

# Teaching Doctrinal Statement

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## Teaching Doctrinal Statement

### Purpose:

Partners of New Life affirm and commit to grow in our 30 Core Competencies, which outline our core beliefs, practices, and virtues. However, our teaching is more comprehensive than those Core Competencies can define. Therefore, to unify our teaching and ensure the continuance of biblical faithfulness into the future this *Teaching Doctrinal Statement* (TDS) expands on and defines in greater detail the theology that undergirds New Life's teaching. Our elders, pastors, and directors affirm the TDS, and all teachers representing New Life agree to teach in concert with it.<sup>1</sup>

New Life's 30 Core Competencies are fundamentally a document expounding primary (and some secondary) doctrinal issues.<sup>2</sup> This Teaching Doctrinal Statement goes beyond that, to deal with secondary, tertiary, and quaternary doctrines. As one endeavors away from primary doctrine, nuance increases, and more grace, kindness, and humility are required.<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that many doctrines have parts that fit within multiple rankings and sometimes must be broken down further to be understood. We define these levels of doctrine this way:

- **Primary Doctrines** are a biblical confession of Christ, a submission to the Bible as the only inspired written Word of God,<sup>4</sup> and some of the most fundamental elements of Christian doctrines such as the Trinity, soteriology, and the return of Christ. Primary doctrines are salvific and matters of Christian orthodoxy; to deny them is to be a part of a cult or false religion.<sup>5</sup>

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1. **Titus 1:9** He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.
  2. **Philippians 2:1-4** So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.
  3. **2 Timothy 2:2** and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.
  4. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.  
**2 Peter 1:20-21** knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
  5. **2 Timothy 1:13-14** Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.  
**Matthew 23:23** Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe the mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.  
**1 Corinthians 3:10-15** According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw — each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that

- **Secondary Doctrines** pertain to the functioning of a local church. While primary doctrines circumscribe orthodoxy, faithful Christian brothers and sisters can and do disagree on important secondary doctrines.<sup>6</sup> How baptism and communion are practiced, leadership is structured, or spiritual gifts are practiced fall into this camp. Unity here is a matter of choice for the sake of fellowship in a local church. These doctrines are not necessarily more important than tertiary doctrines but are matters of practical function for any Christian community.
- **Tertiary Doctrines** are understood to be clearly taught in scripture but are not salvific and do not justify division amongst Christians. Reformed doctrine, Christ's fulfillment of the Old Covenant, and the natures of God's will are all tertiary doctrines. Unity here is a matter of leadership and teaching; otherwise, it is an arena to respect divergent thought when it is likewise submissive to scripture.<sup>7</sup>
- **Quaternary Doctrines** are found in three categories: matters of conscience, modes of application, and areas of doctrine that lack biblical clarity. A difference in all of these from tertiary doctrines is that unity is sought by consistently setting aside personal preference without imposing it on others.
  - **Matters of conscience** are personal moral convictions of right and wrong that are not explicitly commanded in scripture. While being informed from scripture, they do not universally apply to all Christians. These issues are commonly in the realms of diet, entertainment,

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anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

**1 Corinthians 15:1-4** Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

**Galatians 1:8-9** But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

6. **Romans 15:5-7** May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

**Ephesians 4:13-14** until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

7. **Acts 20:27-28** for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

**Romans 14:1-6** As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

clothing, parenting, schooling choices, holiday traditions, civil engagement, politics, medical interventions, or participation in religious or cultural ceremonies.<sup>8</sup> It is good to have strong convictions in these things and to apply them personally. It is not good to impose them on others.<sup>9</sup>

- **Modes of application** have to do with defining things, such as modesty, patriotism, or sabbath in specific ways that go beyond scripture and do not apply across cultural borders. Like matters of conscience, applications cannot be imposed on others.<sup>10</sup>
- **Areas of doctrine that lack biblical clarity** are found in many areas. Basic elements of some doctrines, such as creation and eschatology, are primary doctrines (God is the creator of all things and Jesus is coming back). But the lion's share of both doctrines lack the biblical clarity to be held dogmatically and are thus quaternary in nature.<sup>11</sup>

So, in addition to the Core Competencies, we believe:

### **Bible:**

We believe the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments comprise the Bible and are the only inspired written Word of God.<sup>12</sup> The Bible is the supreme and final authority in all matters to which it speaks. It informs the pursuit of all truth, even

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8. **Romans 14:1** As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.
  9. **1 Corinthians 10:32-33** Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.
  10. **1 Corinthians 9:19-23** For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.
  11. **1 Corinthians 13:9-12** For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

**Deuteronomy 29:29** The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

**Romans 11:33-36** Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

**1 Corinthians 4:6** I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.

12. **2 Timothy 3:16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness

**Ephesians 2:20** [God's household is] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

truth not addressed directly within its pages.<sup>13</sup> It is infallible and without error in the original manuscripts.<sup>14</sup> Through it we know God<sup>15</sup> and by submitting to it we submit to God.

