

“Christianity 101”
1, The Bible

“We believe that the Bible is the verbally inspired word of God, the final authority for faith and life, inerrant in the original writings, infallible and God-breathed.”

1. We hold that the Bible does not merely *contain* the word of God but that it is the word of God.

a. 2 Pet 1:16-21 - Peter gives us an example of the Spirit-led eye-witness testimony that Jesus said would be given (e.g, Jn 14:25-27). Here he relates his personal witness to the transfiguration of Jesus. His message:

- wasn't a cleverly invented story. Not man-made (See also re: Paul -Gal 1:11, 1 Cor 11:23).
- It was an eyewitness account.

b. 2 Tim 3:15-17 - Scripture (God's word) is God-breathed. That is, that God through people through whom He was pleased to work, conveyed His desired message accurately using their education, vocabulary etc. And, as such, His word is profitable for “doctrine, reproof, correction and training in righteousness” so that the man or woman of God might be fully equipped to do what He calls them to do. Consider:

- It was written over a 1500 year period.
- It has a unified theme - God's redemptive work for us in Christ.
- He used 40 different authors from all walks of life and educational levels: priests, shepherds, farmers, fishermen, tent makers, kings/noblemen, officials, soldiers, mothers, girls, princes, queens, scholars, bureaucrats, a physician, musicians among others were used to convey His message.

c. His message is unchanging (e.g., Mtt 5:18, Jude 1:3).

- It does not change with the “times.” If it did would it be true? Fads, changing societal mores and time cannot alter it.
- It is the ultimate authority for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3-ff).
- It is the core of ministry (See 1 Tim 4:13, 2 Tim 4:1-5)
- It is to be read, taught and proclaimed (e.g., Ne 8:4-8)
- It is the power of God. He has the last word. Always. Jn 1:1-5, Rom 1:16, Heb 1:1-3, 4:12.

* God has given us the power to apprehend it. His Spirit helps us but the unbeliever will struggle (1 Cor 2:14-16).

* The Spirit is our Teacher (See Rom 12:2, Eph 4:23, Col 1:9).

d. God intends His word to be understood -

- It is understood historically, grammatically and contextually.
 - * The duty of any teacher is to seek to honestly convey its message as given.
 - * God's word interprets itself and does not contradict itself.
- It can stand scrutiny.

**“Christianity 101”
2, The Godhead**

“We believe in one, triune God, eternally existing in three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - eternal in being, identical in nature, equal in power and glory, and having the same attributes and perfections. (Dt 6:4, 2 Cor 13:14)

1. Unity in plurality - God is shown throughout the bible to be one God, yet existing in three persons. And while the word “trinity” is not used in the bible, many passages allude to or directly indicate this (e.g, Gen 1:26-27, 3:22, 11:7, Is 6:8, 48:16; Jn 1:32-34, 14:26, 1 Cor 12:4-6, 15:26; 2 Cor 13:14, 1 Pet 1:2,)

2. God exists eternally in three persons:
 - a. Eternal in being. (Dt 32:40,)
 - b. Identical in nature. (Jn 10:30,14:9, 17:5)
 - c. Equal in power and glory. (Jn 10:16, Lk 5:23, 1 Jn 1:22)
 - d. Having the same attributes and perfections .
 - e. One (Dt 6:4, 32:39; 2 Sam 7:22, 1 Chr 17:20, Ps 83:18, Ps 86:10, Is 43:10, 44:6-7, 45:5-18, 22-25; Mk 12:29, 1 Cor 8:4, Eph 4:1-6, 1 Tim 2:5.

3. One cannot separate them. It’s all or nothing. Look at Mtt 28:18-20, Jn 5:16-30, Jn 8:14-19, 14:5-14).

4. They share the same characteristics: omnipotence (Gen 18:14, Ps 65:6), immutability (Mal 3:6, Jas 1:17), holiness (Ex 15:11, Is 6:3, Rev 15:4) omniscience (Ps 139), omnipresence (Ps 139), incorporeal (E.g., Jn 1:18, 4:24, 1 Tim 1:17, 6:16, 1 Jn 4:12 etc.)

5. They are all involved in everything: e.g., - baptism (Mtt 28:19), Spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:4-6), In Luke 1-2 God is seen to be the one who sent Gabriel to Zechariah and Mary, the Spirit enabled conception and the Son was born of Mary. Gabriel told Mary that the Lord was with her, that the Spirit would come upon her, that the power of the Most High would overshadow her and that the one born to her would be the Son of God.

“Christianity 101”
3, The Person and Work of Jesus Christ”

“We believe that the Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God, was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful men. (Jn 1:1-2, 14; Lk 1:35) We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a representative, vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice, and that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead. (Rom 3:24-25, Eph 1:7, 1 Pet 1:3-5, 2:24).

