

explore the journey

crbc

5 Key Questions

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Explore the Journey

at **Council Road Baptist Church**

What is "Explore the Journey"?

This course is designed to be the first point of connection and exploration for those considering membership into Council Road Baptist Church. It also serves as a theological overview from which the life of our church springs. Content of this course includes the core values and doctrines of our church, with explanations of the scriptures, God, sin and the nature of humanity, salvation and the nature of the church. This class explores the basic doctrines of evangelical Christianity and serves as an explanation for those investigating Christianity as well as a training tool for Christians who want to have a better grasp of their faith and want to "be prepared to give an answer to everyone who wants to know the reason for the hope you have" (1 Peter 3:8).

Who should take "Explore the Journey"?

Explore the Journey is open to everyone. If this is your first week at Council Road, if you believe in Jesus or not, this introductory course is a great place to get started for those who are merely curious and for those who are excited to get connected.

We do ask that everyone who is new to CRBC to take the course to assess how they believe about the overarching issues of salvation, the scriptures and the nature of God, humanity and the church.

What if I want to become a member?

This course is strongly recommended for anyone who wants to become a member of CRBC. It is important that you have a broad picture of our theology before you begin your journey with us. Whether you are brand new to Christianity or have a masters of divinity, it doesn't matter, we seek to all be on the same page as we walk this road together.

What about the other "Journey" material?

It would be very helpful to anyone wanting to take the other journey courses to begin here with the "Explore" material. The other courses are best understood from the foundational context of our doctrines.

Becoming a member at Council Road Baptist Church

"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another." Romans 12:5

Council Road is a family of believers who are committed to loving people to Christ and helping them on their journey with God and others. In other words, we see our church as being on an exciting journey and inviting others to come with us. To begin this process, we encourage every new member to participate in our "Journey" courses offered four times a year:

Explore the Journey: This course is offered at our Newcomers Dinner on the first Sunday evening of each new term.* At this catered dinner at the CUBE, you will meet our staff and will be introduced into the life of our church. The course will cover some of the most compelling questions people have about Christianity. "Where did we get the Bible?", "How does God speak to us?", "Are there many roads to heaven?", "Is there a literal hell?" are just a few of the questions we will cover. The "Explore" material is great for people exploring Christianity, new believers and mature believers who want to learn how to answer questions from their unbelieving friends. This course is designed to explain the first 8 of our 24 essentials (the doctrines of our faith). There is a slight charge for the meal for our members, but non-members are our guests and will eat free. Please RSVP at 789-3175 or go to registration on this website. (Childcare available with reservation).

Discover the Journey: On the last Sunday of each term, we are offering a luncheon for everyone interested in learning more about CRBC. At this sack lunch event we will go over some material that explains 16 of the 24 essentials of our Christian walk (the first 8 are covered in "Explore the Journey"). We will talk about our "4 C" approach to missions (LP2C), what someone who is a follower of Christ looks like, why we do what we do at Council Road and where our money goes and how we make decisions as a Body. This course is strongly recommended for anyone wanting to join our church.

Join the Journey: Each term, new members are encouraged to join one of our "Join the Journey" community groups. This is a great way to meet new friends and to start your journey with us as a new member of Council Road. This group will go through a 42 day devotional book written by our pastor which will help you grasp the 24 essentials of our faith and the overall philosophy of the Council Road (LP2C) strategy. You will make great friends, and will have an opportunity at the end to decide for yourself how you want to "plug in" to the ministries of CRBC.

Membership at Council Road is accomplished in one of four ways:

- Accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior and being baptized by immersion
- If you have already accepted Jesus, but have not been baptized by immersion, then follow Him in believer's baptism
- Transfer of membership by letter from another Southern Baptist Church
- Statement of having previously accepted Christ and experienced baptism by immersion and becoming a member of another Baptist or Christ centered evangelical Church
- *Our Community Groups meet in four "terms" throughout the church year. The first term begins as our kids go back to school and ends at the fall break. The second term meets from after the fall break to the Christmas holiday. Our third term meets from the beginning of January to mid February. Our fourth term meets after spring break and ends before the summer break. For specific dates, download the schedule from the Community Group site.*

Nailing Down what Matters: Our 24 Essential Beliefs:

Essential Doctrines

Authority of the Scriptures I believe the Bible is God's word and has authority in my beliefs and actions (2 Timothy 3:16)

The Trinity I believe in God the Father and God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, the Three in One. (Hebrews 1:3)

The Nature of Humanity I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior. (1 Cor. 15:47-49)

Salvation and God's Purpose of Grace I believe one comes to a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8-9)

The Nature of the Church I believe the church is God's primary way of accomplishing His redemptive plan (Eph 4:15-16)

The Ordinances of Christ I believe that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two ordinances symbolizing God's work in my life and in the church and are important to my spiritual life and development. (1 Corinthians 11)

The Kingdom of God I believe in God's general sovereignty over the universe and His particular rule over those who accept Him as Lord. (1 Peter 2:4-10)

The Lord's Day I believe the first day of the week is resurrection day and a day to celebrate His rule in my life. (Exodus 20:8-11)

Essential Practices

Celebration (Worship) I worship God for who He is and for what He is doing in my life. (Psalm 95:1-7)

Bible Study I study the Bible to know God and His truth and to find direct application into my life. (Hebrews 4:12)

Community I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purpose for my life for others and for the world. (Acts 2:44-47)

Cause I believe that God has put me on this earth to love all people to Christ and to help them in their journey with God and each other. (Eph 6:19-20)

Serve I give my life away in order to accomplish God's purpose. (Romans 12:1)

Prayer I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life. (Ps.

66:16-20)

Tithe I give my tithe to accomplish God's purpose for my life. (2 Corinthians 8:7)

Spiritual Gifts I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes. (Romans 12:4-6)

Essential Virtues

Love I unconditionally and sacrificially love and forgive others (1 John 4:10-12)

Joy I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances. (John 15:11)

Peace I am free from anxiety because things are right with God, others, and myself. (Phil 4:6-7)

Patience I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life. (Prov 14:29)

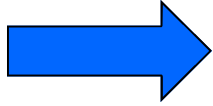
Kindness/Goodness I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others. (1 Thess 5:15)

Gentleness I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others. (Phil 4:5)

Faithfulness I have established a good name with God and others based on my long term loyalty to the relationship. (Proverbs 3:4-5)

Self Control I have the power, through Christ, to maintain control of myself. (Titus 2:11-13)

Key Question: Is the Bible the “Word of God”?



What we believe about the Scriptures

The key to understanding the scripture is to see them as REVELATION from God.

Rev' e. la' tion n. **The act of revealing; a dramatic disclosure of something not previously known or realized, especially by supernatural means.**

The New Testament speaks of the Old Testament as Scripture, for which the Greek word is graphe, meaning writing. The word “bible” comes from the Greek word for “book”. The Holy Bible means “Holy Book”.

It contains 66 separate books (39 in the OT and 27 in the NT), written in three languages (Hebrew Greek and Aramaic), over a period of more than a thousand years, by over 40 authors on three continents.

It was written by kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesman and scholars. The books cover history, sermons, letters, hymnbooks, and a love song. There are geographical surveys, architectural specifics, travel diaries, population statistics, family trees, inventories and legal documents. It covers hundreds of controversial subjects with amazing unity. It is the best selling book of all time, and is now available in 3000 languages.

The OT was written on papyrus (a form of paper made from reeds), the NT was made written on parchments (prepared animal skins). Because both forms of documents were easily degradable under hot and dry conditions, few original manuscripts could survive.

The scriptures are revelation, not merely inspiration

An objection raised about revelation

“God used human instruments to write down the scriptures we now have, doesn't this raise the possibility that there was error somewhere in the translation of these scripts?”

When we talk about scriptures as the revelation of God, we are saying that they have been revealed by God Himself.

In'sp –ra sh n n. **A supernatural influence that fills those who come under it to receive divine truths and communicate them to others.**

Read 2 Timothy 3:16

¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness....”

Ask Three questions:

1. What does this passage say is inspired?
2. How much of scripture is said to be inspired?
3. Who initiated the inspiration of scripture?

It is important to understand that God has revealed Himself in history, but He has also inspired some to write down these divine disclosures.

Read Habakuk 2:2

² Then the LORD replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald ^[a] may run with it."

Read 1 Peter 2:20-21

²⁰Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. ²¹For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

Scripture says this about itself:

Given by inspiration of God- II Timothy 3:16
The very words of God- I Thessalonians 2:13
Are all we need to know God- Luke 16:29,31
A perfect guide for life- Proverbs 6:23
Flawless- Proverbs 30:5-6
Perfect- Psalm 19:7
Precious- Psalm 19:10
Powerful- Hebrews 4:12

Another objection about revelation

Just because the writers of the Bible claim to have recorded God's revealed Word for man it doesn't mean that it is true- where is the proof? Any man can claim that he has God's revealed Word. For instance, Mohammad makes the same claim as does Joseph Smith (the founder of the Mormon church). So how can anyone have confidence that the statements made in the Bible are indeed the words of God?

Neither Islam, nor any other world religion or cult can present any fulfilled prophecies concerning the coming of their prophets. However, in the Bible we see hundreds of fulfilled prophecies extending hundreds, and sometimes over a thousand years into the future. Consider the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning Jesus Christ:

- Born of a woman (Gen. 3:15 cf. Mt. 1:20; Gal. 4:4)
- Descendant of Isaac, not Ishmael (Gen. 21:12 cf. Mt. 1:2)
- Descendant of Abraham (Gen. 22:18 cf. Mt. 1:1; Gal. 3:16)
- Descendant of Jacob, not Esau (Num. 24:17 cf. Lk. 3:23-24)
- From the tribe of Judah (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Gen. 49:10 cf. Lk. 23-24)
- Resurrected & exalted (Ps. 16:10, Isa. 52:13, 53:10-12 cf. Acts 2:25-32)
- Forsaken by God (Ps. 22:1 cf. Mt. 27:46)
- Crucified (Ps. 22:16 cf. Lk 23:33) note: crucifixion didn't exist until hundreds of years after Psalms was written
- Lots cast for His clothing (Ps. 22:18 cf. Jn. 19:23)
- Betrayed by a friend (Ps. 41:9 cf. Mt. 26:50)
- Ascended into heaven (Ps. 68:18 cf. Acts 1:8, Eph. 4:8).
- Born of a virgin (Is. 7:14 cf. Mt. 1:18)
- From the family of Jesse (Is. 11:1 cf. 3:23,32)
- Prophesied by a forerunner (Is. 40; Mal. 3:1 cf. Jn. 1:19-52)
- Rejected by his own people (Is. 53 cf. Jn. 1)
- Buried in a rich man's tomb (Is. 53:9 cf. Mt. 27:57)
- Crucified with thieves (Is. 53:12 cf. Mt. 27:38)
- Presented as a king riding a donkey (Zech. 9:9 cf. Lk. 19:35-37)
- Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12 cf. 26:15)
- Blood money thrown on temple floor & used to buy a potter's field (Zech.11:13 cf. Mt. 27:5-7) Note: the temple was destroyed in 70 AD, indicating the Messiah must have come prior to this date.