All scripture is God breathed, written by men who were carried along by the Holy Spirit.<sup>16</sup> Thus the meaning of scripture is bound within the intentions of God and of human authors, along with the cultural, creative, lingual, and historical realities in which they lived. While the Bible may be applied differently in various circumstances, no passage of scripture will mean something today that was not originally intended.<sup>17</sup> Therefore a proper study of scripture will include:

## 1. Prayer

The Spirit of God is present in both the divine and human authorship, and the Spirit illumines our eyes to truth. Therefore, all Bible study requires a humble God-dependent posture of prayer to receive from God.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. Context

All passages are defined within the context they were written. Thus, the surrounding verses, chapters, book, author, genre, and rest of the Bible are

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13. **Psalm 19:7-10** The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

**Psalm 119:105** Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

14. **Psalm 12:6** The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times

**Proverbs 30:5** Every word of God proves true; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him

**Isaiah 40:8** The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever

**Matthew 5:18** For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished

**Matthew 24:35** Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

15. **John 5:39** You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.

16. **2 Peter 1:21** For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

17. **2 Peter 3:16** As he (Paul) does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

18. **John 14:26** But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you

**John 16:13** When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come;

**1 Corinthians 2:14** The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to Him, and He is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

essential to the interpretation of any passage. The Bible is the only infallible standard to interpret itself. In trying to understand a difficult passage there are often clearer passages addressing the same concept that must direct the interpretation of the more difficult passage.

### 3. Language

Word studies and rules of grammar are useful in interpreting passages. While this is best done in the original languages, utilizing multiple trusted English translations and editor's notes assists in understanding the meaning of a passage.

### 4. Historical Background

Aspects of the culture in which the Bible was written are often foreign to us today, so historical background adds insight to the original meaning of a passage.

### 5. Community

The Bible was given by God to the people of God. Therefore, interpreting scripture accurately includes listening to others. This provides wisdom and protects us from the errors inherent in one person's perspective.<sup>19</sup> Listening to the historic church community further provides us with God's providential shaping of orthodoxy through time and mitigates against the cultural blinders of any one culture or generation.<sup>20</sup>

The Old Testament is fully inspired and forms the foundation for the New Testament. It finds its fulfillment in Christ and the New Testament.<sup>21</sup> In this, there are three principles which establish the logical priority of newer passages over older ones, particularly of the NT over the OT. These three principles are:

1. Newer passages shed light on older ones. There is a progressive nature to God's revelation that can be seen in the fact that the prophets at times

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19. **Proverbs 11:14** Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety

**Acts 15:22** Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.

20. **Isaiah 46:9-10** "Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all My purpose'."

**Jeremiah 6:16** Thus says the LORD: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls."

21. **Matthew 5:17** "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

critique the law,<sup>22</sup> and the gospels at times reinterpret the prophets.<sup>23</sup>

2. Jesus, the Apex of God's revelation, is the supreme fulfillment and Lord over all that came before Him.<sup>24</sup> The Ten Commandments reveal God's nature to us, yet Jesus is the radiance of the Glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature.<sup>25</sup> Jesus Christ reigns as King so supremely over the OT that He variously maintains, reinterprets, and even changes OT Law.<sup>26</sup> The law is not abolished in Christ, but it only applies to Christians as it is fulfilled in Christ. Jesus is the new law giver, therefore while Christians are not under OT law, they are under the law of Christ.<sup>27</sup>

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22. **Isaiah 1:11-15** "What to Me is the multitude of your sacrifices?" says the LORD; "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required of you this trampling of My courts? Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood."

23. **Matthew 2:14-15** And he rose and took the child and His mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called My son" (**Hosea 11:1**).

24. **Luke 24:44** Then He said to them, "These are My words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

**Colossians 2:17** These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

25. **Hebrews 1:1-2** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.

26. **Matthew 5:21-22** "You have heard that it was said to those of old... 'But I say to you'..." These phrases occur five times in the Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5:21, 27, 33, 38, 43**), where Jesus establishes Himself as the new lawgiver.

**Mark 2:28** So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.

**Hebrews 8:13** In speaking of a new covenant, He makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

**Romans 10:4** For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

27. **1 Corinthians 9:20-21** To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.

**Ephesians 2:20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.

3. The New Testament is a foundation of the Church and the continuation of the teaching of Jesus. For in it the Spirit glorifies Jesus by taking from what is Christ's and revealing it to us.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, when studying the Bible, one must ask how a passage ought to be interpreted in light of Jesus Christ and the greater revelation of the Holy Spirit through the NT.

We specifically refute the inspiration of both the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. The Bible is the sufficient Word of God and is not to be added to by either a claim of inspiration or by the traditions of men. The Apocrypha is worthwhile as a source for historical study, understanding that it is not inspired. Pseudepigraphal books on the other hand are not historically accurate and teach false doctrine.

### **God's Glory:**

From God, through God, and to God – everything exists for and is purposed for His glory.<sup>29</sup> God is glorious,<sup>30</sup> with an overwhelming beauty that radiates from the sum total of all His attributes working together in perfect harmony. God is perfect in

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

29. **Isaiah 6:3** "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory."

**Romans 11:36** For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen;

**Hebrews 2:10** For it was fitting that He, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

30. **Exodus 15:11** "Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?"