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God, where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor and Advocate. (Acts 1:9-10, Rom 8:34, Heb 9:24; 1 Jn 2:1-2)

1. The eternal Son of God - Jn 1:1-4, Heb 1:1-14, 9:26; 1 Jn 1:1-4. In the beginning He was there. All things were made by and through Him.
2. He became man (See Phil 2:1-11). Although He was (Literally) “In the form of God existing,” Form = “shape, form.” A word that describes the outer form of Christ embodying the reality of God’s essential substance (See Heb 1:1-3).
 - a. Jn 1:18, Heb 2:17 - no man has ever seen God, except through the revelation of God through Jesus. Col 2:9 - Jesus was both human and divine.
 - b. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary. Mtt 1:18-25, Lk 1:26-38. See also Gal 4:4)
 - c. In order that He might reveal God. (Jn 1:29-34)
 - d. That He might redeem (“purchase, buy out of”) sinful men. (Mtt 1:21, 1 Tim 1:15)
 - e. He accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross. (Phil 2:5-8, Heb 12:2)
 - representative - He came in our place. (Rom 5:12-21)
 - vicarious / substitutionary- “Performed or suffered by one person as a substitute for the benefit or advantage of another.” (From Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary). (Col 1:22, Heb 9:28, 1 Pet 2:22, 3:18)
 - justification (“to be pronounced/declared righteous”). Our justification is made sure by the resurrection of Jesus. (Is 53:11, Rom 4:25, 5:18)
3. He ascended to heaven (Lk 24:50-51, Act 1:9-10, 1 Tim 3:16)
 - a. He is now exalted at the right hand of God (Act 2:23, 5:31)
 - b. He is our High Priest (Heb 2:17, 3:1, 4:14, 6:20, 7:26, 8:1)
 - c. He ministers as our:
 - Representative (Rom 5:12-21)
 - Intercessor (Is 53:12, Rom 8:34)
 - Advocate. (1 Jn 2:1)

“Christianity 101”
4, The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

“We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person who convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment, and that He is the supernatural agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ, indwelling, equipping, empowering and sealing them unto the day of redemption.” (Jn 16:8-11, 1 Cor 3:16, 12:7, 12-14)

“We believe that He is the Divine Teacher who guides believers into all truth and that it is the privilege and duty of all believers to yield their selves to be filled with the Spirit.” (Jn 16:13, Eph 5:18, 1 Jn 2:20,27)

1. He is a divine person - The Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity and possesses all the attributes and prerogatives possessed by the Father and Son. For example:

- a.** Just as the Father and Son have life in themselves, so does the Holy Spirit (Jn 6:63, Rom 8:11, 2 Cor 3:6, 1 Pet 3:18).
- b.** He is shown to do all that the Father and Son do and to be all that they are (Gen 1:1-2, 1 Cor 2:10-16, Job 33:4, Ps 139:1-16, Mtt 12:32, Gal 5:22-23, Jn 14:15-17).
- c.** He is a person, not a force or emanation.
 - He is intelligent and possesses knowledge (1 Cor 2:10-11).
 - He teaches (Jn 14:16, 26)
 - He exercises His will (Act 16:6).
 - He has emotions and can be grieved (Is 63:10).
 - He guides (Jn 16:13).
 - He convicts (Jn 16:8).
 - He gives life (Tit 3:5)
 - He intercedes (Rom 8:26).
 - He commands (Act 13:2-4, 16:6, 8:29).

2. He shows us our sin (conviction) that we might turn to Christ and be saved.

3. He is the supernatural agent in regeneration (Tit 3:5-7).

- a. He baptizes all believers into the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-13).
- b. He indwells them (Jn 14:17, 1 Cor 6:19).
- c. He equips the believer for service (1 Cor 12:7).
- d. He empowers the believers for service (Eph 1:19, 3:20).
- e. He seals the believer (Eph 4:30).

4. He is the Divine Teacher who guides believers into all truth (Jn 16:13).

5. He fills those believers who yield themselves to Him (Eph 5:18).

- a. This is passive - we cannot fill ourselves. It is His work.
- b. Our part is to seek Him and offer ourselves to Him (e.g., Rom 12:1-2).

“Christianity 101”
5, Creation

“We believe the Genesis account of creation and believe that man and all things in existence came about by the direct creation of God and not by macro-evolution (Gen 1 and 2, Jn 1:3; Col 1:16-17)”

1. The Genesis account of creation. Gen 1:1 - “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Creation implies a guided, intelligent process. We do not see this earth or the universe existing as the result of random chance.

a. One has to think about this. Critics of creation decry belief in a supreme being as being unsupported by the evidence. What is the alternative? That the universe created itself? Or that it has always existed and had no beginning? That everything we see came about as the result of random chance? In creation we see:

- Order. The universe is governed by natural laws. Even in the structure of the simplest creatures there is order. Go out to supper. Usually one’s order comes to them arranged on their plate. The salad or soup brought out first, meat (hopefully) of the type chosen and cooked to order, the vegetable to the side, perhaps some bread. How did it get there? Do you believe in the cook? You haven’t seen one but there must be one behind the door to the kitchen. In the same way the complexity and order of creation implies an intelligent Maker. An explosion in a junk yard won’t yield up a newly minted auto, neither can a random, unguided process give us the complexity and design we see in life.
- As the bible relates the creative act, things very much seem to be organized in “kinds.” Anyone familiar with taxonomy can see this.
- Information seems to be in place at the simplest levels to guide life.

b. Man and all things in existence came about by the direct creation of God and not by micro-evolution.

