

MORE THAN A CREED

IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS. IT'S ONLY ABOUT JESUS. IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT JESUS.

WHAT IS A CREED?

Throughout the centuries, Christians have expressed their faith in brief summaries to proclaim the gospel and to insure that teaching in the church is thoroughly Biblical. These summaries of faith we call creeds, from the Latin *credo*, 'I believe.'

There are many creeds in the Bible, though they are not explicitly identified as such ([Deuteronomy 6:4](#); [1 Kings 18:39](#); [Matthew 16:16](#); [Matthew 28:19](#); [John 1:49](#); [John 6:68-69](#); [John 20:28](#); [Acts 8:36-37](#); [Acts 16:31](#); [1 Corinthians 8:6](#); [1 Corinthians 12:3](#); [1 Corinthians 15:3-7](#); [Ephesians 4:4-5](#); [Philippians 2:6-11](#); [1 Timothy 2:5-6](#); [1 Timothy 3:16](#); [Hebrews 6:1-2](#); [1 John 4:2](#)).

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CONFESSION, A CATECHISM, A CREED, AND A MOTTO?

CONFESSION

Definition: sometimes comprehensive description of **core** beliefs

Length: chapter or **book** length

Examples: Augsburg Confession (1530), Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), Baptist Confession of Faith (1689), The Baptist **Faith** and **Message** (2000)

CATECHISM

Definition: series of **questions** designed to teach beliefs

Length: can vary from a few dozen questions to several **hundred** questions

Examples: Catechism of the Catholic Church, **Westminster** Catechism

CREED

Definition: short, pithy document describing a group's beliefs

Length: typically **one**-page

Examples: **Nicene** Creed, Apostles' Creed

MOTTO

Definition: describes the **general** motivation or intention

Length: single phrase or sentence

Examples: “Where the Bible speaks we speak, where the Bible is silent, we’re silent”; “No Creed but Christ, no Book but the Bible, and No Law but Love”; “It’s all about Jesus, it’s only about Jesus, it’s always about Jesus.”

What was your background? Did you learn a confession, a catechism, a creed, or a motto growing up?

WHY NOT JUST USE THE BIBLE?

Let’s look up those verses that we listed above. Everyone look at least one up and ask the following question: **Do any of the passages above individually summarize/communicate all of your beliefs about Christianity?** Since the answer is, ‘No,’ we have to take the central teachings of Scripture and combine them into an easily transmitted format (something we can talk about to the person that we work with, go to school with, or meet on the street).

The Bible is profitable for several things, but it’s given that we might, **“be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16)**. The Bible was **not** given to provide a concise and easily transmittable version of what we believe so we could more easily communicate it to others. It’s up to us to study all of Scripture, rely on the Holy Spirit to illuminate the text, and formulate a consistent understanding of the text.

Our English word text is from the Latin *textus*—it’s where we get our word, ‘textiles’—the word used to describe the weaving that must be done to produce a garment. Paul uses this visual imagery in **2 Timothy 2:15** when he writes to Timothy that he should be a, **“a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”** The Greek word for ‘rightly dividing’ is the word for cutting a garment straight. Paul was a tentmaker by trade and it was his job to weave the goats’ hair so tightly that it was waterproof. He then had to cut the pieces of the tents exactly or they wouldn’t fit together as they should to provide the proper protection.

Our doctrine should **fit** together in the same way. The Bible is a collection of historical accounts, law, prophecy, poetry, and letters—and it all **fits** together perfectly—every seam is flawless and every corner is woven with precision. However, **“we see in a mirror, dimly” (1 Corinthians 13:12)** and our doctrine has some rough spots and some missing threads and maybe a cuff missing here or there or perhaps the wrong color thread. We don’t have perfect understanding of all things, so we get as close as we can and we use what we know to help the kingdom.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

6/21: Nicene Creed

6/28: Apostles' Creed

7/05: *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000): (1) The Scriptures, and (2) God

7/12: *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000): (2A) God the Father, (2B) God the Son, (2C) God the Holy Spirit

7/19: *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000): (3) Man, (4) Salvation, (5) God's Purpose of Grace, (6) The Church

7/26: *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000): (7) Baptism & the Lord's Supper, (8) The Lord's Day, (9) The Kingdom, (10) Last Things, (11) Evangelism and Missions

8/02: *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000): (12) Education, (13) Stewardship, (14) Cooperation, (15) The Christian and Social Order

8/09: *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000): (16) Peace and War, (17) Religious Liberty, (18) The Family

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REVIEW

Creed: short, pithy document describing a group's **beliefs**

WHY CREEDS?

1. To **summarize** what we believe
2. To **clarify** what we believe (protection against heresy)
3. To **instruct** what we believe

WHY NOT CREEDS?

1. Creeds can become the **authority** (**Colossians 2:8**)—(every person must challenge them—we are not called to faith in a creed) (A related thought is this: **Wikipedia: While not necessarily rejecting the Nicene Creed as erroneous, some evangelical Christians, on the basis of their sola scriptura view (the belief that the Bible is the only infallible or inerrant authority for Christian faith, and that it contains all knowledge necessary for salvation and holiness), consider it as in no way authoritative, since it is not part of the Bible**)
2. Creeds can be **changed** (they are voted into existence and can be altered by voting)
3. Creeds can be **divisive** (if you don't believe this, you're not 'in')

NICENE CREED

WHAT IS IT?

The most widely accepted creed in Christianity (I thought the Apostles' Creed was before this study)

WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN?

First version was written in AD **325**, with a section added related to the Holy Spirit in AD **381** (sometimes referred to as the "Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed") and a highly controversial addition made in AD 589 (Note: It is important to know which version you're using as they contain different words)

WHO WAS IT WRITTEN BY?