Go to the largest library in the world and ask the librarian for the books that have:

1. Future prophecies
2. Prophecies clearly documented as made before the events they describe
3. Prophecies fulfilled in history, outside the prophets control, exactly as prophesied
4. Prophecies that have specific scientific verification.

The librarian will come back with only one book: the Bible!

The New Testament is constantly under attack and its reliability and accuracy are often contested by critics. But, if the critics want to disregard the New Testament, then they must also disregard other ancient writings by Plato, Aristotle, and Homer. This is because the New Testament documents are better preserved and more numerous than any other ancient writing. Because the copies are so numerous, they can be [cross checked](#) for accuracy. This process has determined that the biblical documents are extremely consistent and accurate.

There are presently 5,686 Greek manuscripts in existence today for the New Testament.¹ If we were to compare the number of New Testament manuscripts to other ancient writings, we find that the New Testament manuscripts far outweigh the others in quantity.

Author²	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Approximate Time Span between original & copy	Number of Copies	Accuracy of Copies
Lucretius	died 55 or 53 B.C.		1100 yrs	2	----
Pliny	61-113 A.D.	850 A.D.	750 yrs	7	----
Plato	427-347 B.C.	900 A.D.	1200 yrs	7	----
Demosthenes	4th Cent. B.C.	1100 A.D.	800 yrs	8	----
Herodotus	480-425 B.C.	900 A.D.	1300 yrs	8	----
Suetonius	75-160 A.D.	950 A.D.	800 yrs	8	----
Thucydides	460-400 B.C.	900 A.D.	1300 yrs	8	----
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	1100 A.D.	1300 yrs	9	----
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	900 A.D.	1200	10	----
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	900 A.D.	1000	10	----
Livy	59 BC-AD 17	----	???	20	----
Tacitus	circa 100 A.D.	1100 A.D.	1000 yrs	20	----
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	1100 A.D.	1400	49	----
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	1000 A.D.	1400 yrs	193	----
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs	643	95%
New Testament	1st Cent. A.D. (50-100 A.D.)	2nd Cent. A.D. (c. 130 A.D. f.)	less than 100 years	5600	99.5%

As you can see, there are thousands more New Testament Greek manuscripts than any other ancient writing. The internal consistency of the New Testament documents is about 99.5% textually pure. That is an amazing accuracy. In addition there are over 19,000 copies in the Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic languages. The total supporting New Testament manuscript base is over 24,000.

Almost all biblical scholars agree that the New Testament documents were all written before the close of the first century. If Jesus was crucified in 30 A.D., then that means that the entire New Testament was completed within 70 years. This is important because it means there were plenty of people around when the New Testament documents were penned who could have contested the writings. In other words, those who wrote the documents knew that if they were inaccurate, plenty of people would have pointed it out. But, we have absolutely no ancient documents contemporary with the first century that contest the New Testament texts.

Furthermore, another important aspect of this discussion is the fact that we have a fragment of the gospel of John that dates back to around 29 years from the original writing. This is extremely close to the original writing date. This is simply unheard of in any other ancient writing and it demonstrates that the Gospel of John is a first century document.

Below is a chart with some of the oldest extant New Testament manuscripts compared to when they were originally penned. Compare these time spans with the next closest which is Homer's Iliad where the closest copy from the original is 500 years later. Undoubtedly, that period of time allows for more textual corruption in its transmission. How much less so for the New Testament documents?

Important Manuscript Papyri	Contents	Date Original Writ-	MSS Date	Approx. Time Span	Location
p⁵² (John Rylands Fragment) ³	John 18:31-33,37-38	circa 96 A.D.	circa 125 A.D.	29 yrs	John Rylands Library, Manchester, England
p⁴⁶ (Chester Beatty Papyrus)	Rom. 5:17-6:3,5-14; 8:15-25, 27-35, 37-9:32; 10:1-11, 22, 24-33, 35-14:8,9-15:9, 11-33; 16:1-23, 25-27; Heb.; 1 & 2 Cor., Eph., Gal., Phil., Col.; 1 Thess. 1:1,9-10; 2:1-3;	50's-70's	circa 200 A.D.	Approx. 150 yrs	Chester Beatty Museum, Dublin & Ann Arbor, Michigan, University of Michigan library
p⁶⁶ (Bodmer Papyrus)	John 1:1-6:11,35-14:26; fragment of 14:29-21:9	70's	circa 200 A.D.	Approx. 130 yrs	Cologne, Geneva
p⁶⁷	Matt. 3:9,15; 5:20-22, 25-28		circa 200 A.D.	Approx. 130 yrs	Barcelona, Fundacion San Lucas Evangelista, P. Barc.1

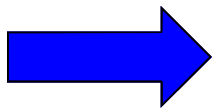
If the critics of the Bible dismiss the New Testament as reliable information, then they must also dismiss the reliability of the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Caesar, Homer, and the other authors mentioned in the chart at the beginning of the paper. On the other hand, if the critics acknowledge the historicity and writings of those other individuals, then they must also retain the historicity and writings of the New Testament authors; after all, the evidence for the New Testament's reliability is far greater than the others. The Christian has substantially superior criteria for affirming the New Testament documents than he does for any other ancient writing. It is good evidence on which to base the trust in the reliability of the New Testament.

1. Norman Geisler & Peter Bocchino, *Unshakeable Foundations*, (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2001) p. 256.

2. This chart was adapted from three sources: 1) *Christian Apologetics*, by Norman Geisler, 1976, p. 307; 2) the article "Archaeology and History attest to the Reliability of the Bible," by Richard M. Fales, Ph.D., in *The Evidence Bible*, Compiled by Ray Comfort, Bridge-Logos Publishers, Gainesville, FL, 2001, p. 163; and 3) *A Ready Defense*, by Josh McDowell, 1993, p. 45.

3. "Deissmann was convinced that p52 was written well within the reign of Hadrian (A.D. 117-38) and perhaps even during the time of Trajan (A.D. 98-117)" (Footnote #2 found on pg. 39 of *The Text of the New Testament*, by Bruce M. Metzger, 2nd Ed. 1968, Oxford University Press, NY, NY). Bruce Metzger has authored more than 50 books. He holds two Masters Degrees, a Ph.D. and has been awarded several honorary doctorates. "He is past president of the Society of Biblical Literature, the International Society fo New Testament Studies, an the North American Patristic Society." -- From, *The Case for Christ*, by Lee Strobel, Zondervan Publishers, 1998, Grand Rapids, MI: pg. 57.

Key Question: Who is God?



What we believe about God

He is *Triunity.

Read Deuteronomy 6:4.

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

Read John 1:1-2.

"¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning."

Read Isaiah 48:12,13,16.

¹³ My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they all stand up together.¹³ My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they all stand up together.¹⁶ "Come near me and listen to this: "From the first announcement I have not spoken in secret; at the time it happens, I am there." And now the Sovereign LORD has sent me, with his Spirit.

In verse 16 who is:

Lord God? A. the Father.

Me? A. The Son.

Spirit? A. The Holy Spirit.

Read John 1:14,17

"¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only,^[a] who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

Who is *the Word* in this passage? A. Jesus.

Read Genesis 1:26.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, ^[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

Who is the "Us" in this passage? A. Trinity God.

*** A good way of thinking about the word "Trinity" is to think of God as three in one, "Triunity." When considering the Trinity, one needs to remember that no one in history has been able to fully comprehend it or understand it. But before we discount the concept as irreconcilable, we must remember that it is the God of the Bible who has revealed it to us. While the word "Trinity" does not appear in Scripture, the concept very clearly does. Church father Tertullian (155-220 ad) was the first to use the word "Trinity." To say that God exists as a Trinity does not mean that there are three Gods, or that one God merely manifests Himself as either Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on various occasions. To say that God exists as a Trinity is to say that there is one God with a unified essence who exists in three equal persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. By person it is meant that God thinks, feels, acts and speaks.**

He is All Knowing

To say that God is "all knowing" is to say that He is OMNISCIENT.

Read Psalm 147:5

⁵ Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.

Read Psalm 139:1-6

¹ O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. ² You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³ You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. ⁴ Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. ⁵ You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

God's omniscience is comforting to us on one level, because He knows our hurts, our pain and our sorrow. But on another level, it is very sobering to know that God knows us this well.

Read Psalm 90:8

⁸ You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.

He is Holy

Read Isaiah 6:1-5

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." ⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ⁵ "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

How should the holiness of God impact the way we live?

Read 1 Peter 1:15-16

¹⁵ But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: "Be holy, for I am holy"

He is Just

God presides in perfect justice. Therefore He cannot overlook injustice in any form. We sometimes ask, "why can't God just forgive everyone, what's the big deal, I forgive people all the time." We must understand that God is different than we are, he is holy and just, and in His perfect justice, he does not "overlook" injustice.

Read Romans 3:25

²⁵ "God presented him (Jesus) as a sacrifice of atonement,^[a] through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice."

Read Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

¹³ Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:10

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Because God does not always execute his perfect justice immediately, some are inclined to believe and to act as if this judgment will never take place. The Bible teaches that this kind of thinking is a very costly personal mistake.

He is Gracious

Read Exodus 34:5-8

⁵ Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. ⁶ And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation." ⁸ Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped.

Read Nehemiah 9:16-17

¹⁶ "But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands. ¹⁷ They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them,

What kind of people is God dealing with?

What qualities of God keep him from giving up on people?

He seeks our worship

God is content and joyful in His own pleasure and purpose, He does whatever He pleases (Ps. 115:3), meaning He is an immanently and eternally happy God. God does not desire our worship because He is incomplete without it, but because He loves us and knows that we will only find our joy in His perfect goodness.

We become what we worship!

He desires His creation to join with Him in His joy and good pleasure. This is the act of worship God calls us into. It is not an event or location; it is a frame of mind and heart that agrees with God in His eternal plan.

Read John 4:23-24

²³Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

What does it mean to worship Him in spirit?

What does it mean to worship Him in truth?