- Change within a “kind/type/species” is certainly possible. Consider the canines: Wolves, domestic dogs, coyotes etc. are one species, capable of reproduction and producing fertile offspring. Or bovines: a Holstein bull, a Musk Ox, Bison, Yak etc. are members of the same kind. The Isolation of a breeding population over time results in specialization. .
- Information is lost and the potential for change within a population diminishes. That is why when you breed two Labrador Retrievers there isn’t a poodle in the litter.

Christianity 101
#6, The Total Depravity of Man

“We believe that man was created in the image of God, but that in Adam’s sin the race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God. That man is totally depraved, and is of himself utterly incapable of changing his lost condition (Gen 1:26-27, Rom 3:22-23, 5:12; Eph 2:1-3, 12).

- 1. Man is made in the image of God (Gen1:26-27).** We are made like Him that we may have fellowship with Him. In Gen 2 God revealed to Adam his uniqueness - he found no suitable helper.
 - a. Mankind has been the focus of God’s redemptive work.
 - b. God entrusted to mankind the stewardship of the earth. We are to use and enjoy it but not to destroy it. We are accountable. (Rev 11:18, Has 2;17)
- 2. Through Adam’s sin the race fell.** (Rom 3, 5:12-21)
 - a. We are not sinners because we sin, we sin because that is our nature.
 - b. We have become alienated from God. (Eph 2:11-12, Col 1:21)
 - c. We are totally depraved, and of ourselves utterly incapable of changing our lost condition.
 - Salvation cannot be earned or purchased by ourselves. (Is 59,63)
 - Left to ourselves, salvation is impossible (Jn 3:16, Rom 3:9-20, 6:23)

Christianity 101
#7, Salvation

“We believe that salvation is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.” (Jn 1:12, Eph 1:7, 2:8-9; 1 Pet 1:18-19)

Salvation

1. The gift of God.

- a. It cannot be purchased / acquired by human means. (Ps 49:5-9, Mtt 16:26)
- b. It is available by God’s grace alone.
 - Grace = unearned favor/kindness/favorable regard. It is not by works (Eph 2:8-9).
 - By trying to earn salvation, we only merit judgment, never salvation (See Rom 3:20, 10:1-4; Act 13:39, Gal 2:16, Heb 7:19).

2. It is received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As Jesus Himself said, “Who do you say that I am?” (Lk 9:20)

- a. Lord = Master, Owner
- b. Jesus = The Salvation of God.
- c. Christ = The Anointed One, Messiah.

3. His blood was shed on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. (Heb 9:11-14)

- a. It was a once for all sacrifice (Heb 7:27, 9:12, 9:26-28, 10:8-10)
- b. God remembers our sins and lawless acts no more if we are His (Heb 10:17).

4. He was physically raised from the dead (Rom 1:4)

- a. In accordance with the scripture (E.g., Is 53)
- b. For our justification (Rom 4:25).

Christianity 101
8, Eternal Security

“We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God’s power and are thus secure in Christ forever. (Jn 6:37-40, 10:27-30; Rom 8:1, 38-39; 1 Cor 4:8, 1 Pet 1:5)

1. There is a vast difference between a “nominal” faith and genuine salvation.

- a. It isn’t those who *look* like believers but rather, those who are believers.
 - For example, look at Mtt 7:21-27, Heb 2:1-4, 3:7-4:13 (esp. 3:12).
 - See Heb 10:19-31 - Genuine faith produces fruit, undergoes and responds to discipline.
- b. Going through the motions and participating with a group alone, isn’t enough.
 - There is no humanly observable “test” for salvation. Never forget that we are not the Holy Spirit. We’re not even “fruit inspectors.” God alone weighs the motives and state of the mind (See Jer 17:9-10).
 - If a person professes faith in Christ yet manifests no outward evidence of that faith, there are only two possibilities:
 - * They are yet unredeemed; being merely a religious unbeliever (2 Cor 13:5).
 - * Their faith is genuine but they are not living it out. They are subject to discipline (e.g., Act 5, 1 Cor 5).
 - Those who are not living their faith will suffer a loss of reward (1 Cor 3:10-15) and may lack any assurance of their salvation (2 Pet 1:3-11). How does one make their “calling and election sure?” (1 Jn 3:18-20)

2. Those who are redeemed *will* persevere to the end.

- a. Jude 24-25 He is able!
- b. Phil 1:6 God completes what He initiates.