A collection of 318 (we think) bishops from all over the world—the first ecumenical council who met from May 20 to July 25 to collectively agree on a wide-ranging set of issues that had arisen after three centuries (fixing the date of Easter, repudiating some heresies, creating some standard practices to follow, etc.). It was approved by all but **two** of the bishops present.

WHERE WAS IT WRITTEN?

The city of Nicaea (modern-day **Turkey**)

WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

To clearly articulate a proper theology of **Jesus**; more specifically, to rebut the philosophy of Arius (a Libyan preacher who said that Jesus was divine, but that he was created by God—heresy in regards to the Trinity)

WHO WAS IT WRITTEN FOR?

The common man to serve as a σύμβολον (the Greek for *symbolo*, where we get our English word, symbol)—**a word that meant half of a broken object which, when placed together with the other half verified the bearer's identity (Wikipedia: Creed)**

WHAT DENOMINATIONS USE IT?

Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican Communion, Reformed churches, Presbyterian, and Methodist (to name a few)

WHAT DID IT SAY? (THIS ENTIRE SECTION IS TAKEN FROM WIKIPEDIA)

The following table displays side by side the earlier (325) and later (381) . . . [and] indicates by [square brackets] the portions of the 325 text that were omitted or moved in 381, and uses *italics* to indicate what phrases, absent in the 325 text, were added in 381.

FIRST COUNCIL OF NICAEA (325)	FIRST COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (381)
We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.	We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of <i>heaven and earth, and</i> of all things visible and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father [the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God], Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;	And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, <i>begotten of the Father before all worlds (æons)</i> , Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;
By whom all things were made [both in heaven and on earth];	by whom all things were made;
Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man;	who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate <i>by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary</i> , and was made man;
He suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven;	<i>he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father;</i>
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.	from thence he shall come again, <i>with glory</i> , to judge the quick and the dead; <i>whose kingdom shall have no end.</i>

And in the Holy Ghost.	<p>And in the Holy Ghost, <i>the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets.</i></p> <p><i>In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.</i></p>
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THE FILIOQUE CONTROVERSY

In the late sixth century, the Latin-speaking churches of Western Europe added the words "and the Son" (*Filioque*) to the description of the procession of the Holy Spirit

first used in Toledo, Spain in 589 with the purpose of countering the Arian heresy

The dispute over the Filioque clause was one of the reasons for the East-West Schism (The East-West Schism, or the Great Schism, divided medieval Christendom into Eastern (Greek) and Western (Latin) branches, which later became known as the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, respectively).

"Filioque" is not the only phrase in the Latin text that is not in the Greek of the Council of Constantinople: "Deum de Deo" (God from God) is another such phrase.

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WHY CREEDS?

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2. To **clarify** what we believe (protection against heresy) (defend)
3. To **instruct** what we believe (declare)

APOSTLES' CREED

WHAT IS IT?

The **second** most widely accepted creed in Christianity

WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN?

It existed in some form by the end of the **second** century, and changes were made until the early eighth century

WHO WAS IT WRITTEN BY AND FOR?

Legend: The Apostles themselves each wrote a portion (it can be easily divided in to twelve parts) on Pentecost after being filled with the Holy Spirit

Reality: The second century bishops/pastors wanted baptismal candidates to have consistent theology. Baptismal candidates would be asked a series of questions (the facts in the Apostles' Creed) and would affirm each section.

WHERE WAS IT WRITTEN?

It was widely used as a baptismal catechism for centuries before being formally written into its current form

WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Probably to refute **Gnosticism**—the belief that Jesus was not a man at all, but only appeared to be a man (also implying that He did not suffer, but that He only appeared to suffer). The Nicene Creed refuted Arianism and the Apostles' Creed refuted Gnosticism—both addressed issues of that day (which is why creeds should perhaps be continuously updated—to meet the need of the day).

WHAT DENOMINATIONS USE IT?

Roman Catholic, Anglican Communion, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Methodist (to name a few)

WHAT DID IT SAY?

The following table displays the Roman Catholic version as well as the version in the Book of Common Prayer.

ROMAN CATHOLIC	BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER (1662)
I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.	I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.	And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord,
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.	Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary,
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.	Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried:
He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again.	He descended into hell; The third day he rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.	He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.	From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.	I believe in the Holy Ghost; The holy Catholick Church; The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting.
Amen.	Amen.

Note: 'Catholic' is a reference to the universal church, not the Roman Catholic Church

THE “DESCENDED INTO HELL” ISSUE

Now, **1 Peter 3:18-20** starts to explain where some of the confusion around the “descended into hell” line comes from. Let’s read that text: **18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, 19 by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, 20 who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.**

If you don’t know what that means, you are in the majority. Martin Luther said this about that text, “This is a strange text and certainly a more obscure passage than any other passage in the New Testament. I still do not know for sure what the apostle meant.” On a funny side note, Peter writes in **2 Peter 3:15-16** that some of Paul’s writings are hard to understand—funny coming from the guy who wrote that passage, eh?

Some parts of the Bible are complicated. All Scripture is equally inspired, but not all Scripture is equally clear. In theology, we have open hand doctrine and closed fist doctrine. Closed fist is the divinity of Christ, the trinity, the resurrection, etc. Open hand are the lesser issues—we’re not going to divide or split up over them—this is one.

When you read **1 Peter 3:18-20**, it appears that Peter is talking about what happened to Jesus between His death and His resurrection. Just before Jesus died on the cross, He declared in **John 19:30**, “**It is finished.**” That meant that everything that needed to be done for sinners to be saved was done. Also on the cross, Jesus looks at a repentant thief and tells him in **Luke 23:43**, “**Today you will be with me in paradise.**”

But first, let’s go to **Luke 16**. In Luke, Jesus tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The story takes place in **Luke 16:19-31** and places are described where Old Testament saints and sinners are kept—divided by a chasm. The good side is called Abraham’s bosom (I believe this is what Jesus is referring to as “**paradise**”) and the bad side is called “Hades” (this is Hades, not *Gehenna*—the Greek word for hell—the place of everlasting torment for the unsaved referred to in **Revelation 20** after the great white throne judgment—in **1 Peter 3:19**, it’s called, “**prison**”). Interestingly enough, people on either side could communicate with each other.