**Psalms 113:4-5** The LORD is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens! Who is like the LORD our God, who is seated on high?

holiness,<sup>31</sup> justice,<sup>32</sup> beauty,<sup>33</sup> wisdom,<sup>34</sup> power,<sup>35</sup> grace,<sup>36</sup> mercy,<sup>37</sup> and love.<sup>38</sup> His ultimate goal in creating and governing the universe is to display His own glory.<sup>39</sup>

So, we can confidently say that our chief aim in all things is to glorify God<sup>40</sup> and enjoy Him forever.<sup>41</sup> For God is glorified in our enjoyment of Him.

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31. **1 Peter 1:16** Since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."
32. **Isaiah 5:16** But the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows Himself holy in righteousness.
33. **Psalms 50:2** Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.
34. **Romans 11:33** Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways!
35. **Jeremiah 32:17** "Ah, Lord GOD! It is You who have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for You."
36. **2 Corinthians 12:9** But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
37. **Romans 12:1** I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
- 1 Peter 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
38. **1 John 4:16** So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in Him.
39. **Isaiah 43:25** "I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins."
- Isaiah 48:9-11** "For My name's sake I defer My anger; for the sake of My praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. For My own sake, for My own sake, I do it, for how should My name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another."
- Ezekiel 20:14** But I acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out.
40. **Isaiah 43:7** Everyone who is called by My name, whom I created for My glory, whom I formed and made.
- 1 Corinthians 10:31** So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
- Colossians 3:17** And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.
- 1 Peter 4:11** whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
41. **Psalms 73:26** My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
- Lamentations 3:24** "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in Him."
- Westminster Shorter Catechism Q/A 1:** What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.
- Matthew 13:44-46** The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

## God's Eternal Purposes:

We believe that God, the sovereign all-knowing King of the universe, has an overall plan by which He orchestrates every cause and every effect according to His own purposes for His own glory.<sup>42</sup> God from all eternity<sup>43</sup> and by the completely wise and holy counsel of His own will, has freely and unchangeably ordained all that has and ever will happen.<sup>44</sup> This means that nothing happens by chance. God is always present.<sup>45</sup> He is not wondering nor fearing what is going to happen next. The blowing of the wind, the cry of a baby, the rolling of the dice<sup>46</sup> – all things are ordered by God. There is not a single rogue molecule in the universe.

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42. **Job 23:13-14** But He is unchangeable, and who can turn Him back? What He desires, that He does. For He will complete what He appoints for me, and many such things are in His mind.

**Psalms 33:11** The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations.

**Proverbs 19:21** Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.

**Isaiah 46:9-11** "Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all My purpose,' calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it."

**Romans 11:36** For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen!

**Hebrews 6:17** So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of His purpose, He guaranteed it with an oath.

43. **Ephesians 1:4** even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

**2 Timothy 1:9** who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of His own purpose and grace, which He gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.

44. **Job 42:2** I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.

**Psalms 115:3** Our God is in the heavens; He does all that He pleases.

**Daniel 4:25** You may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will.

**Daniel 4:34-35** At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored Him who lives forever, for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and He does according to His will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand or say to Him, "What have you done?"

**Ephesians 1:11** – In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.

**See also Footnote 41.**

45. **Ruth 2:3-4** So she set out and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers, and she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the clan of Elimelech. And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you!" And they answered, "The LORD bless you"

**Esther 4:14** For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

46. **Proverbs 16:33** The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

To clarify how God's eternal purposes play out, there are three significant truths to expound upon:

1. God's governance incorporates secondary causes<sup>47</sup> so that He is not the author of sin. He does this in two ways. First, He uses free agents, such as Satan and people, who are responsible for their own free choices to carry out their sin for His purposes.<sup>48</sup> Also, He uses neutral elements of a fallen world, such as natural laws and nature itself, to affect circumstances for His purposes.

**A. Free Agents:** People and spiritual beings have free-will<sup>49</sup> and are responsible for their own free choices. Yet God directs those choices for His own holy purposes. Joseph's brothers chose to sin in sending Joseph into slavery, but God directed it for ultimate good.<sup>50</sup> The kings of Canaan chose to sin by fighting against Israel, but God directed them to do it for His purposes.<sup>51</sup> Herod,

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47. In **Acts 2:23** God clearly orchestrates His purposes in the betrayal of Jesus, who "was handed over to you [the leaders of Israel] by God's set purpose and foreknowledge." Yet God did not sin in this act, for it was ordained through secondary causes. Satan was involved (see **John 13:2, 27**; and **Luke 22:3**), and Judas by his own free-will chose to sin in this way, and is responsible for his actions (see **Matthew 26:24**).

**See also Footnote #50 – 54.**

48. **Isaiah 14:12-14** How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set My throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'

**Ezekiel 28:12-18** Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord GOD: "You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you. In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you. By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade you profaned your sanctuaries; so I brought fire out from your midst; it consumed you, and I turned you to ashes on the earth in the sight of all who saw you.