What are you depending on for a right standing with God? If it is anything other than Christ you are not “there.”

Are you sure of your position as God’s child? Would you like to be? Seek and serve Him!

Christianity 101
9, The Two Natures of the Believer

“We believe that every saved person possesses two natures; with provision made for the victory of the new nature through the indwelling Holy Spirit and that all claims to the eradication of the old nature in this life are contrary to the clear teaching of the Bible.” (Rom 6:13, 8:12; Gal 5:16-25, Eph 4:22-24, Col 3:10, 1 Pet 1:14-16, 1 Jn 3:5-9).

A great passage that describes this is found in Rom 6:1-23

1. Just because Jesus died for our sin doesn't grant us license **Rom 6:1-14**

- a. How can we who died to sin live in it any longer?
 - b. All of us who are baptized into Jesus are baptized into His death.
 - We were buried with Him through baptism to live a new life.
 - We are united with Him in His death and resurrection.
 - * Our old nature was crucified with Him to do away with the body of sin - it no longer enslaves us. (1 Cor 10:13). We are free.
 - * Because He lives, we live - the power of death/sin is broken.
 - c. Our Lord's sacrifice for sin was a one time act, and He lives to God, so we are to count (“reckon, conclude, decide, consider”) ourselves dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus our Lord.
 - Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body. Yes, we will continue to sin but:
 - * Seek to honor and submit to Him. M. Luther was once asked why a believer should even try not to sin if it was a foregone conclusion that they will sin. He answered that just because birds can fly over your head didn't mean you should “let them nest in your hair.” You get the idea.
 - * We are forgiven (Rom 8:1). Rejoice!
 - Sin shall not be your master - you are under grace.

2. What then, shall we not fight sin because we are under grace? By no means **Rom 6:15-23**
(“Never may it be” - the same as in vs 2)!

- a. We each need to choose who we will serve and what fruit we want to bear - see Gal 5:13-26.
- b. God has set us free to serve Him.
- c. Choose!
 - Once you had no choice and were condemned.
 - Now we can live out our faith.
- d. What benefit did we reap from ungodly living in our past? It condemned us.
 - We have been set free to serve God and reap eternal life.
 - The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life!

Christianity 101
10, Separation

“We believe that the saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Lord, and that separation from all religious apostasy, sinful practices and associations is commanded by God.” (Rom 12:1-2, 14:13; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1, 2 Tim 3:1-5, 1 Jn 2:15-17)

1. Look up 1 Pet 2:9-12 Peter makes the point that because although we once were not God’s people and had not received mercy, our reality as Christians is altered. We are a chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation a people belonging to God.

- a. Our purpose is to make Him known here.
- b. And as His people we are called to abstain from sinful desires that “war” (“*wage war, fight*”) against our souls.
- c. In Tit 1:10-16 - Some people adhere to sound doctrine but deny God by their lives.
 - See 1 Tim 5:8
 - See Jude 1:4 - They turn God’s grace into a license for immorality and deny our Lord (Jn 14:21).
 - See 1 Jn 2:15-17 - We are not to march to the “drumbeat” of this world.

2. Look up 2 Jn 1:10-11 John here urges either a woman or a church to avoid false teachers/teaching and not to aid them in their “work.”

- a. Understand what apostasy is: It is a “falling away” from, a withdrawal, a defection from the faith.
 - Understand what is essential to the Christian faith. This must be our basis for unity.
 - If there is no unity in essentials, then there can be no unity in purpose.
 - If there is unity in the essentials and in life, we can work together (Mk 9:38-41, Phil 2:2, 3:15).
- b. Do not make common cause with those who deny the faith.

Christianity 101
11, Missions

“We believe that it is the obligation of the saved to bear witness by word and deed to the truths of the bible and to seek to proclaim the gospel to all mankind. (Mk 16:15, Act 1:8, 2 Cor 5:18-6:2) To examine this from the pages of scripture look at Col 4:2-6

1. Devote yourselves (*continue steadfastly in, persist in, stay firm in,*” the idea being to continue to stay at it, expending whatever effort is needed. Like the Nike commercial - “Just do it!”) **to prayer. In outreach it is vital to pray and seek the Lord. It is a major component of evangelism. Pray for people, for opportunity, for the ability to speak clearly.**

a. Being watchful (“to be awake, alert”).

b. Being thankful.

c. Pray for open doors for the gospel (“*mystery of Christ*”). Ask for opportunities! (1 Cor 16:8-9, Eph 6:19-20)

d. Pray for those who proclaim it to be clear!

2. Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders (“*those outside*”).

a. Make the most of every opportunity (“buying up the time”). This is part of being alert in prayer and asking for guidance. If we are looking for opportunities we will likely not waste them.

b. Let God lead you in your conversation (“speech, words”).

- Cultivate the habit of thinking/praying before speaking.

- Pray for an opening.