Now, back to **1 Peter 3:18-20**. When Jesus died, His body went in the ground and His spirit went to paradise. Now, let’s throw **Ephesians 4:8-10** into the mix. **Ephesians 4** talks about Jesus taking, “**captivity captive**”. I believe that when Jesus went to paradise to get the Old Testament saints, He proclaimed (preached) His victory there to those in Paradise and it was heard across the chasm by those in Hades. Let’s read **1 Peter 3:18-20** again.

So what about those that, “**formerly were disobedient**”? As if this wasn’t complicated enough, those are the folks that had been there since Noah’s day that rejected Noah’s message.

So where is paradise? It’s in heaven—no one is waiting on Jesus do finish His work anymore. That’s why Paul can tell the Corinthians that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

Last passage, and then we’ll go back to the Apostles’ Creed. In **Revelation 1:18**, Jesus is talking and He says, “**I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.**” Some view these keys as literal keys that Jesus got when He went to paradise to get the Old Testament saints—they feel that He stopped over in Hades, picked up these keys and proceeded on His way. I believe that the keys are symbolic of the authority that Jesus has over Hades and death.

So, back to the Apostles’ Creed. **Does the Bible clearly state that Jesus went to hell?** No. Was Jesus close to Hades? Yes. Could He have gone there (theoretically) to get the keys to Hades? Yes. Is that likely? No. **Is this a closed fist issue?** No. **If you were writing the Apostles’ Creed today, would you leave that line out?** Many do.

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OVERVIEW OF THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE

Note: Green text is from *The Baptist Faith & Message*, by Charles S. Kelley Jr, Richard Land, and R. Albert Mohler Jr

History: First adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in **1925** and **was a revised edition of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith** (p. 5).

Need: Adopted as a formal response to the **fundamentalist**/modernist controversy of the early 20th century.

Versions: 1925 (fundamentalist/modernist), 1963 (authority of Scripture), 1998 ("The Family" article added), and most recently in **2000** with Adrian Rodgers serving as Chairman, The Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee

Articles: **18** different articles covering a wide array of topics (The Scriptures, God, Man, Salvation, Church, Education, Stewardship, Peace and War, Religious Liberty, and The Family). As a comparison, the Apostles' Creed is 110 words and *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000) is just under 3,000

1. THE SCRIPTURES

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Memory Verses: **2 Timothy 3:16-17: All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

"HOLY BIBLE"

66 books of the Old and New Testaments

"GOD'S REVELATION"

divine **self-disclosure** (p. 8)

Different kinds of revelation:

1. General Revelation: God communicating through nature and history. **Romans 1:20: For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.***

2. Special Revelation: God communicating through the Bible and Jesus Christ. Paul writes in Romans why we need special revelation, but it boils down to the fact that our sin blinds us from knowing all truth about God via only His general revelation (**Romans 1:25: who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.**) We **“love the lie and hate the truth.”** (p. 9)

“GOD FOR ITS AUTHOR”

We believe in the **verbal plenary** inspiration theory of the Bible. **Put simply, this means that the Bible’s inspiration is *verbal*—extending to the very words themselves—and *plenary*, or full. Thus, we affirm that every word of the Bible is inspired and that *every word is fully inspired*. . . . God used their personalities, writing styles, and personal experiences to accomplish His perfect purpose. These human authors were not passive stenographers; rather, the Holy Spirit worked through them, inspiring them so thoroughly that they were moved to write exactly what God intended—right down to the very words. . . . The result of divine inspiration is that. . . . **Nothing** is missing. (p. 11)**

Alternate views on inspiration:

1. Dynamic theory: **God gave human authors the basic **ideas** that they developed in their own ways** (p. 11)

2. Dictation theory: **The authors were **passive** instruments who recorded divine instruction** (p. 11)

“SALVATION FOR ITS END”

1 John 5:13: These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to believe* in the name of the Son of God.

The Bible points us to **Jesus**. **John 5:39: You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.**

“TRUTH, WITHOUT ANY MIXTURE OF ERROR”

Psalms 19:7: The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple

Authoritative: **Every word of the Bible bears God’s own **authority**** (p. 19)

Infallible: **God never **fails**, nor does His Word.** (p. 17)

Inerrant: **John 17:17: Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. The Bible is all truth and contains no **errors** of any kind.** (p. 19)

Sufficient: We do not rely on any other source to find **truth** or wisdom.

Eternal: **Isaiah 40:6-8: The voice said, “Cry out!” And he said, “What shall I cry?” “ All flesh is grass, And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.”**

The Baptist Faith and Message does not begin with the Scriptures by mere accident or custom. . . . All of the other doctrines we will study in this book are truths found in God's Word. (p. 20)

2. GOD

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

Memory Verse: **Exodus 20:3: You shall have no other gods before Me.**

“ONE LIVING AND TRUE GOD”

Deuteronomy 6:4: Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!

Isaiah 45:5a: I am the LORD, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me.