Worshipping in spirit is the opposite of worshipping in the blandness of form and routine traditionalism. Worshiping in truth is the opposite of worshipping without a clear understanding of the nature and attributes of God. The more you know *about* the more you want to worship Him.

To worship God is to find pleasure in Him and to be in joyful relationship with Him.

Read John 17:3

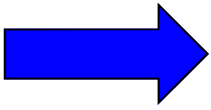
³Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

The word "know" is a word that means "intimacy" or "closeness". God desires us to know Him in a personal way. Eternal life is not just a future hope, but a present reality. When the Bible speaks of eternal life, it is referring to relationship with Him right now and on into the future.

What a good relationship with God looks like:

1. Philippians 4:6-7: We share our anxieties with God
2. Proverbs 3:5-6: We seek direction from God.
3. John 14:15: To love God is to obey Him

Key Question: Why is Life so Hard?



What we Believe about the Nature of Humanity and Sin

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. – Genesis 1:1

How did the world come into existence?

In many ways this question is the one that determines all other questions that determines one's worldview and corresponding view of God and human life. While a myriad of opinions exist on this matter, there are five predominant non-Christian categories of thought:

Thought	Central Idea	Emphasis
Deism	God creates but is not present in the workings of His creation	God's transcendence
Pantheism	God is part of His creation	God's personal immanence
Panentheism/ Monism	All in God. All is one.	God's transcendent nature
Process Theology/ Open	God is in process, growing in knowledge with His creation	God's personal nature
Naturalism	Matter comes forth from natural processes, without the aid from any supernatural entity. In this worldview, matter and life is created by chance.	Matter is either eternally existent, or it comes into effect ex nihilo (Out of nothing).

The above views of creation fail both philosophically and biblically. Pantheism/Panentheism both have a god that is part of the creation, making it impossible for Him to be the creator. Their god remains either transcendent (Other) or immanent (Personal), but not both. He is unable to rule the creation he is part of. Matter is usually an illusion; matters of evil and good are seen as relative, and part of the same god nature.

Other systems of belief struggle with how the universe is created. Naturalism and/or Materialism leaves us with an infinite regress of cause and effect, or the incredulous doctrine that everything we see came out of nothing with no causal force or purpose.

The biblical creation story tells us that an eternal, necessary first cause (God), created the universe, and all that is in it. The law of causality demands that all effects (Matter) need a cause, and that these changes take place in the current space dimension in which we live. God is eternal (Psalm 90:2) and is subsequently apart from His creation as the necessary first cause.

Evolutionary theory recognizes that man came from matter already existent on the earth, but they are unable to determine how that process took place. Biblically, we realize that God's power was able to do what is naturalistically impossible: bringing forth life from lifeless matter. God created the substance (Matter) of the universe Ex Nihilo (Out of nothing). The Hebrew word BARA is used, while the word ASAH is used for the creation of man. Genesis 2:7 uses the word YATSAR meaning "Formed", depicting the formation of a substance already present (i.e. The earth or dirt). Thus, man's first name is ADAM, meaning red clay or ruddy.

The creation narratives of humanity all have similar elements to them, highlighting God's revelation of Himself to all men of all cultures through the course of time (Psalms 19:1; John 1:9; Romans 1:18-25). It also is a by-product of oral tradition passed on from generations (Genesis 11:1-11).

What do the Scriptures say about Creation?

Read Exodus 20:11

For in six days the LORD created the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Nehemiah 9:6

You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.

Hebrews 11:3

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

What is the fall?

God created this world in a perfect state and upon the creation of the man and woman God declared His entire creation "very good" (1:31).

All of the individual and corporate shortcomings of God's perfect intentions for all of creation either intentionally or unintentionally and through omission or commission qualify as SIN.

Scripture teaches that God clearly commanded the first man and woman to not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil or you will surely die (Gen. 2:16-17). The man and woman sinned against God.

Because Adam was the head of the human race, when he sinned everyone who would ever live (other than Jesus Christ who had no earthly father) was complicit in his sin (Gen. 3:1-6; Hosea 6:7; Rom. 5:12-21; I Cor. 15:21-22, 15:45-50).

Therefore, everyone (except Jesus Christ) is from their conception sinful by nature and corrupted to the very core of their being and therefore incapable of doing anything that pleases God (Psalms 51:5; Rom. 3:10-18; Rom. 8:7-8).

Therefore, everyone (except Jesus Christ) sins (I John 1:8) by breaking God's holy laws (Ps. 14:1-3; Isa. 53:6; Rom.3:10, 3:23; I John 3:4) because they are a sinner by nature and simply showing forth their heart (Pr. 4:23, 17:19, 20:9; Matt. 6:21; Luke 6:45).

The fall was therefore the descent of the human race and the rest of God's creation (Romans 8:18-27) into a state of rebellion against God. Man continues to have dignity despite His depravity, however, because He still remains an image bearer of God even though that image is marred by sin (Gen. 1:26, 9:6; Jam. 3:9).

Is everyone totally sinful?

Yes, while people are not absolutely sinful (they could do evil things with greater degree and frequency) all people are totally sinful in that their every motive, word, deed, and thought is for their own glory rather than God's (Ps. 29:2; Romans 3:23, 11:36, 16:27).

This is because those who do not belong to God are utterly incapable of pleasing God and doing things for His glory (Matt. 7:17-18; Rom. 8:7-8).

There is a vestige of moral sense, however, in people because of the conscience that God gave them (Romans 2:14-15). However, even the seemingly good deeds done from the moral conscience are mere filth to God if done apart from loving obedience to Him because they are attempts at meriting our own righteousness which is the heart of pride. These attempts are an enemy of the humble grace in which one receives the righteousness of God as a free gift (Is. 64:6).

Man is also totally sinful in the fact that all of his person is marred by sin. This includes the mind (Eph. 4:18), the will (Rom. 6:16-17), the emotions (Titus 3:3), and the physical body (Rom. 8:10).

Does God cause sin?

The Bible is clear that God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all (I John 1:5). The Bible is also clear that God does not take any delight in sin (Ps. 5:4), He hates and detests sin (Pr. 6:16; Zech. 8:17), He hides His face from sinful people (Is. 59:2, 64:7). Sin is a privation of God's good creation and a contorting of His beautiful and glorious perfect works.

Where does sin come from?

God does not tempt us to sin but instead the temptation to sin arises from within our own hearts. Therefore, mere behavioral change is not sufficient to remedy the human condition, but instead we need a new heart and nature if there is to be any true victory over sin in our lives.

Read James 1:13-15:

When tempted, no one should say, "God tempted me" For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Read Proverbs 27:19:

As water reflects a face, so a life reflects the heart.

Read Matthew 12:34b

For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.

Read Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is desperately wicked above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Read Mark 7:21-23

For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly. All these come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'

What are the consequences of sin?

Read Genesis 2:16-17

And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

Read Matthew 13:14

In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving."

Read Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Read Ephesians 2:1

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...

The result of our sin is death and destruction. God is the giver of life and want us to join in Him in life eternal. But our problem is that our sin separates us from God and His good pleasure. God is a God of justice and holiness, but He is also a God of compassion and mercy. His great mercy provides our perfect solution.

Key Question: Could a Loving God Send People to Hell?



What we Believe about Salvation and God's purpose in Grace

What is God's solution?

As a God of perfect justice and holiness, God cannot by His nature just "let sin go". It has to be paid for. The end result of sin is death. According to scripture, there is only one escape from this personal judgment. That escape requires a perfect, unblemished sacrifice to pay our death penalty for us. Divine justice would not only be served, but we could be pardoned. There is only one who was without sin and by His divine nature could absorb our sin- Jesus.

Read Matthew 20:28

²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Read 1 Corinthians 5:21

²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus died as a substitution for our sin. If this is true, then he suffered more than just physical death on the cross.

Read Mark 15:33-34

³³At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

What is our response?

Although Christ's sacrifice provides a solution to our sin and separation from God, it by no means becomes a solution until each of us has personally appropriated it for ourselves.

Read John 1:12

¹²Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in him, he gave the right to become children of God—

What does it mean to "receive Christ"?

Read Mark 8:34-35

³⁴Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵For whoever wants to save his life^[a] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

Read 1 Cor. 15:3

³For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance^[a]: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

Read Romans 10:9

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

Read John 10:10

¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly.

To receive Christ means to turn away from my independence from God, to embrace Christ's death as payment for my sins, which brings forgiveness and reconciliation with God and to confess that Jesus is lord of my life; to believe that in Christ is a better more abundant life. It means to reject the life of death and embrace eternal life!

What is Repentance?

Repentance comes as a result of the conviction from the Holy Spirit and results in a deep desire to change one's heart and ensuing life by God's grace. This includes repenting of sin and turning to Jesus Christ for forgiveness and salvation (Acts 3:19, 11:21, 14:15, 20:21, 26:18, 26:20; I Thessalonians 1:9; James 5:20).

What is Faith?

Read Hebrews 11:1

"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for the conviction of things not seen"

Read Hebrews 11:6

"Without faith, it is impossible to please God."

Faith is used 232 times in the Bible, and is the primary way that man enters into a relationship with God. God is not found through human reason (1 Corinthians 1:21), and subsequently faith is the medium by which God is known. This is primarily because man's reason is flawed and incapable of knowing God in this way. So God, rich in, mercy, and according to His grace, saved us through faith, a faith that He gave us (Acts 3:16, 14:27; Ephesians 2:8).

It's not a matter of the quantity of faith, but the object of faith, which is always God (Ephesians 2:8-10). Proverbs 3:5, therefore, admonishes us to "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding*"

Faith takes us beyond our intellect, and empirical abilities, and allows us to see the spiritual world that God has revealed. He gives us this faith, in order for us to experience the world as He sees it and trust Him (Romans 10:9-10). Though this knowledge is not exhaustive (Deuteronomy 29:29; Isaiah 55:8-9; I Corinthians 13:12), it is adequate to know God intimately (John 17:3), and it gives us a fuller understanding of reality as it really is, and as it has been revealed by God.

All ultimate knowledge begins in faith. For any system to be coherent, it must presuppose the authority of their system of thought in order to process information consistently. This is circular, however all systems of knowing are ultimately circular, because they claim authority. There is ultimately no source more authoritative than itself. Subsequently it can't be "Proven" through empirical or rational methods itself.

So faith is a wider rationality that sees reality the way that God has revealed, and intended men to know. Faith also is not esoteric. It is faith in the person, and work of Jesus Christ, who is God's "*Exact representation*" here on earth (Hebrews 1:3).

What is Grace?

