reign with Him over Israel and all the nations of the earth. This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and by the removal of Satan from the world (Matthew 25:31; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 1:10-11; 2:29-30; Revelation 20:1-7; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Daniel 7:17-22; Revelation 19:11-16; Daniel 7:17-27; Revelation 20:1-7).

We teach that the kingdom itself will be the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel to restore them to the land that they forfeited through their disobedience. The result of their disobedience was that Israel was temporarily set aside, but will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Isaiah 65:17-25; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Zechariah 8:1-17; Deuteronomy 28:15-68; Matthew 21:43; Romans 11:1-26; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:22-32; Romans 11:25-29).

We teach that this time of our Lord's reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness, and long life, and will be brought to an end with the release of Satan (Isaiah 11; 65:17-25; Ezekiel 36:33-38; Revelation 20:7).

*The Judgment of the Lost.* We teach that following the release of Satan after the 1,000-year reign of Christ, Satan will deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city, at which time Satan and his army will be destroyed by fire from heaven. Following this, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, whereupon Christ, who is the Judge of all men, will resurrect and judge the great and small at the Great White Throne Judgment. (Revelation 20:7; Revelation 20:9; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10; John 5:22)

We teach that this resurrection of the unsaved dead to judgment will be a physical resurrection, whereupon receiving their judgment, they will be committed to an eternal conscious punishment in the lake of fire (John 5:28-29; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:11-15).

*Eternity.* We teach that after the closing of the millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers, the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved and replaced with a new earth, wherein only righteousness dwells. Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another. Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:7-15; 2 Peter 3:10; Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 20:15; 21:1-27; 22:1-21; Revelation 21:2; John 17:3; Revelation 21-22; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; 1 Corinthians 15:28).

## MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

We teach that the term “marriage” has only one meaning and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in scripture (Gen. 2:23–24).

We teach that as believers’ marriages are to illustrate Christ’s relationship with His church, believers should choose to marry those who share their faith and regenerate life (2 Cor. 6:14).

We teach that the marriages of believers are to illustrate the loving relationship of Christ and His church, with the husband loving his wife as Christ loves the church and the wife responding to her husband’s loving leadership as the church responds to Christ (Eph. 5:18–33).

We teach that marriage was given by God as part of His common grace, and that it has no meaning other than as He has provided. We teach that marriage is subject to the curse of the Fall, but that believers, living in obedience to the Scripture and under the control of the Holy Spirit, can begin to experience peaceful, productive, and fulfilled marriage as intended by God (Gen. 2:18–24; Gen. 3:16; 1 Peter 3:7).

We teach that marriage is always a public, formal, and officially recognized covenant between a man and a woman, and without such a covenant, no marriage exists.

We teach that “common law marriage,” is not equivalent to covenant marriage, even where valid in specific cases under pertinent law, and that prolonged conjugal cohabitation does not establish, and is not equivalent to, covenantal marriage. We teach that where no such covenant exists, or can be discerned, between a cohabiting couple

prior to coming to faith in Christ, family units should be preserved to the extent possible and, if otherwise appropriate, solemnization encouraged. We teach that where a valid marriage has been established prior to coming to faith in Christ, the couple should remain married (John 4:18; 1 Cor. 7:24).

We teach that God hates divorce, permitting it only where there has been unrepentant sexual sin or desertion by an unbeliever. We teach that remarriage is permitted to a believing partner, and only when the divorce was on biblical grounds. (Mal. 2:14-16; Matt. 5:32, 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:12-15)

We teach that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We teach that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman (Heb. 13:4).

We teach that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pedophilia, pornography, any attempt to change one's sex or disagreement with one's biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God (Lev. 18:1-30; Matt. 5:28; Rom. 1:26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1, 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:1-8).

We teach that the practice of homosexuality, in particular, is subject to God's wrath and abandonment, is a manifestation of original sin, is a matter of choice, and epitomizes man's ungrateful rebellion against God (Rom. 1:18-28).

We teach that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture or the doctrines of the church.

We teach that the faithful proclamation of the Scripture, including the call to repentance, does not constitute hate speech, or hateful and harassing behavior, but is instead a fundamental part of the church's loving mission to the world (Matt. 28:16-20; 2 Cor. 5:11-20; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 4:1-2).

We teach that God offers redemption and forgiveness to all who confess and forsake their sin, including sexual sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We teach that His forgiveness is total and complete and that God imputes the full righteousness of Christ to the believing sinner. We teach that the forgiven sinner has been cleansed from the guilt of sin, set apart unto God, or made holy, and justified before Him. We teach that any man or woman who has received that forgiveness is "in Christ" and is a "new creation" (Ps. 103:11-12, 130:3-4; Is. 43:25, 44:22; John 5:24; Col. 2:13-14; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:17).

## SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

We teach that children are a blessing from the Lord, known by God from before the beginning of human time and existence, formed by God in the womb of the mother, and created in God's image. Thus all human life is sacred and worthy of protection from the moment of conception. To destroy a human life, regardless of the developmental stage, is to commit murder, which is forbidden by God.

We teach that life begins at conception, and in this uniting a human life is formed. This new life has the same Imago Dei (image of God) of all other human beings, and thus has the same value as such in God's eyes. For this reason, we teach that any act which ends a human life in the womb is equivalent to ending a life outside the womb.

We teach that life has inherent, intrinsic value given by God from conception to end of life, and is specifically purposed for the glory of God alone in each and every facet.

We teach that "mercy-killing" and euthanasia are forms of murder, which take the life of another human outside of the will of God. We teach that each life, regardless of age, physical condition, disease, ailment, or aptitude, has value because of the image of God placed upon that life.

We teach that regardless of condition, the purpose of glorification of God still remains for each human being, and therefore is to be regarded as sacred until such time as God chooses to take away life in earthly form.

(Genesis 1:26-28; 2:24; Psalm 127 & 128; 139:13-16; Matthew 19:1-10; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:22-33; 6:1-2; Hebrews 13:4.)