“INTELLIGENT, SPIRITUAL, AND PERSONAL”

Intelligent: **God is a knowing Being, not a blind force.** (p. 23) **Job 37:16: Do you know how the clouds are balanced, Those wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge?**

Spiritual: **God is . . . not limited by a physical body** (p. 23) **John 4:24a: God is Spirit**

Personal: **God has a personality and relates to His people in a personal way** (p. 23) **Ezekiel 34:24, 30-31: 24 And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken. 30 Thus they shall know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and they, the house of Israel, are My people,” says the Lord GOD.” 31 “You are My flock, the flock of My pasture; you are men, and I am your God,” says the Lord GOD. 1 Peter 5:7: casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.**

“CREATOR, REDEEMER, PRESERVER, AND RULER”

Creator: **Genesis 1 (ex nihilo), Psalm 19:1: The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. John 1:3: All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.**

Redeemer: **God rescues His people from peril.** (p. 25) **Exodus 6-12; Job 19:25: For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth.**

Preserver: **God protects and guards His creation and His creatures.** (p. 25) **Matthew 10:29: Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. Psalm 147:9: He gives to the beast its food, And to the young ravens that cry. Colossians 1:17: And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.**

Ruler: **God exercises His kingly lordship over the entire cosmos.** (p. 25) **1 Chronicles 29:11: Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, And You are exalted as head over all. Exodus 15:18: The LORD shall reign forever and ever.**

“INFINITE IN HOLINESS”

Isaiah 6:3: Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!

Holiness is the quintessential attribute of God’s moral character, and it defines **all** other attributes. (p. 29)

“TRIUNE GOD”

Isaiah 6:8: Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here **am I!** Send me.”

Matthew 28:19: Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

2 Corinthians 13:14: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit **be with you all. Amen.**

“The Father is God;--the Son is God;--the Holy Ghost is God;--there is but one God.” John Dagg, *Manual of Theology*, p. 250

“The Bible does not explain the Trinity. It simply gives us the **facts**. . . the briefer the definition of the Trinity, the better for practical purposes. God is revealed to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These have personal qualities. Yet God is one. This is the New Testament teaching. Beyond this we tend toward speculation.” E. Y. Mullins, *Baptist Beliefs*, pp. 19-20

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2A. GOD THE FATHER

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

Memory Verse: **Matthew 6:26: Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?**

Psalm 103:13: As a father pities [has compassion—in the infinitive mood, indicating] **his children, So the LORD pities** [has compassion—in the perfect mood, indicating completion] **those who fear Him.**

"PROVIDENTIAL CARE"

Providence: divine guidance or care (Merriam-Webster)

Psalm 104 (read to yourself at your table)

1. Seen in His **care and protection** (p. 32)

Genesis 50:15-21: 15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him." 16 So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying, 17 'Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you."' Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

18 Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are your servants."

19 Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? **20** But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive. **21** Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

2. Seen in His **provision** (p. 33)

1 Kings 17:2-7: 2 Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, **3** “Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. **4** And it will be *that* you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.”

5 So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. **6** The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook. **7** And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

Matthew 6:25-34: 25 “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? **26** Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? **27** Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? **28** “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; **29** and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **30** Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith?

31 “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32** For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **33** But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. **34** Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.

3. Seen in the **moral** structure of the universe (p. 34)

Deuteronomy 30:19-20: 19 I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; **20** that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He *is* your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.

Galatians 6:7-8: 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. **8** For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

“ALL POWERFUL”

Genesis 17:1: When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “*I am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.

Jeremiah 32:17: Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.

Revelation 19:6: And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!

"ALL KNOWING"

Psalms 50:11: I know all the birds of the mountains, And the wild beasts of the field *are* Mine.

1 Kings 8:39: then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and act, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men)

Psalms 139:1-4: **1** O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*. **2** You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. **3** You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. **4** For *there is* not a word on my tongue, *But* behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.

The fact that God knows all things does not mean that He necessarily causes them to happen. (p. 36)

Romans 11:33: Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out!

"ALL LOVING"

1 John 4:8: He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Romans 5:8: But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

"ALL WISE"

Isaiah 40:13: Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or *as* His counselor has taught Him?

We can't even understand ourselves, never mind God (as is seen in **Romans 7:14-15:** **14** For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. **15** For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.)

2B. GOD THE SON

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

Memory Verse: **Romans 5:8:** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

“ETERNAL SON OF GOD”

John 1:1-3: **1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

John 8:58: Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”

Revelation 22:13: I [Jesus] am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End, the First and the Last.

“INCARNATION”

Incarnation: the embodiment of a deity or spirit in some earthly form (Merriam-Webster)

John 1:14: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Philippians 2:7: but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.

“YET WITHOUT SIN”

Hebrews 4:15: For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin.

1 Peter 1:18-19: **18** knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, **19** but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

“SUBSTITUTIONARY DEATH”

2 Corinthians 5:21: For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

“HE MADE PROVISION”

Hebrews 9:22: And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

Ephesians 1:7: In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

John 1:29: The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

“RAISED FROM THE DEAD”

1 Corinthians 15:3-5: **3** For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4** and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures

“ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN”

Luke 24:51: Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.

“EXALTED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD”

Romans 8:34: Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

Hebrews 10:12: But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God

“ONE MEDIATOR”

1 Timothy 2:5: For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus

Hebrews 9:15: And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Hebrews 4:16: Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

“FULLY GOD”

John 1:1: 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

“FULLY MAN”

R. G. Lee, *Beds of Pearls*, 36-37 (*The Baptist Faith & Message*, 42)

“RECONCILIATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN”

Romans 5:10: For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

2 Corinthians 5:18: Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation

“HE NOW DWELLS IN ALL BELIEVERS”

Galatians 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

2C. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

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

Memory Verse: **Ephesians 5:18:** And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit

“INSPIRED HOLY MEN OF OLD”

2 Peter 1:21: for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit

“ILLUMINATION”

1 Corinthians 2:12-13: **12** Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. **13** These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

John 16:13-14: **13** However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. **14** He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you.

“EXALTS CHRIST”

John 16:14: He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you.