- Be open to God’s leading (There are “seasons” in ministry - Act 14:27, 1 Cor 3:5-9).

- We all have differing gifts. (1 Cor 12).

Bear witness

In word - 1 Cor 5:12-13, Eph 4:29-32, Col 4:6, 1 Pet 3:15-16

In deed - Mtt 5:16, Eph 5:3-7, 11; Col 1:13, 4:5; 1 Tim 3:7, 1 Pet 2:11-12

As a matter of priority:

We as a congregation (and many individuals) support missions.

We reach out in our community. (AWANA, VBS, other outreaches etc.)

Christianity 101
12, The Ministry and Spiritual Gifts

“We believe that God is sovereign in the bestowment of all His gifts, and that the gifts of evangelist, pastor and teacher are sufficient for the perfecting of the saints today.* (2 Cor 12:12, Eph 4:7-12) We believe that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith, in accordance with His own will, for the sick and afflicted, and the safety of His saints. (Jn 15:7, Act 12:5-11, Jas 5:14-15)

** This statement could use an adjustment. The prophetic gift is far more often forth-telling (preaching) than fore-telling (prediction) in scripture. Additionally musical thanksgiving and praise are equated with the prophetic gift in 1 Chron 25:1-31 (esp in vs 3).*

1 Cor 12

1. God does not want us to be ignorant regarding spiritual gifts (Lit: “spiritual things”).

- a. The exercise of God’s gifting in us will never bring dishonor on the Lord Jesus but will always exalt Him. (12:1-3)
- b. God in His fullness is active in the administration of His gifts. (12:4-6)
- c. The manifestation of the Spirit (through His gifting) is given to each one (believer) for the common good. This is important. It is a joy to serve God and use the gifts He gives us for the welfare of His church. But, they are not for personal edification. (12:7)
- d. God’s gifting in the church is as diverse as its members (12:8-30, Rom 12:3-8, Eph 4:7-16, 1 Pet 4:7-11).

2. God has gifted certain people to equip the church (Eph 4:7-16)

- a. To prepare God’s people for works of service.
- b. To produce unity, maturity and stability in the church.

3. God is changeless and still heals when it is within His will for us (see 2 Cor 12:7-10). It is always right to pray for it and trust God to do what is best for us in accordance with His will.

**Christianity 101
13, The Church**

“We believe that a local church is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by a covenant of faith and by the fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, and exercising the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by His word; that its officers are pastor/teachers, deacons and deaconesses whose qualifications, claims and duties are clearly defined in the bible.”

We believe that the true mission of the church is the faithful proclamation of the gospel of our Lord to all men as we have opportunity.

We hold that the local church has the absolute right of self government, free from the inheritance of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations; and that the one and only superintendent is Christ, through the Holy Spirit; that it is scriptural for the churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the gospel; that each local church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation in all matters of membership, policy, government, discipline or benevolence, the will of the local church being final. (Acts 15:13-18, 20:17-28, 41-42; 1 Cor 11:2; Eph 1:22-23, 4:11; 5:23-24; Col 1:18; 1 Tim 3:17)

Christianity 101
13, The Church
1 Cor 12:12-26

1. An organized organism (“Its alive!”)

- a. Regenerated by the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5, 1 Cor 12:12-13, Tit 3:3-5, 1 Pet 1:3)

- b. Upon placing one’s faith in Christ:
 - We were baptized into the Body of Christ (Church)
 - We were sealed by the Holy Spirit (Jn 10:25-30, Eph 1:13-14, 4:32)
 - We were indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:17, Rom 8:9, 1 Cor 3:16)
 - We were equipped for service by the Holy Spirit (Rom 12:3-8, 1 Cor 12:7+11)
 - * Given gifts for ministry (1 Cor 12:7)
 - * We are to be trained for service (Eph 4:7-16)
 - * We are called to discipleship and mutual commitment/ encouragement (e.g, Heb 10:19-25)
 - * We are called to make Christ known (e.g, 1 Pet 3:13-22)

- c. It has a divinely-ordered structure.
 - Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers (Eph 4:11-16).
 - Elders* (1 Tim 3:1-7, 5:17-25, Tit 1:5-9).
 - Deacons / Deaconesses (1 Tim 3:8-13, Rom 16:1-2).
 - Local Assembly (serve in outreach, care, etc).

2. The Local Church should be made up of baptized believers. Baptism is a command (Matt 28:16-20, Act 2:37-39).

3. We (believers) are to be mutually committed to one another. (See 1 Cor 12:14-26)

4. As a church we are to pursue gospel based fellowship and cooperation with other congregations.

- a. The local church is to observe the ordinances instituted by Christ (baptism/ communion). (1 Cor 11:17-34).

- c. The local church we believe to be self governing and free from an imposed external hierarchy (i.e., a denomination).

- d. The local church is to be solely responsible in determining how, when and if we engage in cooperative ministry with other congregations.