Grace or "Charis" in the Greek means, a gift from God (Acts 15:11; Romans 4:5, 11:5-6; Galatians 2-3, Galatians 5:1, 5:13; Ephesians 2:1-10; Philippians 1:6) and reminds us that we were saved by God's gift to us, and that it had nothing to do with human works, religious or otherwise (John 1:13; Romans 9:16; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:5-6). God's grace is His continuing gift to His people. It's an act of mercy that He bestows on His people, and it is completely undeserved.

We are not only saved by grace, but we are established, and empowered by God's grace in our lives (Acts 4:33; 6:8; 13:43; Romans 3:24; 5:15; 12:16; 15:15; 1 Corinthians 15:10; 2 Corinthians 9:8; 12:9). In addition, we are given life and cleansing from sin by God's grace (Romans 6:1, 6:14-17; 2 Corinthians 6:1; Ephesians 1:7, 2:5-8). And, God's grace also comes to His people by means of spiritual gifts that are unique abilities that enable Christians to serve God fruitfully (Romans 12:6; I Peter 4:10). Therefore, a Christian knows that whatever good comes from their works is ultimately the fruit of God's grace working in and through them (I Corinthians 15:10).

Can Jesus lose a Christian?

Some people wonder if a Christian can lose their salvation. The Bible, however, states that salvation does not belong to Christians but instead belongs to God (Jonah 2:9). Therefore, the question is not whether or not a Christian can lose their salvation, but rather whether Jesus can lose a Christian.

According to Scripture, Jesus does not lose any people that God has given Him (John 6:39; 10:28; 17:12). Our salvation belongs to God and therefore it is not ours to lose.

Paul is clear that nothing can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:35-39) and that even we are unfaithful to God we are secure because He remains faithful to us (2 Timothy 2:13).

Note: It is imperative to realize that this assurance doesn't depend on you making a choice towards God in some sort of ritual (i.e. prayer, baptism, communion, etc.), but is secured by the work that God, through His Son Jesus, did on the cross. Assurance comes from knowing that God is at work in you (Philippians 1:6; 1 John). Too often we have assured people they are saved because they grew up in the church, or once said a prayer, but this is simply unbiblical. Assurance comes from trusting in Christ, and realizing that God is growing His love in our lives. It is His Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are His.

Do all roads lead to heaven?

No, of course not. This is a popular way to believe today- that all "messiahs" and "inspired teachers" from the great world religions are basically saying the same thing and therefore all religious paths lead to heaven.

It's interesting how we apply irrational thoughts to a religious world view that we would never apply to daily life. You don't believe that you can get on any road in Oklahoma City and it will lead you to your destination. You would never say, "all roads lead to Tulsa!" Why would you apply that thought to something as important as your eternal destiny?

People make the observation that Christians are being narrow when they make the claim that Jesus is the only way to heaven. It is important to remember that all truth is narrow. Truth is not relative or negotiable, that is what makes it truth. The sun always comes up in the west, a pecan tree does not produce watermelons and you cannot use water to run your car. These are all narrow views because they are the truth.

If Jesus is who He said He was, God in flesh, then whatever He says is authoritative and true. He said that He was the way the truth in the life and that nobody comes to the Father except through Him ([John 14:6](#)). This statement by Jesus cannot be true while all other religions are true as well. Christianity and the claims of Christ are diametrically opposed to the teachings of Islam, Buddhism/Hinduism and Judaism. They cannot all be true at the same time!

Consider these statements by Jesus:

"your sins are forgiven" ([Mark 2:1-7](#))

"I am the resurrection and the life; everyone who believes in me will never die" ([John 11:25-26](#))

"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except by me." ([John 14:6](#))

These statements have no value or authority whatsoever unless Jesus was truly who he claimed to be. And just who was that? Let the following New Testament "explanations" answer that question clearly.

Read [Colossians 2:8-9](#)

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. ⁹For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.

[John 10:30-33](#)

³⁰I and the Father are one." ³¹Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, ³²but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" ³³"We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

Friends and enemies of Christ alike clearly understood the claims that Jesus was making about himself. It was not a claim that he was a great teacher or moral leader, but that he was God and that He had authority to forgive sin. No other religious leader ever made that claim about himself.

This is the claim that forms the core of who Jesus was and what He taught. There is only one of three conclusions you can draw about Jesus Christ:

Conclusion 1: His claim was true ----- He was, in fact, God.

Conclusion 2: He thought His claim was true----He was a lunatic, sincerely deluded

Conclusion 3: He knew His claim was false-----He was a liar who died like a fool.

C.S. Lewis pointed out that we should pity Him as a lunatic, despise Him as a liar, but we should not be so intellectually dishonest as to say that He was a good man, but not God!

What about people who never hear the gospel?

The Bible says that God is a just God. We know that whatever He does is right. When it comes to those who have never heard the Gospel, He will do what is right, whatever that is. But as for you, you have heard the gospel and He will judge you according to how you respond. He is calling you to repentance, to turn from sin and come to Him. What we do know about God in His perfect Justice and Holiness, is that when people are judged by Him, they will walk away saying "That was fair. I may not like it, but that was fair."

[Read Romans 2:11-16](#)

¹¹For God does not show favoritism. ¹²All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. ¹⁴(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, ¹⁵since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) ¹⁶This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

Those who do not hear the law will be judged according to the law that is written in their hearts. The Law written in their hearts is the knowledge of right and wrong and what their conscience tells them. The Bible also says He calls out who He predestines (Ephesians 1). I have seen first hand how even people living in Muslim or Hindu countries come to Christ by the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit without a Christian witness to sustain them.

Key Question: Is the Church even Necessary?



What we Believe about the Church

What is the church?

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... Ephesians 5:25

The church is the community of Christians for all time who have been loved and saved by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:25). In every church, there are people who are not Christians (Matthew 13:24-30), including wolves sent by Satan to lead people astray (Acts 20:29-30).

While it is possible for Christians to know who else is a Christian (i.e. the frequent references to Christian brothers and sisters), ultimately only the Lord knows exactly every person who is and is not a Christian (2 Timothy 2:19).

Should all Christians be vitally involved in a local church?

Hebrews 10:25 *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

The Old and New Testaments were written to communities of God's people who regularly gathered together for such things as teaching, fellowship, worship, etc. The Bible is clear that every Christian is a part of the larger church body and is expected to participate in the life of a local church with the spiritual gifts God has given them (I Corinthians 12:1-31).

It is therefore a sin for someone who claims to be a Christian to not be actively loving their Christian brothers and sisters (I John 1:7, 3:17-18, 4:21) and seeking fellowship with the church (I Corinthians 12:7, 14:6, 14:12, 14:26b).

What things should happen at a healthy church?

- 1. preaching and teaching of all of God's word (Acts 20:27; 2 Timothy 4:2)
- 2. worship of God (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 1:12, 5:16-19)
- 3. evangelizing of lost people (Matthew 28:19)
- 4. helping those in need (Luke 6:35-36; Acts 11:29; 2 Corinthians 8:4; I John 3:17)
- 5. baptizing of new Christians (Matthew 28:19)
- 6. building up of God's people (Colossians 1:28; Ephesians 4:12-13)
- 7. unity and love among God's people (John 13:34-35)
- 8. service by God's people (I Corinthians 12:4-6; Ephesians 4:12; I Peter 4:11)
- 9. partaking of communion (I Corinthians 11:17-34)
- 10. church discipline (Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1-5)
- 11. effective prayer (Acts 2:42; Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18)
- 12. Biblical church government (Philippians 1:1)
- 13. holiness among God's people (John 14:15, 17:23; Hebrews 12:14)

- 14. deep and sincere love for Jesus at all times (Luke 10:27)
- 15. an unwavering commitment to the gospel of grace (I Corinthians 15:1-8)
- 16. evidence of the power of God (Romans 1:16)

Who is the ultimate head of the church?

The Scriptures are clear that Jesus Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:9, 1:22-23, 4:15, 5:23). Jesus is the Apostle who plants a church (Hebrews 3:1). Jesus is the Senior Pastor who builds the church (Matthew 16:18). Jesus is the Senior Pastor who rules the church (I Peter 5:4). And, it is ultimately Jesus who closes churches down when they have become faithless and/or fruitless (Revelation 2:5). Therefore, it is absolutely vital that a church love Jesus, obey Jesus, imitate Jesus, and follow Jesus at all times and in all ways according to the teaching of His Word (Colossians 3:16).

What are pastors, deacons, and members?

Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons...

Elder or Pastor The elder is the pastor of the church, and vicariously, the staff who serve with the pastor (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; I Peter 5:2). The pastoral staff are men chosen for their ministry according to clear biblical requirements (I Timothy 2:11-3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

The pastors' duties include leading (I Timothy 5:17) managing (I Timothy 3:4-5), tending (I Peter 5:2-5), giving account (Hebrews 13:17), living exemplary lives (Hebrews 13:7), using authority (Acts 20:28), teaching (Ephesians 4:11, I Timothy 3:2), preaching (I Timothy 5:17), doctrinal instruction (Titus 1:9), and discipline (Matthew 18:15-17).

Deacons are the servants of the church who are also qualified for their ministry of overseeing and caring for God's people by qualifications that are nearly identical to the elders minus the teaching and preaching abilities (I Timothy 3:8-13). The deacon ministry may have officially begun in the early church in Acts 6:1-6.

Members are the Christians who are actively participating in the life of the local church that it is built up for God's purposes (I Corinthians 12:1-31 especially 12:24). The early church had a notion of membership that included numerical record (Acts 2:37-47), records of widows (Tim. 5:3-16); elections (Acts 6:1-6), discipline (Matt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1), accountability (Heb. 13:17), and an awareness of who was a church member (Rom. 16:1-16)

What is a local, global, historical, and future church?

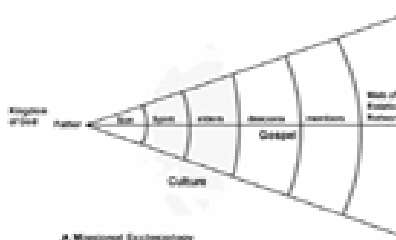
The **local church** is the gathering of God's people in particular areas. In the New Testament this would include, for example, the church at Corinth, the church at Ephesus, the church at Thessalonica, the church at Colosse, the church at Galatia, the church at Philippi, etc. Many of the New Testament letters were written to be read in the gathered worship services of local churches (Colossians 4:16). It is the privilege of Christians to gather together in a local church and participate in the work of the gospel there.

The **global church** includes Christian brothers and sisters from other nations, languages, races, and cultures of the earth (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Revelation 5:9-10, 14:6). It is the privilege of Christians to stand in unity with Christians across the globe with such things as prayer, funding, missions, service, opposition to persecution, etc.