“CONVICTS MEN”

John 16:7-11: **7** Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. **8** And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: **9** of sin, because they do not believe in Me; **10** of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; **11** of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

“CALLS MEN”

Revelation 22:17: And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

“BAPTIZES EVERY BELIEVER INTO THE BODY OF CHRIST”

1 Corinthians 12:13: For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

“COMFORTS BELIEVERS”

He comforts us when we don’t know how to pray by praying on our behalf. **Romans 8:26:** Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

John 16:7-8: **7** Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. **8** And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment

“BESTOWS THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS”

1 Corinthians 12:4: There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:11: But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

“SEALS THE BELIEVER”

Ephesians 4:30: And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

“PRESENCE IN THE CHRISTIAN”

John 14:16-17: 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— **17** the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

1 Corinthians 3:16: Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

“THE GUARANTEE”

Ephesians 1:13-14: 13 In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, **14** who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

“ENLIGHTENS AND EMPOWERS”

Acts 1:8: But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

MORE THAN A CREED

IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS. IT'S ONLY ABOUT JESUS. IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT JESUS.

REVIEW

Creed: short, pithy document describing a group's beliefs

OVERVIEW OF THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE

Note: Green text is from *The Baptist Faith & Message*, by Charles S. Kelley Jr, Richard Land, and R. Albert Mohler Jr

History: First adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1925

Need: Adopted as a formal response to the fundamentalist/modernist controversy of the early 20th century.

3. MAN

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

Memory Verse: **Genesis 1:27: So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.**

“CREATION OF GOD”

Genesis 1:27: So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

“MADE IN HIS OWN IMAGE”

“Image of God” means we are, **“moral creatures who can know and worship God.”** (p. 60) **Genesis 1:27: So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.**

Colossians 3:10: and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

Nothing else in all of creation is made in the image of God except for man. **The entire animal kingdom declares the glory of God, but the animals are unaware of this great fact.** (p. 61)

“MALE AND FEMALE”

Genesis 1:27: So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Gender is a good thing and it should not be confused or altered by man.

“CROWNING WORK OF HIS CREATION”

Genesis 1:31a: Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed *it was very good*. Everything was just ‘good’ until God made man and saw that man completed His creation—the finishing touch.

Ephesians 2:10a: For we are His workmanship [literally, the masterpiece of an artist’s entire life work]

“FREEDOM OF CHOICE”

Genesis 2:16-17: 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” While God created the perfect environment, He did not create robots to inhabit it.

“MAN SINNED”

Genesis 3:6-7: 6 So when the woman saw that the tree *was good for food* [lust of the flesh], *that it was pleasant to the eyes* [lust of the eyes], *and a tree desirable to make one wise* [pride of life], *she took of its fruit and ate*. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were naked*; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. [It did not take long for ‘works salvation’ to come into play—man sins and what does man do? Man thinks man can fix it.]

“BROUGHT SIN INTO THE HUMAN RACE”

Romans 5:12: Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned. Adam and Eve gave it to their kids and their kids gave it to their kids and their kids and their kids and then to us.

“ENVIRONMENT INCLINED TOWARD SIN”

Colossians 1:19-20: 19 For it pleased *the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell*, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. 2 **Corinthians 5:19:** that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. If all things need to be reconciled, then something is wrong with all things.

“UNDER CONDEMNATION”

Romans 3:10-12: 10 As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.”

“EVERY PERSON OF EVERY RACE”

Revelation 5:9: And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. God sets the standard of whom He loves—and if He loves every person enough to die for and attempt to redeem every person, “Out of every tribe and tongue,” then we should love every person to that same extent.

4. SALVATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

Memory Verse: **John 3:16: For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**

Salvation is the great theme of the Bible. (p. 66) The arc of redemption covers **Genesis 1** to **Revelation 22**.

Sin separated human beings from God (Isaiah 59:2: But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.), and God's judgment against sin created a barrier no human effort could overcome. (p. 67) Because of this barrier, Jesus Christ had to die to effect salvation. **John 3:18: "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:36: He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."**

Just in case you think you were or are good enough, there's **Isaiah 64:6: But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy [menstrual] rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.** So the best I can do looks like a used menstrual rag. Now, Gary uses the leprosy example when describing this verse because he can't talk about menstrual rags with children in the sanctuary, but that's how bad we really are.

"REPENTANCE AND FAITH"

The conditions to salvation are repentance (changing of the mind) and faith (thinking to be true). Repentance takes care of the past and faith takes care of the future. Jesus Himself preached repentance and faith in **Mark 1:14-15: 14 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."**

Salvation has several components, but the big pieces are: *regeneration* (rebirth into God's family), *justification* (declared righteousness), *sanctification* (setting apart), and *glorification* (perfection).

"REGENERATION" (one-time birthing into God's family—a new birth into a new family with a new Father)

John 3:3: Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." **2 Corinthians 5:17:** Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

"JUSTIFICATION" (one-time declaration of righteousness—a legal acquittal by a judge)

Romans 3:26: to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. **Romans 3:28:** Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

"SANCTIFICATION" (currently ongoing setting apart—a continuous movement toward becoming like Jesus)

1 Thessalonians 4:3a: For this is the will of God, your sanctification. **1 Corinthians 1:2:** To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. **Hebrews 10:14:** For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

"GLORIFICATION" (future perfection—a completing of the **saving work of God** (p. 75))

Romans 8:17: and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. **Romans 8:30:** Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. **Philippians 1:6:** being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ. **1 John 3:2:** Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

5. GOD'S PURPOSE OF GRACE

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

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

Memory Verses: **John 10:27-29:** 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand.

"ELECTION"

Election: God's gracious action in choosing people to follow Him and obey His commands (p. 78)

“GRACIOUS PURPOSE OF GOD”

The story of Noah illustrates this purpose (and the general misunderstanding of this purpose) better than almost any other. **Genesis 6** is the beginning of the story of Noah and most people think it goes this way: The whole earth was bad except for Noah and God chose Noah and his family to start over. The actual story goes like this: The whole earth was bad—including Noah and Noah’s family (**Genesis 6:1-7**). God was gracious and chose Noah (**Genesis 6:8**). Noah did what was right and walked with God (**Genesis 6:9**). Grace always precedes righteousness. There is nothing good about man before the grace of God changes him. God picked Noah because God wanted to—and God does the same with us. The question we should ponder is not, ‘Why doesn’t God pick everyone?’ The question we should ponder is, ‘Why did God pick anyone?’