**Genesis 3:3-7** but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

49. **Free-will:** We define "free-will" as the freedom to choose and act within one's own nature. So while God is free to do anything, He cannot sin because it goes against His nature. Likewise fallen humanity is free to choose God, but apart from His enabling grace, they do not because it is not in their corrupted nature to do so.
50. **Genesis 50:19-20** But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."
51. **Joshua 11:20** For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the

Pilate, Gentiles, and Jews sinned when they conspired to kill Jesus, but they did it according to God's predestined plan.<sup>52</sup> David sinned in taking a census of Israel, but God incited him to do it.<sup>53</sup> Satan did evil against Job and yet was doing what God had ordained.<sup>54</sup> Judas delivered Jesus to be crucified, but did so according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.<sup>55</sup> So God governs sin but remains sinless because He is not the direct cause of sin.<sup>56</sup> Instead He uses secondary causes who directly carry out the sin within His purposes. God never condemns unjustly because free agents always chose sin by their own free-will and therefore are fully responsible for their sin even when God directs it.<sup>57</sup>

**B. Neutral Elements of a Fallen World:** God directs both light and darkness. Disaster, tragedy, and calamity all occur within God's perfect plan. God does not simply allow things to happen, He directs and governs all things,<sup>58</sup> but He does so in such a way that He is not the direct agent causing evil or sin. Flood, hail, fire, drought, famine, locusts, death, thunder, rain, wind, and more carry out God's purposes according to God's plan. God is holy and does not directly cause the evil

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LORD commanded Moses.

52. **Acts 4:27-28** For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place.
53. **2 Samuel 24:1** Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and He incited David against them, saying, "Go, number Israel and Judah."
54. **Job 1:12** And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.
55. **Acts 2:23** This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.
56. **Deuteronomy 32:4** "The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is He."
- James 1:13** Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempts no one;
- 1 John 1:5** This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.
57. **Psalms 89:14** Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before You.
- Romans 1:20** – For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.
- Revelation 16:7** And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are Your judgments."
58. **Isaiah 45:7** I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things.
- Amos 3:6** Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the LORD has done it?

that these neutral elements bring about.<sup>59</sup>

2. God's governance also incorporates contingencies<sup>60</sup> so that prayer, obedience, and disobedience all affect how the future unfolds without altering the fact that God ordains it all. So God responds to circumstances as they unfold and yet He ordered how those circumstances would unfold before time began.<sup>61</sup> Most of life has conditional dynamics in which free choices affect different outcomes. Yet these choices and their outcomes fall under the realm of contingencies which God has incorporated into His sovereign governance. From a human perspective it can appear that God responds to us as if He did not know what would happen.<sup>62</sup> It can appear that God changes His mind based on our choices.<sup>63</sup> But those responses and changes, as well as our choices, are all ordered by God.
3. Scripture points to at least two wills of God, or two ways of Him willing, so that there are things purposed by God that please Him and yet grieve Him at the

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59. **Genesis 6-9; Exodus 9:23-29; Joshua 10:11; 1 Samuel 7:10; 12:18; Nahum 1:3; Leviticus 26:19-20; Deuteronomy 11:13-15; 28:24; 2 Samuel 21:1; 1 Kings 16:30 - 18:45; Hosea 13:5; Amos 4:7; Jonah 1:4-15; Zechariah 17:17; Revelation 16:21** all serve as examples of God using neutral elements as secondary causes for His purposes.

60. In the area of contingency, God orders that some things may or may not happen depending on variable conditions and the voluntary intentions of people involved. Thus the Bible is filled with conditional commands of God: **Genesis 2:16-17** is the first of thousands of such commands. Also, there are over 200 "if/then" passages in the Bible: see **2 Chronicles 7:14** "if My people who are called by My name humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

61. **Proverbs 16:9** The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.

**Proverbs 20:24** A man's steps are from the LORD; how then can man understand his way?

62. **Jeremiah 18:8** and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it.

**Jeremiah 26:13** Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD will relent of the disaster that He has pronounced against you.

**Jonah 3:10** When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that He had said He would do to them, and He did not do it.

63. **Genesis 18:23-32** Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" And the LORD said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake." Abraham answered and said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." Again he spoke to him and said, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it." Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there." He said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it."

**Exodus 32:14** And the LORD relented from the disaster that He had spoken of bringing on His people.

same time.<sup>64</sup> The eternal purposes of God can be viewed from two perspectives. On the one hand, God unconditionally and effectually decrees all that comes about according to His own pleasure.<sup>65</sup> In another sense, many of these things that come about displease Him. God was grieved that Jesus died on the cross. Herod, Pontius Pilate, and those that conspired against Jesus were responsible for their own sin. Yet from a different perspective, God did want it to happen and predestined the plan for it to occur.<sup>66</sup> King David “sinned greatly” in taking a census of Israel. God was so displeased that 70,000 men passed away as the angel of the Lord stretched out his hand against Israel for David’s sin.<sup>67</sup> Yet God wanted David to take the census and “incited David” to take it for His own purposes.<sup>68</sup> Did God want Pharaoh to harden his heart?<sup>69</sup> Did He want the Canaanites to oppose Israel entering the Promised

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64. **Here are three specific examples:**

**1.** God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (**Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11**), yet He takes pleasure in righteously executing His judgment (**Deuteronomy 28:63; 2 Samuel 2:25**). So God wills death in one sense and does not will death in another sense.