* The terms, “elder,” “bishop (or overseer)” and “pastor” describe the same office.

Christianity 101 # 14 Christian Giving

“We believe that the support of God’s program and local; church should be by the free will offerings of God’s people.” 1 Cor 16:2, 2 Cor 9:7

This is the portion of our statement of faith that deals with giving. We call it “Christian Giving” because it should be different from the manner in which the world gives. Jesus confronted the proud spirit of His own age (Mtt 6:1-2, Lk 22:24). People gave but with strings attached. If they helped you, you owed them. And they likely wouldn’t let you forget it either. You see, giving can be selfish. Christian giving has as its object, God and as its motive, love and gratitude.

1. Giving should be an act of worship

- a.** If God doesn’t have us, our giving has no spiritual significance. Giving apart from worship is worthless.
- b.** Giving is not a means to an end (Act 5:2 Cor 9:9-12, 1 Tim 6:3-10).
 - God is not a gum-ball machine. Giving so we can gain is mere self worship.
 - Giving for the wrong reason yields it’s own, temporal reward (Mtt 6:1-4).

2. God’s work and church are to be supported by the free-will offering of His people.

- a.** The tithe is a mis-applied and mis-understood concept.
 - Dt 14:12-29, Dt 26:12-15, Am 4:4
 - * In Dt 14 10% of a person’s annual gain was to be put aside for family worship. Although a portion of their offering was given to the priests/levites, the family ate the lion’s share.
 - * Every third year the 10% was to be taken to the storehouse to care for the Levites, orphans, widows and stranded aliens. Israel was a nation and the tithe a tax.
 - * The NT counterpart of the tithe is taxes, revenue, fees etc. to support govt. (Rom 13:1-7). Pay your fair share, no more or less.
- b.** The tithe is a good guideline but not a command for the church.
- c.** For the church, giving is:
 - A matter of worship (2 Cor 8:1-7, 2 Cor 9:7)
 - Accepted based on motive (Compare Mtt 6:2 w/ 2 Cor 8:12).
 - According to one’s ability (E.g., Lev 14:30, Det 16:17, Ezr 2:69, Act 11:29).
 - An act of worship (Mtt Mtt 6:2, 23:23-24, Lk 11:42).
 - A privilege (1 Chr 29:14, 2 Cor 9:6-15)
 - A recognition of our common bond in Christ (1 Jn 3:16-24).

Christianity 101
#15 Baptism and Communion

“We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water, to show forth in a solemn and beautiful symbol our faith in the crucified, buried and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to new life. We believe that communion is the commemoration of Christ’s death until He comes again and should be preceded always by solemn self-examination. (JN 3:23, Acts 8:38-39, Ro 6:3-5, 1 Cor 11:23-28, Col 2:12).

1. Baptism:

- a.** A public declaration of faith in Christ, made in obedience to His command.
 - Matt 28:16-19 -
 - * The apostles were not commanded to make converts, but *disciples*. A disciple is “one who follows.” To make disciples is to teach and instruct those who have placed their faith in Christ. A disciple is a believer.
 - * Baptize (“to sink, dip, submerge”) - Col 2:9-12.
- b.** Baptism is an identification with Christ in His death and resurrection (Rom 6:3-4, 8; 1 Cor 6:14).
- c.** It is a reminder to us that we are dead not sin and alive to God through our Lord (Rom 6).
- d.** The only prerequisite for baptism is faith in Christ. No lengthy classes etc. In Act 8:36, the Ethiopian official who had just placed his faith in Christ asked for and was granted, baptism. In Act 16:31-34 the jailer at Philippi and his family who had that very night placed their faith in Christ were baptized.

2. Communion:

- a.** Communion is the commemoration of Christ’s death until He comes again (1 Cor 11:26).
- b.** It is for believers. Although some churches practice a “closed” communion in which only baptized members of their congregation may participate, we at Standish Bible Church do not.
 - We believe that communion should be open to anyone who has placed their faith in Christ.
 - Regarding children, it is the parent’s duty to:
 - * Ensure that their children hear and understand the gospel.
 - * Determine when a child is mature enough in their understanding to participate in communion. If a child believes, understands and if their parent(s) believe that they are ready, they may participate.
- c.** Before participating in communion, we need to examine ourselves (1 Cor 11:27-32)

Who should not participate in communion:

- *Those who have not yet placed their trust in Christ. This is for believers.*
- *Those who believe but are not right with God. Practicing behavior that they know is wrong and are unwilling to confront it.*

But, those who are battling the world, their own weakness etc. but yet are seeking the Lord need not worry. Rejoice and partake!

Communion = "participation, sharing in" When we join in we acknowledge that Christ died for us, to pay for sin. In a very real sense, we died with Him because it was for our sin that He died. And not only do we share in the sacrifice of Christ but we share in it together.