The **historical church** includes the Christian brothers and sisters who have gone before us (Hebrews 11:1-12:1). It is the privilege to learn from the lives of our brothers and sisters.

The **future church** includes the Christians who will carry the gospel of Jesus Christ forward after we are gone into the nations, races, cultures, languages etc. that will exist.

What is a missional church? (LP2C)



A **missional church** is a church that considers the gospel of Jesus Christ as its primary motivation in all things. As a result, the missional church takes seriously the need for the power of the gospel to be practically demonstrated so that Christians are built up in their faith and non-Christians become Christians (Romans 1:16-17). A missional church, therefore, cares very deeply about people coming into and going out of the church for the sake of the gospel. This is what we mean by "loving people to Christ" (LP2C).

A missional church thus trains up leaders for the work of the gospel and sends them out to begin new works in new mission fields and designates a significant portion of its resources to both building the local and global church. This is all done out of Jesus' mandate that we begin at home and work the gospel out to all nations of the earth from our home (Acts 1:8).

What is the Southern Baptist Convention?

The SBC is the largest protestant denomination in the United States and has the largest mission sending organization in the world. The missions organization of the SBC is called the International Mission Board and operates on every continent and has over 5000 missionaries worldwide. In addition, the church planting arm of the SBC is called the North American Mission Board and has over 5000 church planters and missionaries in North America. In the SBC, every church is autonomous and "cooperates" with other churches to accomplish missional work throughout the world.



What we Believe about the Ordinances of Christ

Why are the ordinances so important?

As followers of Jesus, we are to keep our lives focused on His redemptive plan in eternity. The central component of our faith is the cross. It stands at the apex of human history. All of scripture points to the cross as the glorious promise of redemption in God's eternal purpose. God knows our need to keep this in perspective. As a result, God's Word instructs us to carry out two ordinances that point to His death and symbolize the life attained by His sacrifice. Jesus never said to remember his birth, but He did say to remember His death.

The Christian life is boiled down to a "banquet" and a "bath." Water and blood. As water and blood spilled from the side of Christ on the cross, the symbolic body of Christ carries out the two ordinances of Christ in the Lord's Supper and Baptism. These two remembrances keep us intimately tied to the most important truths of our faith. They symbolize our cleansing through the blood atonement of Christ and the feast of our life in Christ as children sitting at His table. The Christian life is about finding cleansing in His blood and in joining Him in the joy of His banqueting table (1 Cor.11:23-26).

We call them "ordinances" because they were ordained by Christ who set the example and told us to follow in His steps.

What do we need to know about the ordinances?

1. They are symbols of our faith and not salvific.

Read Ephesians 2:8:

For **by grace you have been saved** through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.

2. They are symbols and testimony of our faith

Read 1 Corinthians 11:26:

²⁶For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Read Romans 6:35:

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

⁵If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

3. They were instituted and ordained by Christ Himself.

Read Matthew 28:19-20:

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

What is baptism?

In the New Testament, baptism occurred by the immersion of a person completely under water and then rising them up (Mark 1:5, 1:10; John 3:23) to show that they were united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:1-7; Colossians 2:11-12). Baptism is to be done in the name of the Trinity (Matthew 28:19).

Baptism is to be done for Christians who evidence saving faith (Acts 2:41, 8:12, 10:47-48; Galatians 3:27). Baptism does not save anyone, but instead shows that God has saved them solely by His free grace (Galatians 1:10, 5:4; Ephesians 2:8-9). Baptism is commanded for God's people (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38).

What is communion?

Communion was instituted by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper as a means by which God's people continually remember and celebrate His body (shown in the bread) and His blood (shown in the wine) shed for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:26-29). The final communion for God's people will be at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb with Jesus at the end of history in His Kingdom (Revelation 19:9). The church is to celebrate communion with a sober confession of sin and recognition of why Jesus died and rose (I Corinthians 11:17-34) and partake together to show that they are unified by Jesus (I Corinthians 10:17).

Therefore, communion is only intended to symbolize the death of Christ (I Corinthians 11:29-30). It was the custom of the church, until a schism at the time of the reformation for the church, to partake of communion each week.

We partake of the Lord's Supper at the beginning of each new term as a reminder to confess our sins to Christ, be cleansed and transformed by Him, and celebrate the goodness of the gospel in our lives and church.



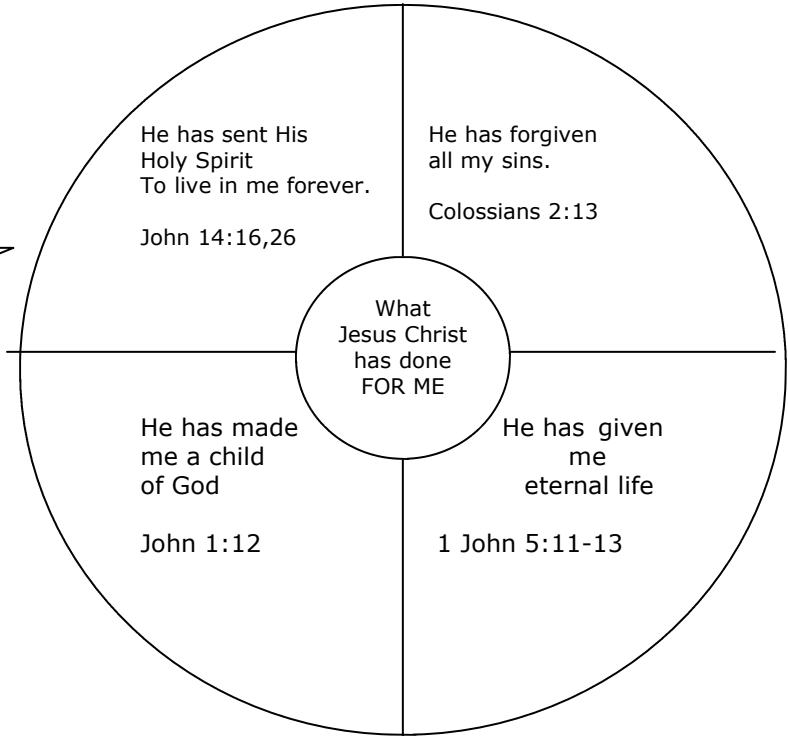
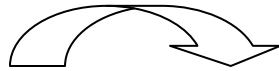
What we Believe about the Kingdom of God

Jesus came to the earth to establish a new reality. He called it "The Kingdom of God".

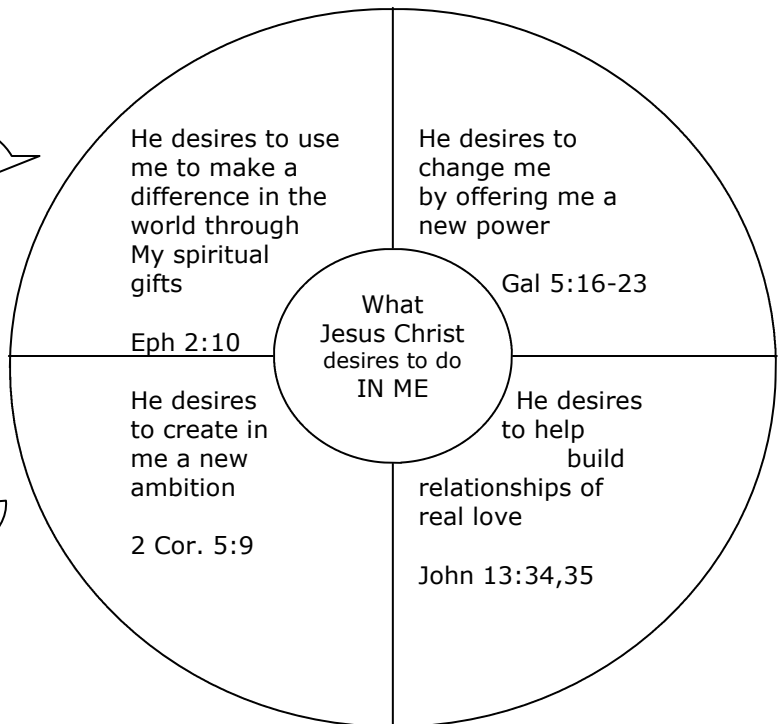
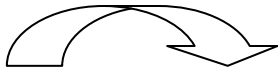
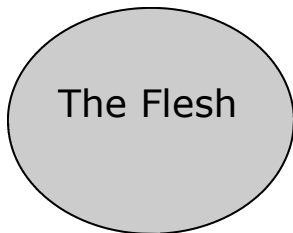
Read Luke 20:21 "The kingdom of God is within you."

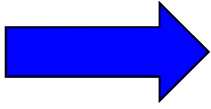
The kingdom of God means "where God rules." When a person comes to Christ, everything changes and life gains a new spiritual reality.

My New Standing in Christ:



My New Life in Christ





What we Believe about the Lord's Day

God created the earth on the first day and God called it good. Jesus rose from the grave on the first day and from that point on, Christians have celebrated their worship on "Resurrection Day" - the first day of the week, creation day and new-creation day. Why do Christians not worship on the Sabbath (seventh day)? Doesn't the Old Testament law say to "remember the Sabbath and keep it Holy"? The Bible teaches that the Old Testament law was a mere shadow of what was to come.

Read Col. 2:16-17:

¹⁶Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

When Christ came he did not obscure this component of God's law and spiritual community...He fulfilled it and began a new tradition. First century believers after His resurrection on the first day of the week turned the Sabbath into the "Lord's Day". In the book of Revelation, the church refers to the day of worship as "the Lord's Day"

Read Revelation 1:10:

¹⁰On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,

The Jerusalem church in the book of Acts gathered on the first day of the week for worship and to receive offerings and to participate in communion because this was the day of the resurrection

Read Acts 20:7:

⁷On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.

It is for us a "Christian institution for regular observance" (Baptist Faith and Message). It is more than just a day of rest as required by the law of the Old Testament Jewish community. It is a gathering in meaningful corporate expression of perusing the joy of the Lord!

The opposite of Christianity is not unbelief, but idolatry. The solution to idolatry is worship. The Israelite worshipped not because of stone tablets, but because of what was written in their hearts. God put salt on the tongue so that we thirst for the Living Water. For the believer and follower of Christ, this is the experience of corporate worship that his heart cries out for. God commands us to seek our joy in Him, to rejoice and be glad, to become what Piper calls "Christian hedonists" passionately seeking happiness in Him alone.