**2.** God establishes all authority (**Romans 13:1**) and orders their decisions (**Proverbs 21:1**). But He does not will or desire for evil rulers to govern. In fact, He commands kings to live righteously (**1 Kings 2:3**), and judges them when they don't (**2 Kings 9:8**). But the very existence of evil Kings (just in **2 Kings** see **3:2; 8:18; 13:2, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 28; 17:2; 21:2, 20; 23:32, 37; 24:9, 19**), along with the fact that God ordains them to office, means that God wills for evil kings to rule in one sense, but does not will for there to be evil kings in another.

**3.** God decrees for Judas to betray Jesus (**Acts 2:23**), and yet is filled with wrath towards Judas for doing so (**Matthew 26:41**). God's will was for Jesus to be betrayed, but He did not desire that it happen.

65. **Numbers 23:19** God is not man, that He should lie, or a son of man, that He should change His mind. Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not fulfill it?

**Isaiah 46:11** Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.

**1 Kings 22:13-34** Here God orders unrelated and unpredictable circumstances to come together for His purposes. God had purposed that Ahab would die in battle, but Ahab sent another into the battle dressed in royal robes, while he went in disguise. The enemy ceased fire, recognizing the false king, but one soldier “drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the sections of his armor.” A random shot, the wind, and the crease of the armor all lined up to fulfill God’s purposes.

**(See also Footnotes 42 and 44.)**

66. **Acts 4:27-28** For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

67. **2 Samuel 24:10-13** But David's heart struck him after he had numbered the people. And David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O LORD, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly." And when David arose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, "Go and say to David, 'Thus says the LORD, Three things I offer you. Choose one of them, that I may do it to you.'" So Gad came to David and told him, and said to him, "Shall three years of famine come to you in your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land? Now consider, and decide what answer I shall return to him who sent me."

68. **2 Samuel 24:1** Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, "Go, number Israel and Judah."

69. **Exodus 14:4; 9:16; and Romans 9:17** (see also **Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8** and **Psalms 105:25**) all show how God directs Pharaoh and hardens his heart in order to display His own glory. However Pharaoh freely chooses to harden his own heart (see **Exodus 8:15; 9:17**) and is responsible for his own sinful actions.

Land?<sup>70</sup> These questions, and many like them, can be answered both yes and no.<sup>71</sup>

One circumstance in which these two wills of God are seen is in salvation.<sup>72</sup> Clearly, God “desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”<sup>73</sup> Likewise, God is “not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”<sup>74</sup> Yet we also know that God “chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,” and that we have “been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.”<sup>75</sup> At New Life we affirm

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70. **Joshua 11:20** For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

71. In **1 Kings 12:6-19** Rehoboam freely chooses to act sinfully towards Israel as a leader. However, “this turn of events was from the LORD, to fulfill the word the LORD”.

In **Isaiah 10:5** Assyria freely chooses to make war against Israel and is judged accordingly because their intention was “to destroy”. But God directs them as an agent for His own purposes (see **Jeremiah 51:19-24** for identical circumstances regarding Babylon).

**Joel 2:32** is a positive example where those who freely call on God, are those whom God has called

In **John 11:48-52** Caiaphas prophesies to Israel concerning Jesus, “that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.” When Caiaphas said this he was thinking that it would be better for Jesus to die than for Rome to come in and destroy the nation. But God intended for his words to point to the sacrificial atonement of the cross. Here God ordained words with deep meaning, when the speaker of the words was not even aware of what that meaning was.

**Acts 13:48** And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the LORD, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

72. While Jesus came and died for the whole world (**John 1:29, 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:5-6**), to offer salvation to all (**Isaiah 55:1; Matthew 11:28, 23:37; Revelation 22:17**), He came and died in a different way for some (**1 John 2:2**). He gave His life effectually (**Colossians 1:21-22; Hebrews 9:15; 1 Peter 3:18**) to pay for and to save His people (**Matthew 1:21**), His sheep (**John 10:15, 26**), His friends (**John 15:13**), His church (**Acts 20:28**), and His bride (**Ephesians 5:25**).

**Luke 22:19-20** And He took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which “is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

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

**Hebrews 9:15** Therefore He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

73. **1 Timothy 2:4** [God] who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

74. **2 Peter 3:9** The LORD is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

75. **John 15:16** You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, He may give it to you.

**Acts 13:48** And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the LORD, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

**Ephesians 1:4-5** Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.

that God wants all to be saved and at the same time we affirm that God elects some to salvation and all those He elects will be saved.<sup>76</sup> In this we recognize that scripture implies there are at least two wills of God.<sup>77</sup>

In all of this, we celebrate the sovereignty of God with humility and acknowledge that God is more glorious and powerful than we can fully comprehend. In submitting our thinking to scripture, all of it, not simply what we understand, we often believe things we do not fully grasp. Therefore, we are against being overly dogmatic in applying these truths. We recognize the need for a gracious attitude; knowledge without love is nothing.<sup>78</sup> We also deny any belief system which distorts God's sovereignty to negate human responsibility in either sharing or believing the gospel.<sup>79</sup>

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**2 Thessalonians 2:13** – But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

76. **John 6:37-39** All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of Him who sent me. And this is the will of Him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

**John 10:28-29** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

**Romans 8:29-30** For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified, He also glorified.

**Ephesians 1:13-14** In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.

**1 Peter 1:3-5** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

77. Historically, the two wills of God have been described with various terminologies, including but not limited to, God's secret and revealed will, decretive and permissive will, and sovereign and moral will.