“FREE AGENCY OF MAN” (Note: this has nothing to do with sports)

“Two truths, therefore, must be recognized in regard to election: God’s sovereignty and man’s free will. Both are abundantly taught in the bible.” Herschel Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, p. 56

God’s sovereignty: (God knows and chose)

John 15:19: If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. **Acts 13:48:** Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. **Romans 8:29-30:** 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. **2 Thessalonians 2:13:** But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth

Man’s free will: (Man has the option)

John 3:15: that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. **Romans 10:9:** that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. **Revelation 22:17:** And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

“BELIEVERS ENDURE TO THE END”

John 10:29: My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father’s hand. You think you can arm-wrestle God? **Philippians 1:6:** being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ. **2 Timothy 1:12:** For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. Notice that God does the keeping, not us. We are eternally secure because He is holding on to us, not because we are holding on to Him.

MORE THAN A CREED

IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS. IT'S ONLY ABOUT JESUS. IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT JESUS.

REVIEW

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6. THE CHURCH

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

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

Memory Verse: **Colossians 1:18: And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.**

“CHURCH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST”

1 Corinthians 3:11: For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the Lord over his church and His saving work is the foundation of the church itself. (p. 86)

Matthew 16: 18: And I [Jesus] also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Jesus clearly states that (1) He builds the church: “**I will build**” and (2) the church is His: “**My church**”.

“BODY OF CHRIST”

Paul used the analogy of the human **body to describe the church** (p. 87) in **1 Corinthians 12:12-27**: (turn there) **12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body,**

so also *is* Christ. **13** For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. **14** For in fact the body is not one member but many. **15** If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? **16** And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? **17** If the whole body *were* an eye, where *would be* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *would be* the smelling? **18** But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. **19** And if they *were* all one member, where *would the body be*? **20** But now indeed *there are* many members, yet one body. **21** And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” **22** No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. **23** And those *members* of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable *parts* have greater modesty, **24** but our presentable *parts* have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that *part* which lacks it, **25** that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another. **26** And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*. **27** Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. You are a body part in the church. This picture keeps us humble, cooperating, and unified.

Romans 12:4-8: **4** For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, **5** so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. **6** Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.* We have different functions and that is by design. What would you be able to do with 25 hands and no mouth or ears or eyes. What would you be able to do with 15 feet and no brain? Our diversity is by design.

“AUTONOMOUS”

Every local congregation is invested with full authority to fulfill its ministry. Baptists do not believe in a hierarchical system above the local church because none is found in the New Testament. (p. 88) There are no Bible verses listed here to refute any hierarchical system because there was never a system to refute.

“BAPTIZED BELIEVERS”

There is no clearly stated verse in the New Testament that gives the requirements for membership in a local body. However, following Christ is a mark of a believer. Anyone who does not take the first step (baptism) is suspicious.

“COVENANT IN THE FAITH”

A church is not merely a voluntary association or a **social** organization. Instead, it is a congregation of believers who covenant [contract] together to fulfill Christ's ministry. (p. 88) Our activities are centered around our mutual belief in Jesus Christ—this is why Christians from significantly differing backgrounds can have unity.

“OBSERVING THE TWO ORDINANCES OF CHRIST”

This is what separates a *chapel* from a *church*. A church **administers** the ordinances (this is the simplest definition of a church).

“SEEKING TO EXTEND THE GOSPEL”

Revelation 22:17: And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. We are the bride and we are to call out.

“SCRIPTURAL OFFICERS”

Pastors. Bishop (meaning overseer), elder (someone with wisdom), and pastor (a shepherd) are used in the New Testament (each word simply describes different parts of the same office). The qualifications are given in **1 Timothy 3:1-7**. **2 Timothy 4:2** is the clearest command to pastors in the New Testament: **Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.**

Deacons. Deacon (meaning servant—literally a waiter in the first century) qualifications are given in **1 Timothy 3:8-13**. Deacons are to do the work of the church through service. Because of the “**husband of one wife**” qualification for both offices, Baptists believe that both pastors and deacons should be men.

7. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

Memory Verse: **2 Corinthians 5:17: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**

For a thorough treatment, go to stuartheights.org/sundayschool and click on “Observing the Ordinances”

8. THE LORD'S DAY

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

Memory Verse: **Psalms 122:1: I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go into the house of the Lord.”**

“CHRISTIAN INSTITUTION”

We meet on Sunday because Sunday is the day the disciples met in **Acts 20:7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.** They probably met on that day because the resurrection occurred on that day (see **John 20:19**—Jesus showed up with the disciples on Sunday—a pretty good example to follow).

“REGULAR OBSERVANCE”

Hebrews 10:25: not forsaking [literally, to leave in the lurch; also used as a sailing term meaning to sail on by] **the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**

“WORSHIP AND SPIRITUAL DEVOTION”

[The Bible] **does not lay a burden on Christians about entertainment, necessary work, and other activities as long as time, priority, and full attention are given to the church gathered for worship. . . . Similarly, Christians can transform the Lord's Day observance into acts of artificial legalism, thus missing the entire point of the day. The Lord's Day is one of Christ's gifts to His church. . . . The Christian's conscience, informed by Scripture, yielded to Christ's lordship, and accountable to the local congregation, must guide the believer's decision making about how to observe the Lord's Day.** (p. 105)

9. THE KINGDOM

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

Memory Verse: **Matthew 6:33: But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**

Kingdom of God: God's sovereign rule in the universe and in the hearts of Christians. (p. 108)

“SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE UNIVERSE”

Isaiah 9:6-7: 6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. God's sovereignty stretches over all of His creation.