This is what corporate worship becomes. It is a time to pursue His joy together and to celebrate all God has accomplished in your life and His purpose and to say with others that your joy is found in His presence and in His will. It is a place to come to and be reminded our God is satisfying His purposes in our lives and that we can glory in Him; that life has a center and no matter how hard life becomes or how complex the issues and struggles one deals with, God is in control. It is that place where I confirm in my spirit God is bigger than all of my problems. This is the place where my heart cries out, "the joy of the Lord is my strength!"

The revolt against Christian hedonism has killed the spirit of worship in many churches. When you have the notion that high moral acts must be free from self-interest, then worship, which is one of the highest moral acts a human can perform, has to be conceived simply as duty. And when worship is reduced to a duty it ceases to exist. One of the great enemies of worship in our church is our own misguided virtue. We have the vague notion that seeking our own pleasure is sin and therefore virtue itself imprisons the longings of our hearts and smothers the spirit of worship. For what is worship if it is not our joyful feasting upon the banquet of God's glory? Worship is an inward feeling and outward action that reflects the worth of God. And the inward feeling is the essence, for Jesus said,

This people honors me with their lips but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me.

Worship is vain, empty, nothing, where the heart is unmoved. And I think it's possible to describe in general the experience of the heart in worship. There are three general ways that the heart can respond in worship to God and they usually overlap and coexist. - John Piper

Appendix A

Further Study of the Inspiration of Scriptures

What does Jesus say about the inspiration of Scripture?

Jesus taught that Scripture was authored by Moses (Mk. 7:10), Isaiah (Mk. 7:6; Mt. 13:14), David (Mk. 12:36), and Daniel (Mt. 24:15).

Jesus taught the OT law was fulfilled in Him: Jesus claimed that all Scriptures, including the Law, the prophets, and the Psalms, were fulfilled in Him (Lk. 24:25-47). Jesus also taught that the entire purpose of the Old Testament was to reveal Him (John 5:39). Jesus taught that OT prophecy had been fulfilled (Lk. 4:21; Mt. 11:10; cf. Lk. 7:27; Mk. 9:12-13; Lk. 18:31-33; Lk. 21:22; Mt. 26:24; Mk. 14:21; Lk. 22:37; Mt. 26:31; cf. Mk. 14:27; Mt. 26:53-56; cf. Mk. 14:49; Lk. 24:25-27; Lk. 24:44-47; Jn. 5:39-47; Jn. 13:18; cf. Ps. 41:9; Jn. 15:25; cf. Ps. 35:19; Jn. 17:12).

Why do we say the scripture we read is “God’s Word?”

The NT writers claimed that the OT was sacred Scripture (Mt. 21:42; 22:29; 26:54, 56; Lk. 24; Jn. 5:39; 10:35; Acts 17:2,11; 18:28; Rom. 1:2; 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; 15:4; 16:26; I Co. 15:3-4; Gal. 3:8; 3:22; 4:30; I Ti. 5:18; II Ti. 3:16; II Pt. 1:20-21; 3:16). Furthermore, the NT authors quote the OT as sacred on roughly 300 occasions.

God cannot speak falsely (2 Samuel 7:28; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18) and so all of Scripture is true and without any error or contradiction (Num. 23:19; Ps. 12:6; 119:89, 96; Prov. 30:5). But, the Bible also teaches the following:

- God’s thoughts are much higher than ours (Isaiah 55:9)
- God has secrets that He has not revealed to anyone (Deut. 29:29)
- We sometimes see dimly (I Cor. 13:12)

We tend to suppress the clear truth of God’s word because of our unrepentant sin (Romans 1:18-19).

Therefore, if it appears that there is a contradiction in Scripture, we must humbly assume that we— not God’s word—are somehow in error. God leaves provision for seeming “contradictions” by telling us that some things in His Scriptures are very hard to understand (2 Peter 3:15-16). This does not mean that we cannot know the truth; it does mean that we only know it in part (I Corinthians 13:9) and must live by faith and trust God.

How was the “cannon” chosen?

Canon is a word meaning “a measuring rod.” The canon is a standard that all scriptural books must meet. The books of the Bible were authoritative and shared particular traits which distinguished them from other mere books. The criteria by which a book was accepted as inspired resulted from the commonalities among those sacred books the Holy Spirit had inspired and chosen for the canon of sacred scripture. The five criteria are:

- Was it written by a prophet of God (Dt. 18:18-22; I Pt. 1:20-21)?
- Was the prophet confirmed by an act of God (Heb. 2:3-4)?
- Does it tell the truth about God (Gal. 1:8; Dt. 13:1-5; Dt. 18:22)?
- Does it have the power of God (Heb. 4:12)?

Was it accepted by the people of God (I Thess. 2:13; Dt. 31:24-26; Josh. 24:26; I Sam. 10:25; Dan. 9:2; 2 Pt. 3:16; I Tim. 5:18; Col. 4:16; I Thess. 5:27).

There is little if any dispute on the books of the Old Testament since those books were quickly accepted as inspired of God. The phrase “thus says the Lord” is repeated hundreds of times throughout the OT by God’s messengers who spoke on His behalf. The OT is clear that God spoke through His prophets (I Kings 14:18; 16:12, 34; 2 Kings 9:36; 14:25; Jer. 37:2); Zech 7:7, 12) and so what the prophet says in God’s name is what God says (I Kings 13:21, 26; 21:19; 2 Kings 9:25-26; Hag. 1:12 cf. I Sam. 15:3, 18). Therefore, to reject what a prophet had said was to reject what God had commanded (Deut. 18:19; I Sam. 10:8, 13:13-14; 15:3, 19, 23; I Kings 20:35, 36). When an OT prophet spoke it was clear that God had spoken. For example, the tablets of the Law were preserved in the Ark (Ex. 25:16-21; 40:20; Deut. 10:5; 1 Kings 8:9), the Five Books of Moses (Pentateuch) were placed alongside them as soon as Moses wrote them (Deut. 31:24-26), and the writings of the prophets were also added (I Sam. 10:25; Josh. 24:25-26; Isaiah 8:20; 29:18; 34:16). The OT books refer to one another as sacred Scripture (Joshua 1:8 quotes the Pentateuch; Daniel 9:2 quotes Jeremiah; and Ezekiel 14:14 speaks of Noah, Daniel, and Job).

What about the Apocryphal Books?

The Hebrew canon was closed and settled with the final book of the OT, Malachi, around 400 B.C. Malachi concluded with the promise that the next event in redemptive history would be the coming of John the Baptist who will prepare the way for Jesus (Malachi 3:1, 4:5-6 cf. Matthew 3:1-17, 17:9-13). During this 400 years of silence between the end of the OT and the coming of Jesus, many of the apocryphal works were written and include such things as books of history, fiction, and practical living, and end times speculation. While these books were read by some of God’s people, they were treated like Christian books in our own day and never accepted as Scripture.

Under pressure from Protestant reformers, the Catholic Church voted to include some apocryphal books to justify their baseless doctrines such as purgatory. These books do not claim to be inspired, contradict each other, and have some clearly aberrant doctrine which are at odds with the rest of God's Word. Jesus summarized the Bible as existing in three parts, the Law, Prophets, and Psalms (Luke 24:4) and accepted the OT canon as it exists today without any modifications and came to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17). Jesus also spoke of the OT as existing from Abel (Genesis) to Zechariah (Malachi) in Luke 11:51 and Matthew 23:25). While the OT is quoted roughly 300 times in the NT, none of the apocryphal (hidden books) or pseudepigraphal (pen name authored books) is ever quoted in the NT or recognized as Scripture by Christians until the Catholic Council of Trent in 1546. Under pressure from Protestant reformers, the Catholic Church voted to include some apocryphal books to justify their baseless doctrines such as purgatory. These books do not claim to be inspired, contradict each other, and have some clearly aberrant doctrine which are at odds with the rest of God's Word. Jesus summarized the Bible as existing in three parts, the Law, Prophets, and Psalms (Luke 24:4) and accepted the OT canon as it exists today without any modifications and came to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17). Jesus also spoke of the OT as existing from Abel (Genesis) to Zechariah (Malachi) in Luke 11:51 and Matthew 23:25).

What about the Words of Jesus Christ?

The words of Jesus were accepted as sacred scripture because they contained the words of Jesus that God's people treasured (Matt 7:28-29; Luke 2:19, 51; John 6:63). Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come to inspire the writing of the gospels and epistles (John 14:25-26, 16:13). Jesus also promised that His people would recognize His teaching (John 10:27). This is possible because the same Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of Scripture also teaches their meaning to God's people in whom He dwells (I Corinthians 2:13-14). For example, in I Timothy 5:28 Paul quotes Jesus' words in Luke 10:7 and calls them "Scripture."

Eyewitness Accounts

All—but a few—NT writers claim to be eyewitnesses (2 Pt. 1:16; I Jn. 1:1-3; Luke 1:1-3; Acts 1:1-3; I Cor. 15:6-8; John 20:30-31; Acts 10:39-42; I Pt. 5:1; Acts 1:9). Some authors who were not eyewitnesses received first-hand information from other reliable witnesses. Luke received his information from Paul (2 Tim. 4:11) and numerous eyewitnesses (Lk. 1:1-4), Mark received his information from Peter (I Pt. 5:13), and James and Jude were closely associated with the apostles in Jerusalem and were probably Jesus' brothers. Paul claimed Jesus Christ was speaking through him (I Cor. 14:37, 2 Cor. 13:3). Paul quotes Luke as Scripture (I Tim. 5:18 cf. Dt. 25:4, Lk. 10:7). NT writers claim that their writings are holy (2 Tim. 3:15). The NT writers said that their writings were the very words of God (1 Thess. 2:13, I Cor. 14:37, 2 Peter 3:2). Peter called Paul's writings Scripture (2 Pt. 3:15-16). Paul declared that the letters he wrote were to be read in the churches and obeyed (Col. 4:16; 2 Thess. 3:14). The early church treated the apostles teaching as authoritative (Eph. 2:20; Acts 2:42; Acts 15; Eph. 2:20; I John 4:6). Almost all books of the NT canon were accepted by the second century, and were finalized after some questions were raised and resolved around the fourth century. There were never any widespread debates on any of the books until the Catholic Council of Trent in 1546.

Can Scriptures be written today?

Hebrews 1:1-2 tells us that God has spoken to us through Jesus and that we have no need of any more revelation beyond what was recorded of His life and work and the subsequent apostolic explanation. The Book of Revelation deals with the end of all things and tells us to expect no more Scripture than what we already have (Revelation 22:18-19). Any new book of the Bible would require eyewitness verification, a new working of God after 2000 years of silence, absolute consistency with the rest of Scripture, and perfect prophecy without any error. We would also have to assume that God had some pertinent revelation that He has withheld from His people for the past 2000 years that He has for some reason now decided to make known.