78. **1 Corinthians 13:1-3** If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

79. **Matthew 28:19-20** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

**Mark 1:15** and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

## **Creation:**

We believe God created everything<sup>80</sup> out of nothing<sup>81</sup> in order to reveal His glory.<sup>82</sup> Further, we believe God created Adam and Eve as the parents of the entire human race,<sup>83</sup> His image bearers, crowned with His glory.<sup>84</sup> As such all humanity shares the unique dignity and value that flows from the image of God.<sup>85</sup> The sanctity of human life, the respect owed to all humans, their rights, and responsibilities, and the eternal nature of all human beings is instilled by His breath of life in us.

We further believe that all true science exists in harmony with the Bible,<sup>86</sup> and that the Bible encourages scientific investigation. When there is a contradiction between the Bible and science, there is either an error in the interpretation of the Bible, an error in the science, or both. In the case of creation, we believe the Bible does not definitively outline the timeframe of creation, so that “young earth” and “old earth” interpretations are both compatible with scripture.

## **State of Humankind:**

There are four states of humankind:

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80. **Genesis 1:1** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

**John 1:1-3** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.

81. **Genesis 1:2** The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

**Hebrews 11:3** By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

82. **Isaiah 6:3** And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”

**Isaiah 43:7** Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.

**Romans 11:36** For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

83. **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.

84. **Psalms 8:5-6** Yet you have made Him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned Him with glory and honor. You have given Him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under His feet.

85. **Genesis 9:6** Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.

**James 3:9** With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.

86. **Psalms 119:105** Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

**2 Timothy 3:16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness

## 1. The State of Innocence

In the Garden, God created humankind in His image without sin,<sup>87</sup> and they lived in a state of innocence, able to choose freely between good and evil and do that which is pleasing to God.<sup>88</sup>

## 2. The State of the Fall

Adam and Eve, our first parents, were led astray from worshipful obedience by the cunning of Satan's deceit,<sup>89</sup> and chose to sin.<sup>90</sup> Through this sin they rebelled against God's authority, fell from their original innocence and communion with God, and became dead in their sin and polluted in all their faculties.<sup>91</sup>

In Adam, all humanity fell into a state of sin.<sup>92</sup> The guilt,<sup>93</sup> corruption,<sup>94</sup> and death<sup>95</sup> resulting from that sin belong to every person so that everyone is born dead in sin and are by nature objects of wrath.<sup>96</sup> We not only are born in

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87. **Genesis 1:31** And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

88. **Genesis 2:16-17** And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 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."

**Ecclesiastes 7:29** See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.

89. **Genesis 3:1** Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

90. **Genesis 3:6** So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

91. **Genesis 3:7** Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

**Romans 5:12** Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

92. **Romans 5:12-14** Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned - for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

93. **Romans 5:16** And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.

**Romans 5:18** Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

94. **Romans 5:19** For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

95. **Romans 5:17** For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

96. **Ephesians 2:1-3** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience - among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Adam's guilt, we are also born corrupt by nature, enslaved to sin, and unable to fully do,<sup>97</sup> understand,<sup>98</sup> or desire<sup>99</sup> the things of God. Having the free-will to choose between good and evil,<sup>100</sup> our fallen nature engenders us to choose evil.<sup>101</sup> However, even in this fallen state all people continue to possess the image of God, have to some extent the law of God written on their conscience,<sup>102</sup> and are capable of doing good in a natural sense.<sup>103</sup>

### 3. The State of Regeneration

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love, converts sinners and brings us into a state of regeneration.<sup>104</sup> He frees us from our enslavement to

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97. **Psalms 14:1-3** The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.

**Matthew 7:17-18** So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.

**John 15:4-5** Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

**Romans 8:7-8** For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

98. **Ephesians 4:18** They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of hearts.

**1 Corinthians 2:14** The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

99. **John 6:65** And He said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

**Romans 3:11** No one understands; no one seeks for God.

100. **Joshua 24:15** And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

101. **Isaiah 53:6** All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way.

**Romans 3:9** What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin.

**Romans 3:23** For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

102. **Romans 1:19** For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

**Romans 2:14-15** For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.

103. **Matthew 7:11** If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

104. **John 1:12-13** But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

sin,<sup>105</sup> makes us new creations, and adopts us as children of God.<sup>106</sup> We are spiritually resurrected with Christ, born by the Holy Spirit, and enabled to do, understand, and seek spiritual good.<sup>107</sup>

However, while our spirits are new, our flesh remains in a fallen state, so that physically we feel the effects of the fall<sup>108</sup> and continually face a battle to walk in the Spirit and the victory that is ours in Christ.<sup>109</sup>

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**John 3:3-7** Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”

**Ephesians 2:4-5** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

105. **John 8:34-36** Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

**Romans 6:6-7** We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. And **v.14** For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