“KINGSHIP OVER MEN”

2 Chronicles 20:6: and said: “O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You *not* rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand *is there not* power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?

“REALM OF SALVATION”

John 3:3: Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The “kingdom of God” is tied to salvation in a variety of ways (see **Matthew 13** for some).

“PRAY AND LABOR”

Matthew 6:9-10: 9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven. Jesus taught the disciples to pray for the coming of the kingdom of God.

“FULL CONSUMMATION”

Matthew 25:31: “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. The kingdom will be ‘full’ or ‘complete’ when Christ reigns over all at the end of all things.

MORE THAN A CREED

IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS. IT'S ONLY ABOUT JESUS. IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT JESUS.

OVERVIEW OF THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE

Note: Green text is from *The Baptist Faith & Message*, by Charles S. Kelley Jr, Richard Land, and R. Albert Mohler Jr

10. LAST THINGS

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Memory Verses: **John 14:1-3: 1** “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. **2** In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

The Bible depicts a timeline that includes past, present, and future. God is not trapped or limited by time. . . . From the very beginning, time was to be limited in duration. (p. 114)

Eschatology: from the Greek *Eschatos* meaning "last" and *-logy* meaning "the study of" (Wikipedia)

“IN HIS OWN TIME AND IN HIS OWN WAY”

There are many views on how the world will come to an end, but within the Southern Baptist Convention, there exists room for a variety of viewpoints. Our church holds a **pre**-tribulational (Christians are raptured from the world prior to the seven-year tribulation period) and a **pre**-millennial (Christ’s second coming is before the 1,000 year reign and Christ Himself will be present during the 1,000 year reign) view of end times. See Gary for more.

“PERSONALLY AND VISIBLY”

1 Thessalonians 4:17: Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (Referring to the rapture)

“THE DEAD WILL BE RAISED”

1 Thessalonians 4:16: For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (Referring to the rapture. Notice that Christ’s resurrection is why we can be resurrected—only because *Love Wins* do we get to be with Him.)

“UNRIGHTEOUS WILL BE CONSIGNED TO HELL”

Revelation 20:11-15: 11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. **12** And I saw the dead, small and great, standing

before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. **13** The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. **14** Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. **15** And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. **God's justice will be fully realized.** (p. 119)

“DWELL FOREVER . . . WITH THE LORD”

1 Thessalonians 4:17: Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Again, there are many sides to the ‘where will we be’ question (some believe in heaven, some believe on earth, some believe the ability to move between the two), but the answers are largely irrelevant as we will be, “**with the Lord,**” and any place, “**with the Lord,**” is infinitely better than any place without Him.

Caution: be wary of spending too much energy focusing on tomorrow or end time events. It is good to be knowledgeable so we can share the future reward/punishment options with those whom we come in contact, but the Bible commands us to focus on today and not to let slip the opportunities that are available now. My prayer is simply that of the last verse of the Bible, **Revelation 22:20:** **He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!** It’s hard to get any simpler than, “**Even so, come, Lord Jesus!**”

11. EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Memory Verses: **Romans 10:13-15:** **13** For “*whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*” **14** How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? **15** And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!*”

Evangelism: telling others about the gospel with the goal being their salvation

Missions: the church’s responsibility to evangelize all

“SEEK CONSTANTLY TO WIN”

Matthew 28:19-20: **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even to the end of the age.*” Amen. One of the greatest things about Christianity is that **God lets us be involved in it.** We have the keys to the kingdom and we are the ones who advance it for God.

Life and death hang in the balance. (p. 125)

“CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE”

Our verbal witness and our Christian lifestyle fit together—neither are particularly appealing by themselves, but when combined, they are a powerful combination that the Holy Spirit can use to draw men to Christ.

12. EDUCATION

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

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

Memory Verses: **Psalm 25:4-5: 4 Show me Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths. 5 Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day.**

Homework: Read **Deuteronomy 4-6** with your spouse—it's 'Christian Education 101' for your home. Also note that education is not limited to our children—we should endeavor to have a lifelong improvement in our knowledge of God and the Scriptures (**2 Timothy 2:15: Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**)

“FAITH OF ENLIGHTENMENT AND INTELLIGENCE”

We are not called to ignorance, but to knowledge and wisdom (**Proverbs 3:13: Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding**). This does not mean that knowledge is the highest attainment of man. Often I hear, “Education is the most important thing.” Untrue. A relationship with God is the most important thing and education is a means to that end, but it is not the end. **Ecclesiastes** teaches us that does not work.

“CHRISTIAN HERITAGE”

Passing on to our children is a large part of what we are to do as a family—take opportunities to live out **Deuteronomy 6:7: You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.** The responsibility is ours to train the next generation—but that requires that we have something to pass on.

13. STEWARDSHIP

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

Memory Verses: **Matthew 6:19-21: 19** “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; **20** but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Steward: one who actively directs affairs (Merriam-Webster)

“GOD IS THE SOURCE”

God created everything we can see as is taught in **Genesis 1:1: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.** God created our bodies and our spirits as is taught in **1 Corinthians 6:20: For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.** God also gave us the ability to be stewards of what we have as is taught in **Deuteronomy 8:18a: And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth.**

“SERVE HIM WITH THEIR TIME, TALENTS, AND MATERIAL POSSESSIONS”

And when we do, we should do it in the spirit of **Matthew 6:1-4: 1** “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. **2** Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. **3** But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly. All that is ours is at his [Christ’s] disposal. (p. 137)

“SYSTEMATICALLY” (WITH A PLAN)

When laying out financial plans, be sure that God’s plans trump your plans. You do not want to end up like the rich man in **Luke 12:16-21: 16** Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. **17** And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ **18** So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. **19** And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”’ **20** But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ **21** “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” Now, this guy sinned in a variety of ways, but one way is that there is no mention of him giving back to God. This man totally excluded God from his plans.