How did we get our English Bible?

Revelation/ Inspiration - God gives His thoughts to His men and inspires them to write down His Words through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Transmission - the original document (autographa) is then carefully copied by scribes so that it can be circulated among God's people. Though only the original autographa are guaranteed to be without error, it is obvious that the copies they used are also treated as authoritative and accurate (Dt. 17:18 cf. I Ki. 2:3; Ezra 7:14; Neh. 8:8). Also, Jesus taught from the existing scrolls and treated them as Scripture (Lk. 4:16-21; Mt. 12:3-5; Mt. 21:16, 42; Lk. 10:26).

The Apostles taught from existing scrolls (Acts 17:2; 18:8). The early church tested all teachings by the existing scrolls (Acts 17:11).

Translation - the original is copied or translated into other languages. While God never promises that we will have a perfect translation, we can confidently be assured that our modern English translations (i.e. NIV, NASB, and NKJV) are trustworthy and accurate. This is because an enormous number of ancient manuscripts have been meticulously translated by large teams of scholars from numerous theological traditions, nations, and cultures from. Translations vary from "word for word" (i.e. NASB) to "thought for thought" paraphrases (i.e. Living, The Message) to a combination of the two (i.e. NIV). Because of the varying translating values, it is best to have multiple translations of the Bible for personal reading and study.

Interpretation - the reader studies the writings to determine the meaning by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. All Scripture is to be interpreted literally, though at times it may take a figurative form (i.e. using metaphor, comparisons, etc.) to communicate a literal truth.

Illumination/ Application - the meaning of the text results in a change in our thinking, actions, motives, etc. and has many applications in our lives.

How can I rightly study Scripture?

Ezra 7:10 *For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.*

Psalm 119:133 *Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me.*

Psalm 119:158 *I look on the faithless with loathing, for they do not obey your word.*

Psalm 119:74,81,147 *May those who fear you rejoice when they see me, for I have put my hope in your word.... My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word.... I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put my hope in your word.*

Psalm 119:161 *Rulers persecute me without cause, but my heart trembles at your word*

Psalm 1:2 *But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

Psalm 119:11 *I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*

Psalm 119:16 *I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.*

Psalm 119:97, 113,159,167 *Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.... I hate double-minded men, but I love your law.... See how I love your precepts; preserve my life, O LORD, according to your love.... I obey your statutes, for I love them greatly.*

Psalm 119:99,148 *I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.... My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises.*

Isaiah 66:2 *Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.*

Matthew 4:4 *Jesus answered, It is written: `Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*

Luke 11:28 *He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."*

Acts 17:11 *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

Acts 20:32 *Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*

I Corinthians 2:12 *We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.*

Colossians 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

2 Timothy 3:15 *and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

James 1:22-24 *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.*

Good Books about the Inspiration of Scripture

[The Origin of the Bible](#), edited by Philip Comfort, is a good introduction to the authority and perfection of Scripture from a team of good theologians.

[Christ and the Bible](#), by John Wenhan, is a very helpful survey of how Jesus Christ viewed the Old Testament.

[The Canon of Scripture](#), by FF Bruce, is a thorough book on how the 66 books of the canon came to be.

[From Ancient Text to Modern Translations](#), by David Ewart, is a very helpful and thorough book surveying how the Bible went from the hands of the original authors to the Bible we hold in our hand today.

[Are the New Testament Documents Reliable?](#), by FF Bruce, is a good survey of the accuracy and credibility of the New Testament.

[The Indestructible Book](#), by Ken Connolly, is a fascinating historical look at how the Scriptures have been opposed and adored over the ages.

What are God's attributes?

God is not an idea or a proposition but instead a living and free person who is completely other, or holy. Speaking about this entirely other God is difficult and so Christians often speak about God in two main terms:

His attributes that He has revealed to us in Scripture

Attributes that that he has revealed through our relationship with Him

First, His attributes are not something merely attributed to Him, but qualities inseparable from His very Being. In every way that God exists, He exists without limit, that is, in perfection. God's attributes can be divided into two categories: shared and unshared. His **Unshared Attributes** belong only to God, while His **Shared Attributes** are found in people to a limited degree since we are created in His image and likeness.

Secondly, we know God by our experiences through relationship with Him: when we recognize His presence all around us; when we recognize His provision in our lives; when we confess our sins and accept His grace to live by faith. In His loving friendship we come to a fuller realization of who He truly is as revealed in Scripture.

Unshared Attributes

Omnipresence - God is everywhere at all times. (Psalm 139:7-12, see also Jer. 23:24, Prov. 15:3, Deut. 31:6, Col. 1:17).

Application = Since God is present everywhere at all times, it is foolish to think we can avoid Him or hide our sins from Him. Also, it is comforting to know that He is there in times of trouble (2 Kings 6:14-17).

Appendix B

Further Study On The Nature Of God

How many gods are there?

The Bible is abundantly clear that there is only one true God (2 Chr. 15:3; Jer. 10:10; John 17:3; I Thess. 1:9; I John 5:20-21) and that all other "gods" are false and therefore mere idols that are not "gods" at all (Deut. 32:21; 1 Sam. 12:21; Psa. 96:5; Isa. 37:19; 41:23-24, 29; Jer. 2:11; 5:7; 16:20; 1 Cor. 8:4; 10:19-20). However, demons (fallen angels) may also pose as gods and elicit worship, possibly even through counterfeit signs, wonders, and miracles (Deut. 32:17; Psa. 106:37; I Cor. 10:20; Gal. 4:8).

The Old Testament contains a number of clear statements that there is only one God (Deut. 4:35, 4:39, 6:4-5, 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:2; 2 Sam. 7:22, 22:32; Ps. 86:8-10; Isa. 37:20; 43:10; 44:6-8; 45:5, 14, 21-22; 46:9). Likewise, the New Testament also clearly states that there is only one God (John 5:44; Rom. 3:30, 16:27; I Co. 8:4-6; Gal. 3:20; Eph. 4:6; I Tim. 1:17, 2:5; James 2:19; Jude 25).

Scripture clearly teaches that there is none like God: Ex. 8:10; 9:14; 15:11; 2 Sam. 7:22; 1 Chr. 17:20; Psa 86:8; 1 Kgs. 8:23; Isa. 40:18, 25; 44:7; 46:5, 9; Jer. 10:6-7; Micah 7:18. Scripture also teaches that any claim to be like God is a Satanic lie (Gen. 3:5; Isa. 14:14; John 8:44).

Is the Father God?

Throughout the Scriptures, the Father is unequivocally called God (John 6:27, 17:3; I Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; I Pet. 1:3).

Is Jesus God?

Jesus Christ is clearly called God throughout the Scriptures (Matt. 28:9, John 1:1-4, 1:14, 5:17-18, 8:58, 10:30-33, 12:37-41 cf. Isaiah 6:9-11; 20:28-29, Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; Col. 1:16-17, 2:8-9, Php. 2:10-11, Heb. 1:8; 1 Co. 8:4-6, 1 Tim. 6:15, Titus 2:13; I John 5:20; Rev. 1:8, 1:17-18, 17:14, 19:16, 22:13-16).

This fact of Jesus' deity was spoken clearly by Himself and recognized as a claim to be God by the Jewish leaders without Jesus' apology or correction (Matt. 26:63-65; John 5:17-23, 8:58-59, 10:30-39, 19:7). The Scriptures are also clear that Jesus was fully a man (Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:16, Rom. 8:3, I John 4:2).

Is the Holy Spirit God?

The Holy Spirit is clearly called God throughout the Scriptures. In the Old Testament He is all-powerful (Micah 3:8; see also Acts 1:8, Rom. 15:13,19), eternal (Heb. 9:14) all knowing (Isaiah 40:13-14; see also 1 Cor. 2:10), creator (Gen 1:2; Ps. 104:30) and all present (Psalm 139:7). In the New Testament, He is also clearly declared God (Acts 5:3-4, see also John 14:16, 2 Co. 3:16-18).

The Holy Spirit is not merely an impersonal force, but a person who can be grieved (Eph. 4:30), resisted (Acts 7:51), insulted (Heb. 10:29).

Are the Father, Son, and Spirit different persons?

Though one God, the Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct persons, The Father and Son are two persons in frequent salutations (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; 6:23; Phil. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1, 2; 1 Tim. 1:1, 2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Phm. 3; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:2; 2 John 3) as well as in other Scriptures (John 3:17, 5:31-32, 8:16-18, 11:41-42, 12:28, 14:31, 17:23-26, Gal. 4:4; I Jn 4:10).

The Scripture is also clear that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not the same person (Luke 3:22; John 14:16, 15:26, 16:7; I John 2:1). Likewise, the Father is not the Holy Spirit (John 14:15, 15:26; Rom. 8:11, 8:26-27; 2 Cor. 1:3-4; Gal. 1:1).

What is the Trinity?

Isaiah 48:16 b And now the Sovereign LORD has sent me, with his Spirit.

Matthew 3:16-17 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Romans 14:17-18 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

Romans 15:16 ...to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

I Corinthians 2:2-5 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

I Corinthians 6:11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

I Corinthians 12:4-6 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

II Corinthians 1:21-22 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

2 Corinthians 13:14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Ephesians 2:18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Ephesians 3:16-17 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love...

Ephesians 4:4-6 There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Colossians 1:6-8 ... All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

I Thessalonians 1:3-5 We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.

II Thessalonians 2:13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

Omniscience - God has complete and perfect knowledge of all things, including the past, present, future, and everything actual or potential (Psalm 147:5, see also Is. 40:12-14, 46:10; Ps. 139:1-6, Job 42:2, Heb. 4:13).

Application = It is comforting to know that God knows all about us, yet still loves and forgives us. Since God knows everything, nothing can separate us from Him, nothing can surprise Him, and He knows our all our needs.

Omnipotence - God is all-powerful and able to do all that He wills (Job. 42:2, see also Ps. 147:5, Mt. 19:26, Eph. 3:20).

Application = It is God's power which guarantees us assurance of our salvation (Rom. 8:35-39, see also 1:16). Also, we can trust God to work out our seemingly impossible situations (Gen. 18:14, see also Jer. 32:17 & 27, Luke 1:37).

Immutability - God does not change (Malachi 3:6, see also Num. 23:19, Ps. 102:27, Rom. 11:29, Heb. 13:8, James 1:17).