- *1 Cor 10:14-17 - the cup is a participation in the blood of Christ. It is a recognition that He died for us.*
- *The bread we break is a participation in the body of Christ. It not only recognizes the substitutionary nature of His sacrifice but the joint participation of the community of faith that He has redeemed. Just as there are many believers so there are many pieces of bread. Just as there is one loaf from which those pieces come, we as believers form one body, the church.*

Christianity 101
#16 The Personality of Satan
Zech 3:1-5

“We believe that Satan is a person, the author of sin, and the cause of the Fall; that he is the open and declared enemy of God and man; that he shall be eternally punished in the Lake of Fire. (Job 1:6-7, Is 14:13-17, Mtt 4:2, 11, 25:41; Rev 20:10).

In this passage three things are seen. The nature of our adversary, and the greatness and grace of God expressed in salvation.

1. The Accuser

- a.** Joshua the high priest is shown to the prophet Zechariah in a vision. In this vision Joshua is standing before God and Satan is at his right hand accusing him. This is what he does. He slanders us before the Lord after trying to lead us to disobey Him.
- His goal is our destruction and impotence (Lk 22:31, 1 Pet 5:8, 2 Cor 2:1-11).
 - His goal is to keep unbelievers from trusting Christ (Mtt 13:22, Act 26:18, 2 Cor 4:4).
- b.** He works in this world to oppose God.
- He is the “prince of the power of the air.” That is, his realm is the world (See also Jn 12:31, 14:30). He tries to control it (1 Jn 5:19).
 - He usurped our position as stewards over Gods’ creation at the Fall.
- c.** He was the “covering cherub” (Ez 28:11-19), the angel who seeks exaltation above his Maker (Is 14:12-15).
- He is an enemy of God and His people, (Eph 6:12) and the church is a witness to him (Eph 3:10).
 - He craves the worship the belongs only to God. His servants (fallen angels) are the ones to whom (and through them, to Satan) false worship is made (Dt 32:17, Ps 106:37, 1 Cor 10:20, Rev 9:20).
- d.** His condemnation and punishment is certain (Rev 20:10)
- His greatest miscalculation was the cross (Jn 12:31, Jn 16:11, 1 Cor 2:6-10, Col 2:15).
 - He is facing his end and total defeat and he has...an attitude (Rev 12:12).

2. God's answer to Satan in Zech 3 - "The Lord rebuke you!"

- a.** The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!
 - God is the Lord of all (Is 45:21-25), He has the final word (Is 55:1-13).
 - God who has chosen Jerusalem. Satan has always centered much of his wrath and plots against the Jews, God's plan and the church. Jerusalem figures prominently in these. It won't do Satan any good (See Zech 12:3).

- b.** God called Joshua a "burning stick snatched from the fire (What a picture of *any* sinner saved by grace!).
 - God removed Joshua's filthy clothes (His sin - Is 64:6, Rev 7:14).
 - God put rich garments on Joshua. When we are saved, God clothes us in His righteousness. (Gal 3:27, Phil 3:9, Col 3:10).
 - * It cannot be earned (Tit 3:3-7)
 - * It is by grace (Undeserved kindness/favor - e.g., see Eph 2:1-10).

3. Some things to consider

- a.** Satan is the chief fallen angel and his power is vast - but his power is nothing compared to that of God.

- b.** Satan has a myriad of fellow fallen angels (demons) who serve him in his rebellion. There are two dangers in dealing with this. Seeing demons "under every rock" and ignoring the fact that we have enemies.

- c.** The Holy Spirit living in us is greater than the enemy (1 Jn 4:4).
 - Satan ET AL for the believer are akin to a dog on a chain - they can bark but they cannot possess them.
 - He can try to tempt, deflect us from God's purpose for us, and use us if we cooperate. But, the child of God belongs to God and are sealed by His Spirit (See Jn 10:22-30, Jn 2:13, 1 Jn 5:18).

- d.** The best defense? Walk with the Lord and keep "short accounts." Know who you are in Christ. Seek God through the word to defend against the enemy's lies (Jn 8:44).

Christianity 101
#17 The Second Coming
Part 1 The “Rapture” of the Church
1 Thess 4:13-5:11

“We believe that the Second Coming of the Church will be preceded by the Rapture of the saints, which is our blessed hope, followed by the visible return of Christ with His saints to reign on earth for one thousand years, and the establishment of universal peace. (PS 72:3-8, Is 11:6-9, Zech 14:1-5, Mic 4:1-5, Rom 11:25-27, 1 Thess 1:10, Rev 3:10)

1 Thess 4:13-5:11 “The Rapture”

1. We are not to be ignorant about fellow believers who die nor should we mourn like the rest of men who have no hope.

2. We believe that:

- a.** God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him.
 - According to get Lord’s own word we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep in Him.
 - For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven
 - * with a loud command
 - * with the voice of the archangel
 - * with the trumpet call of God.
 - The dead in Christ will rise first.