“PROPORTIONALLY”

Leviticus 27:30, 32: 30 And all the tithe of the land, *whether* of the seed of the land *or* of the fruit of the tree, *is* the Lord’s. *It is* holy to the Lord. **32** And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord.

“LIBERALLY”

To be liberal literally means to be **open**-handed, or generous. That’s the spirit that we’re taught to give with in **2 Corinthians 9:5: Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.**

MORE THAN A CREED

IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS. IT'S ONLY ABOUT JESUS. IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT JESUS.

OVERVIEW OF THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE

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14. COOPERATION

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

Memory Verse: **1 Corinthians 3:9: For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.**

Congregationalism: The belief that a local body of believers is directly responsible to God's authority, not to a church hierarchy (p. 143)

Voluntary association: The united, cooperative effort of churches with common beliefs to minister together in ways they could not minister alone (p. 143)

"ASSOCIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS"

Stuart Heights Baptist Church is a member of the Hamilton County Baptist Association, the Tennessee Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention. We are members of those groups by choice as we believe more can be done with our involvement in those groups than can be done without our involvement in those groups. **We do not cooperate with groups that deny the gospel of Jesus Christ or that do not accept the Bible as the Word of God.** (p. 145)

"ORGANIZATIONS HAVE NO AUTHORITY"

While we are members of those organizations, we are not subject to their authority. **Ephesians 5:25** clearly states that "**Christ is head of the church,**" and as such, no other organization can usurp the authority of the church.

"COOPERATE WITH ONE ANOTHER"

Cooperative Program: A plan of cooperation by which Southern Baptists provide financial support for ministry and missions in an ongoing, systematic way. (p. 145) The Cooperative Program includes missionary (around 5,300

missionaries), educational (six seminaries), and benevolent ministries (evangelism efforts, children's homes, volunteer missions, collegiate ministries, camps, etc.).

The spirit of cooperation is summed up in this passage: **Acts 2:44-47: 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.**

15. THE CHRISTIAN AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

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

Memory Verses: **Matthew 5:14-16: 14 You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**

The Lordship of Jesus Christ extends to every dimension of human **work** and **culture**. (p. 154)

“IMPROVEMENT OF SOCIETY”

Romans 13:1-7: 1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. 5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

“ESTABLISHMENT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”

Matthew 5:13-16: 13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. 14 “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see

your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. One of the things that we sometimes forget is that we are to be salt and light. These verses clearly imply that the salt can lose its flavor and the light can be hidden. We are called to good works so that we can redirect men to the Father.

“IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST”

Jesus was constantly making reference to those in need, as He did in **Luke 4:18-19: 18** *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; 19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”* Christ didn’t just talk about it—He did it.

Some people talk about having a relationship and not having a religion. While I understand the intent, that statement shows a misunderstanding of **James 1:27: Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.** We are called to be **religious**—and religion is activity, not formality. Religion is an active engagement in the lives of those with no means to repay as well as an active awareness of my surroundings for the purpose of my protection.

“SANCTITY OF ALL HUMAN LIFE”

I think natural extensions of those who cannot protect themselves (as the widows and orphans cannot) are those that have not yet been born. The Psalmist says in **Psalm 139:13-16: 13 For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. 14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.** The most serious problem with abortion is that it can **interfere** with God’s plans for the unborn.

16. PEACE AND WAR

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

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Memory Verse: **Romans 12:18: If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.**

“SEEK PEACE”

I prefer, ‘make peace,’ as used in **Matthew 5:9: Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.** Peacekeepers maintain what already exists while peacemakers **create** that which does not already exist.

There will be those that we interact with that test and try us. **Romans 12:18-19: 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.** But God makes all things right in His time.

“REMEDY . . . GOSPEL OF OUR LORD”

War is the result of human sinfulness. (p. 158) We are warned that our real enemy is not man, but as it is written in **Ephesians 6:12: For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers,**

against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. The object of war should be **peace**. It is easy to forget that the solution to the problems of the world is the **gospel**. The solution is not democracy. The solution is not equal rights. The solution is the gospel of Christ—the Prince of Peace (**Isaiah 9:6: For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**).

“PRAY FOR THE REIGN OF THE PRINCE OF PEACE”

But even the Prince of Peace doesn't get peace by never going to war. **Revelation 17:14: These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.** Love wins in death and love wins in war.

17. RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

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

Memory Verses: **1 Timothy 2:1-2: 1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.** We are to **SPIT** on all men.

We are not free from the commandments and doctrines of God's word. (p. 163) **Philippians 3:20: For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.** Be careful where your allegiance lies.

“CHURCH AND STATE SHOULD BE SEPARATE”

While the church is independent of the state, the state should not abandon morality.

“LOYAL OBEDIENCE”

While we may not like every aspect of our civil leadership, we are not called to anarchy as is stated in **Romans 13:1-7**. Obey the state until it conflicts God's laws—there our loyalty to the state ends. However, one of the most ignored Scriptures is the command to **pray** for our leaders. **1 Timothy 2:1-2: 1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.**

“FREE CHURCH IN A FREE STATE”

Acts 4:19-20: 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

18. THE FAMILY

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

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

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

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

Memory Verse: **Ephesians 4:32: And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**

“FOUNDATIONAL INSTITUTION OF HUMAN SOCIETY”

It's so foundational, in fact that, “**Few confessions of faith throughout the history of the church have included articles on marriage and the family because Christians through the centuries have been united in a common understanding of God's plan for marriage, family, and children.**” (p. 168)

“MARRIAGE”

God honored marriage by establishing the metaphor of the bridegroom and the bride to express the relationship between Christ and the church. Revelation 19:7: Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Ephesians 5:22-25: 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.

A healthy Christian marriage is a powerful illustration of the Gospel. (p. 171)

“CHILDREN”

Colossians 3:20: Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.