**Romans 8:1-2** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

106. **Ezekiel 36:26-27** And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

**2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come!

107. **Romans 6:4** We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

**Romans 8:3-4** For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

**1 Peter 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

**1 John 3:9** No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in Him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

108. **Romans 8:20-23** For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

**2 Corinthians 4:16** So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

109. **Romans 7:18-25** For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep

Within this battle, we increasingly overcome, victorious in Christ;<sup>110</sup> however, we never continually nor perfectly walk in Him.<sup>111</sup> Positionally we are in Him<sup>112</sup> and press on to take hold of that for which Christ has already taken hold of us.<sup>113</sup>

Furthermore, we have great confidence in our striving, knowing that God is faithful and will enable all, without exception, to persevere to the end.<sup>114</sup> So we fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.<sup>115</sup>

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on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

**Galatians 5:17** For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

**Philippians 2:12-13** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

110. **1 Corinthians 15:57** But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**1 John 5:4** For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.

111. **Ecclesiastes 7:20** Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

**1 John 1:8** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

112. **Colossians 3:3** For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

**Ephesians 2:6** And raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

113. **Philippians 3:12-14** Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

**1 Timothy 6:12** Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

114. **John 10:28-29** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

**1 Corinthians 10:13** No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

**See also Footnote #75.**

115. **Hebrews 12:2** Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

#### 4. The State of Glory

When Christ returns in glory, Christians will receive a resurrected body and enter into an eternal glorified state in the new heavens and earth.<sup>116</sup> In this glorified state, the process of salvation will be complete and we will walk perfectly in righteousness.<sup>117</sup>

#### Salvation:

Salvation is an overarching term that includes the entire process of redemption: beginning with election and ending with glorification. Several steps in this process may occur essentially simultaneously, or over time. However, they follow this logical order:

##### 1. Election

Election is God's choosing of His people, not because of their works, but because of His own purpose and grace which He gave them in Christ Jesus before the ages began.<sup>118</sup>

##### 2. Predestination

Predestination is God's plan to accomplish His purposes, especially for the salvation of the elect.<sup>119</sup>

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116. **Romans 8:18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

**1 Corinthians 15:41-44** There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

**2 Corinthians 4:17** For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

**Philippians 3:20-21** But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to him.

117. **1 John 3:2** Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be (as not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see him as He is.

**Revelation 21:1-5** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And He who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also He said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

118. **2 Timothy 1:9** who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.

119. **Ephesians 1:4-5** Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love, he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.

### 3. Gospel Call

The Gospel Call is an invitation to all people to come to God in faith and repentance.<sup>120</sup> However, without God's enabling, people universally reject this call.<sup>121</sup>

### 4. Effectual Call

An Effectual Call is God implanting the gospel, by His Spirit—an inward, effectual, irresistible call that brings about regeneration.<sup>122</sup>

### 5. Regeneration

Regeneration is the work of God the Holy Spirit by which spiritually dead people are made alive. They are born again, given a new nature, and made new creations in Christ.<sup>123</sup>

### 6. Conversion

Conversion takes place when a person responds to God with faith and

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120. **John 3:15-16** That whoever believes in Him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world, that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

121. **Isaiah 53:6** All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

**John 3:19** And this is the judgment: the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light because their works were evil.

**1 Corinthians 2:14** The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

**See also Footnote #99.**

122. **Acts 16:14** One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

**1 Corinthians 1:18** For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (see also all the way through verse 31)

**2 Corinthians 4:3-6** And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

123. **John 3:5-7** Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.

**2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

**Titus 3:5-6** He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

repentance and is united with Christ. Faith and repentance are gifts of God.<sup>124</sup>

## 7. Justification and Adoption

Justification is when those who respond to God in faith and repentance are declared righteous. They are pardoned of their sins and credited with the righteousness of Christ. In being declared righteous the justified are adopted into the family of God.<sup>125</sup>

## 8. Sanctification

Sanctification is the process by which God supersedes our sinful desires with an ever-increasing satisfaction in God. This process of becoming holy is brought about by the work of God and the striving of man.<sup>126</sup>

## 9. Glorification

Glorification is when, after having persevered to the end, Christians are made perfect and salvation is fully realized.<sup>127</sup>

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124. **Romans 2:4** Or do you presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance.

**Ephesians 2:8-9** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

**2 Timothy 2:24-25** And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth.

125. **Romans 8:15** For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

**Romans 4:5-8** And to the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the LORD will not count his sin."

**Romans 4:23-5:1** The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**1 John 3:1** See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

126. **1 Corinthians 15:10** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

**2 Corinthians 3:18** And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

**2 Corinthians 7:1** Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

**Hebrews 12:14** Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the LORD.

127. **1 Corinthians 15:51-53** Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised

## **Sovereignty of God & Evangelism:**

Theology emphasizing the sovereignty of God is occasionally accused of diminishing the need for evangelism. The question is asked, "Why proclaim the gospel if God has already chosen those who will be saved?"