- b.** After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up in the together with them in the clouds to meet to meet the Lord in the air.

- c.** And we will be with the Lord forever.

3. Therefore comfort each other with these words.

Part 2 The Second Coming
Rev 20:1-6

1. The millennium (1,000 year reign)

- a.** Satan will be bound and imprisoned for 1000 years.
- b.** The tribulation saints will be resurrected and reign with Christ.

Christianity 101
18 The Eternal State
Rev 20:11-21:5

“We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men; the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment; (Mt 25:46, 2 Cor 5:8, Phil 1:23, 3:21; 1 Thes 4:16-17; Rev 20:4-6). We believe that the souls of unbelievers remain in Hades (“Hell”) after death, in conscious misery until the second resurrection, when, with soul and body reunited, they shall appear at the Last Judgement before the throne of God and shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, not to be annihilated, but to suffer everlasting, conscious punishment. (Mt 25:41-46; Mk 9:43-48; Lk 16:19-26; 1 Thess 1:7-9; Jude 6-7; Rev 20:11-15)

1. We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men:

- a. The saved (believers in Christ) to eternal life (New Heavens and Earth) see Is 65:17, 66:22, Rev 6:14, 21:1).
- b. The home of believers will be the place of righteousness. Once saved we are delivered from the penalty and power of sin. There, we will not even have to reckon with its presence. Can you imagine this? In our present state it is foreign to us.
- c. We will be in the state where everything is clear. Look at 1 Cor 13:8-13:

Now	Then
We know that knowledge, prophesy and language will pass.	We will have perfect clarity (back to before Babel?)
We prophesy in part, speak and reason like children (imperfect in knowledge etc.)	Perfection comes, childish ways are put behind us.
We see but a poor reflection (as in an old Metal mirror).	We will see “face to face,” that is, with clarity.
We know in part.	We will know and be known fully.
Abide faith, hope and love.	Love is the greatest (e.g. 1 Jn 4:7-8)

2. The unsaved will be raised to judgment and everlasting punishment.

a. The souls of unbelievers remain in Hades/Hell after death, conscious until the Second Resurrection. See Lk 16:19-31.

b. When they are raised, the unrighteous will appear at the Last Judgment and be cast into the Lake of Fire. A note here is in order:

- The Lake of Fire was not created for humanity, but for the devil and his angels. See Matt 25:41

- But, those who reject God and His salvation, whether they are conscious of it or not, are followers of Satan, “the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.” Eph 2:2b.

- * There are people who serve the enemy by choice.

- * How much more tragic is it when people who don’t give him a second thought join in his rebellion and share in his punishment! See Ps 10:2-7.

Christianity 101
19 Marriage and Human Sexuality
1 Thess 4 :3-8

“We believe that marriage is a union ordained by God (Gen 2:24). This church defines marriage as the exclusive, covenantal union of one man and one woman in a lifetime commitment (Mtt 19:4-6). A civil government’s sanction of such a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by this church only to the extent that it is consistent with the definition of marriage stated in this section of the church constitution. Further, legitimate sexual relations are exercised solely within marriage (1 Cor 7:1-2), 1 Thess 4:3-8). Hence, sexual activity outside of marriage (referred to in the New Testament as “porneia”) is inconsistent with the teaching of the bible and this church.”

1. Marriage - a divinely established relationship. Gen 2:24

- a.** It is an exclusive relationship (No polyandry or polygamy). It is a covenantal union of one man and one, woman in a lifetime commitment (See Mtt 19:4-6).
 - Gen 2:23-25 - God ordained marriage before the Fall.
 - Matt 19:1-10, Dt 24:1-4 - After man became a fallen being, God allowed divorce as a concession to that fact. Humanity is fallen. “Moses...” - spoke by the Holy Spirit. “All scripture is God - breathed (2 Tim 3:15-17).
 - * The religious teachers of Jesus’ day taught that a man could divorce his wife for “any and every reason.”
 - * Jesus denied this, pointing to the intent of God for man as expressed in the bible. The only biblical grounds for divorce and remarriage is adultery. The injured party is free to remarry. The offending party if divorced, is to remain single for life.

- b.** A civil government’s sanction of a marriage means nothing if the marriage is not in accord with the biblical definition of marriage.

2. Legitimate sexual relations are exercised solely within marriage (1 Cor 7:1-2, 1 Thess 4:3-8)

- a.** Sexual activity outside of marriage is inconsistent with the teaching of the Bible and this church.

- b.** To reject God’s teaching concerning this is not to reject man but God.
 - Cohabitation is *not* godly. It is in fact a training ground for divorce.
 - Jesus did not equate cohabitation with a marriage commitment (Jn 4:16-18).
 - To reduce sexual expression to mere recreation or to divorce it from a marriage commitment / covenant is to defile something that God made holy.
 - * We are more than mere animals - we are made in the image of our Creator.
 - * Flee sexual immorality. Your body is God’s temple. You are bought with a price.