Application = It is comforting to know that God remains the same even when we change. Also, it is reassuring to know that we can trust what God has said because His Word never changes.

Eternality - God has no beginning or end and is not bound by time, though He is conscious of time and does work in time (Psalm 90:2, see also 93:2; 102:12; Eph. 3:21).

Application = It is comforting to know that since God sees things from an eternal perspective He knows what is best for our lives, and for the events that take place in the world.

Self-Existence - God is the only being who is not affected by external forces and does not depend upon anyone or anything for His continued existence (Exodus 3:14, see also Isa. 41:4,43:10, 44:6, 48:12; Rev. 1:8, 1:17; 2:8, 3:14, 21:6, 22:13).

Application = It is reassuring to know that God is the creator of all things and that all things are dependent upon Him. Also, since God created us, He also can sustain us and control our future for good.

Sovereignty - God is supreme in rule and authority over all things (Psalm 103:19, see also 2 Sam. 7:28, I Chron. 29:10-13), though He does allow human freedom (Gen. 50:21,22).

Application = No attribute can supply the security and comfort in terrible trials like God's sovereignty, because within our trials is the reminder that there is a God who is working out all things for our eventual good (Romans 8:28, see also account of Joseph and Genesis 50:20).

Transcendent - God is fully distinct from the universe He created which refutes pantheism (God is in all) and animism (all is a god) (Gen. 1:1 see also Psa. 102:25-27; Isa. 4:22, 42:5; Acts 17:24; I John 2:15-17).

Application = It is awe inspiring and comforting to know the enormity and otherness of God and His infinite grandeur.

Creator - God is the One who brought all things into existence out of nothing solely by His power (Gen. 1:1, see also Psa. 33:6, 102:25; Isa. 44:24; John 1:3; Rom. 11:36; Heb. 1:2, 11:3).

Application = It is a pleasure to enjoy God's creation and also amazing to consider that He created all that is out of nothing by the sheer power of Himself.

Shared Attributes

Spirit - God is invisible and immaterial (John 4:19-24, see also John 1:18, 3:1-10, 14:16-17, 16:12-16, 2 Cor. 3:15-17, 1 Tim. 6:15-16). A Spirit is personal with a mind (Ps. 139:1-4), emotions (Eph. 4:30), and a will (John 6:40).

Application = It is encouraging to know that since we are created in the image and likeness of God we have a spirit and will go on to eternal life if we know Him.

Holiness - God is absolutely separate from any evil (I Peter 1:16, see also Ex. 3:5; Lev. 19:2; Psa. 5:4-6, 99:5; Isa. 6:3, 8:13, 57:15; Hab. 1:12-13; 1 Jn 1:5, I Pet. 1:14-19).

Application = The Holiness of God is both fearful and awe-inspiring. Since He is absolutely holy, it is only through His Holy work that we can come into a relationship with Him and one day enter into His presence. Also, we are made holy by His sanctifying work in our lives (I Peter 1:2, 2 Cor. 3:18).

Love/Goodness - God alone is perfectly good and loving, and He alone is the source for all goodness and love (1 John 4:8-16, see also ex. 34:7, Ps. 84:11, Jn. 3:16, Eph. 2:4-7, Gal. 5:22).

Application = All that we do in life should be motivated by our love for God and our neighbor

(Matt. 22:37-40). Also, we must remember that love may involve rebuke or chastisement when we sin (Hebrews 12:6, Prov. 13:24).

Truth - God is the source of all truth. He is the embodiment of truth (Jn. 17:17, see also see also John 14:6, Titus 1:2, Num. 23:19, 2 Cor. 1:20).

Application = It brings great confidence and comfort to know that we can completely trust God and His Word.

Justice/Righteousness - God does not conform to a standard of right and wrong, but right and wrong flow out of His character (Exodus 34:7, see also Gen. 18:25, Deut. 32:4, Acts 17:31, Romans 2:11).

Application = It is comforting to know that God deals fairly with all people, not allowing the guilty to go unpunished, but providing love and mercy to those who turn from sin and to Him for forgiveness.

Mercy - God does not give some people what they deserve because He is loving and gracious (Titus 3:5, see also Eph. 2:4-7, Ex. 34:6-7, Matt. 18:23-35, Rom. 12:8)

Application = Jesus, dying for and becoming our sin, and saving us from the deserved wrath of God, was the ultimate act of mercy for which we should be eternally grateful. Due to His mercy, we should be eagerly merciful to those whom we meet.

Beauty - God is beautiful and His creation reflects His beauty. God made men & women in His image and likeness to also create works of beauty (Psalm 27:4, see also Psalm 50:2, Isaiah 33:17, Ecc. 3:11).

Application = In response to God's beauty we should take time to enjoy the beautiful creation He has surrounded us with. We should also appreciate the reflection of His beauty that we find in the arts and creative process, recognizing that creating is a part of being made in the image and likeness of God, an act that gives Him glory.

Can we know God fully and truly?

While the Scripture is clear that God has revealed Himself, it is also true that God also hides

Himself (Isaiah 45:15). This means that we may know God truly while yet not knowing Him fully because He is absolutely infinite and there is end of Him and therefore He can never be known in totality.

What are some names of God?

In Scripture a person's name is closely linked to the person's character and purpose. This would be true to the names of God in Scripture. All the names of God reveal but a glimpse of God and his character. We know that with many names of God that there is no name that will ever be able to completely describe or understand the fullness of God and his character.

Primary OT Names.

1. **Jehovah** (YHWH) meaning **Self-Existent One** (from Ex. 3:14, "I am that I am"). The characteristics of this name is in the relationship between the true God and His people and, when used, emphasizes God's holiness, hatred of sin, and love of sinners.

2. **Elohim** meaning is **Strong One** (Gen. 1:1). The characteristics are used of the true God and of false Gods. It is a plural word and is the plural of majesty. The plural does allow for the subsequent revelation of the Trinity in the NT but does not teach the Trinity per se. This name is used much when pertaining to God's sovereignty and work (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 32:27; Gen. 1:1; Isa. 45:18; Deut. 5:23; 8:15; Ps. 68:7).

3. **Adonai** meaning **Lord or Master** marks him out as a ruler (Joshua 5:14; Isaiah 6:8-11). The characteristics of this name are used of men and of God and indicate the master-servant relationship.

Compound OT Names.

1. With the name El.

El Elyon, translated the Most High, exalted one (lit., the strongest strong one, Gen. 14:19; Ps. 9:2; Dan. 7:18, 22, 25; Isa. 14:13-14).

El Roi, the Strong One who sees (Gen. 16:13).

El Shaddai, the Almighty God, points to his gracious power (Gen. 17:1-20; 28:3; 35:11; Ex. 6:31; Ps. 91:1, 2).

El Olam, the Everlasting God, the unchanging God (Gen. 16:13; Isa. 40:28).

2. With the name Jehovah.

Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide (Gen. 22:13-14).

Jehovah Nissi, the Lord my banner (Ex. 17:15).

Jehovah Shalom, the Lord is peace (Judg. 6:24).

Jehovah Sabaoth, the Lord of hosts (1 Sam. 1:3).

Jehovah Maccaddeshcem, the Lord your Sanctifier (Ex. 31:13).

Jehovah Raah, the Lord is my Shepherd (Ps. 23:1).

Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness (Jer. 23:6).

Jehovah El Gmolah, the Lord God of recompense (Jer. 51:56).

Jehovah Nakeh, the Lord who smites (Ezek. 7:9).

Jehovah Shammah, the Lord who is present (Ezek. 48:35).

Names of God in the New Testament.

When looking at the name of God in the New Testament, Jesus Christ emerges as the predominant name. Jesus claimed to be the revealed name of God in John 17:6. Jesus is the culmination of the promise that God would dwell with His people.

Jesus: Derived from the Hebrew "Joshua" (Y'shua) or "Je-Hoshua" meaning Jehovah Is Salvation. "I AM": Jesus upset his generation especially when He said, "Before Abraham was, I AM," John 8:58. Note also his claim to be Jehovah in such phrases as "I AM the Light of the world," "the bread of life," "living water," "the Resurrection and the Life," "the Way, Truth and the Life" in John's Gospel. From the Hebrew OT verb "to be" signifying a Living, Intelligent, Personal Being.

Christ: is equivalent to the Hebrew 'Messiah' (Meshiach), "The Anointed One."

What are some poetic images of God?

There are two areas in which God is spoken of in poetic images:

human experience (anthropomorphic)

experiences taken from creation.

The anthropomorphic poetic images of God

God is called:

Bridegroom (Isa. 61:10).

Husband (Isa. 54:5).

Father (Deut. 32:6).

Judge and King (Isa. 33:22).

Man of War (Ex. 15:3).

Builder and Maker (Heb. 11:10).

Shepherd (Ps. 23:1).

The poetic images of God from creation

God is compared to:

A lion (Isa. 31:4).

An eagle (Deut. 32:11).

A lamb (Isa. 53:7).

A hen (Matt. 23:37).

The sun (Ps. 84:11).

The morning star (Rev. 22:16).

A light (Ps. 27:1).

A torch (Rev. 21:23).

A fire (Heb. 12:29).

A fountain (Ps. 36:9).

A rock (Deut. 32:4)

A shield (Ps. 84:11).

The poetic images of Jesus Christ

Shepherd of the Sheep (1 Pet. 5:4).

Master (Jn. 13:13).

King of kings (Rev. 19:16).

Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16).

Bishop and Guardian of our Souls (1 Peter 2:25).

Daystar (Rev. 2:28).

Deliverer (Rom. 11:26).

Advocate (1 John. 2:1).

Second Adam (1 Cor. 15:45,47).

Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:13).

Vine (Jn. 15:5).

Chief Cornerstone (Eph. 2:20).

Immanuel, God with us (Isa 7:14).

Firstborn (Rom. 8:29).

Head of the Body (Col. 1:18).

Physician (Lk. 4:23).

Rock and Stone (1 Cor. 10:4).

Root of Jesse (Rom. 15:12).

Potentate (1 Tim 6:15).

Chief Apostle (Heb. 3:1).

Great High Priest (Heb. 3:1).

Pioneer and Perfecter of our Faith or Author and Finisher (Heb. 12:2).

Lamb of God & Lamb Slain before the Foundation of the World (Jn 1:36 & Rev. 13:8).

Lord God Almighty (Rev. 4:8).

There was an extreme reverence for using or honoring the name of God. That is why we hear Jesus tell us to start our prayer "Hallowed be your name" (Matt. 6:9). Our desire at CRBC is that people would pray and speak of God in a similar way that is not only honoring to him but also true to his character.