First, we confidently say that God so loves the whole world that He sustains and showers all people with blessings,<sup>128</sup> He displays His glory for all to see,<sup>129</sup> and He offers a way of salvation for any who will believe.<sup>130</sup> And though all people reject this offer without God's transforming grace,<sup>131</sup> the fact that God offers an open call of the gospel to all people is a model for us to do the same. Additionally, He commands us to proclaim the gospel to our neighbors and to the ends of the earth, and we must obey.<sup>132</sup>

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imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

128. **Matthew 5:45** So that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

**Acts 17:25-27** Nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward Him and find Him. Yet He is actually not far from each one of us.

129. **Romans 1:20** For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

130. **John 3:16** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

**Matthew 11:28** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

**Revelation 22:17** The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

**See also Footnotes #68-70, and 115.**

131. **See Footnotes #99 and 119.**

132. **Matthew 28:19-20** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

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

**Romans 10:14-15** How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

We do believe that while God loves all people, He does not love all people in the same way. He chooses some before the foundation of the world<sup>133</sup> and predestines them for glory. He sets His love on them in a unique way so that their salvation is sure.<sup>134</sup> He draws them to Christ<sup>135</sup> and regenerates them,<sup>136</sup> making them new from the inside; while others He leaves in the hardness of their sinful hearts.<sup>137</sup>

However, we believe that rather than diminish the need for evangelism, God's sovereignty brings hope to it. For the burden is not on us to compel and convince people of the truth.<sup>138</sup> Instead, it is our privilege to serve God and be used by Him within His divine purposes, knowing that God opens hearts to receive the gospel.<sup>139</sup> Additionally we believe that it is through the gospel that regeneration is brought to the elect.<sup>140</sup> So while faith in Christ is a gift,<sup>141</sup> God has ordained that this gift is

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133. **Ephesians 1:4-5** Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.

134. **Romans 1:7** To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.

**Jude 1:1** Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:

135. **John 6:44** No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

136. **Ephesians 2:4-5** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

137. **Mark 4:11-12** And He said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven". **{Isaiah 6:9-10}**

138. **1 Corinthians 2:1-5** And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

139. **Luke 24:45** Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

**Acts 16:14** One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The LORD opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

**1 Corinthians 2:14** The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

140. **Romans 10:17** So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

141. **Ephesians 2:8** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.

received through the preaching of the gospel,<sup>142</sup> and God governs the preaching of the gospel just as much as the faith that comes through it.

Therefore, we enthusiastically receive our responsibility to share the gospel as an open invitation of God to all people as a great privilege. Oh, what a humbling gift and exceeding joy that God would use us to share His love and play a part of His rescuing of sinners.

### **Sovereignty of God & Prayer:**

Theology emphasizing the sovereignty of God is also periodically accused of diminishing the need for prayer. Some ask, “Why pray if God has already ordered the future according to His purposes?”

In many respects the fact that God holds the future is exactly why we should pray.<sup>143</sup> If human self-determination governed the future, then prayer would be useless. But because God is sovereign, we come to Him. Indeed, God desires us to pray even though He already knows what we will ask for.<sup>144</sup> God is big enough to govern both the ends and the means to that end. Ultimately, we pray because we stand in utter dependence on God and He is glorified in our dependence.<sup>145</sup>

Therefore, we wholeheartedly devote ourselves to prayer. We do it because God commands us to,<sup>146</sup> because we constantly stand in need of supernatural aid,<sup>147</sup> and because God has ordained that our prayers would have effect.<sup>148</sup>

### **Identity in Christ:**

Because Jesus is the vine and we are the branches, in Him we bear much fruit and

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142. **See footnote #129**

143. **Ecclesiastes 8:7** For he does not know what is to be, for who can tell him how it will?

144. **Matthew 6:7-8** And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

145. **Psalms 50:15** And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.

146. **Ephesians 6:18** Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.

**Colossians 4:2** Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

147. **Luke 18:27** “But He said, “What is impossible with men is possible with God”.

148. **Exodus 32:9-14** And the LORD said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them”...“Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people”... And the LORD relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.

**See also Footnote #62.**

apart from Him we can do nothing.<sup>149</sup> Therefore our dependence on God goes far beyond prayer; it is central to the entirety of our lives.

Whether we are teaching or learning, working or resting, serving or receiving, our aim is to walk in the reality that we are crucified with Christ, therefore we no longer live, but Jesus Christ lives in us.<sup>150</sup>

### **Obedience:**

We believe that obedience is a beautiful expression of worship and love to God,<sup>151</sup> and that all true Christians will progressively live a life of obedience because of God's transforming work in them.<sup>152</sup> It is not possible for a person to have Christ as their Savior without having Him also as their Lord.<sup>153</sup> Christians, by the grace of God, follow Jesus Christ in obedience and live a life increasingly controlled by the Spirit of God.<sup>154</sup>

There is a paradox pertaining to the necessity and consequence of our obedience that is wrapped up in the multifaceted glory of God's love. Love is a complex word. On a human level a man can say he loves his wife, his son, and double cheeseburgers, meaning something different in each context.

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149. **John 15:1-2** I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. **2** Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

**Romans 7:18** For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

150. **Acts 17:28** 'In Him we live and move and have our being.'

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

**Colossians 1:27** To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

151. **1 Samuel 15:22** Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams..

**1 John 5:3-4** For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith.

152. **1 John 3:9** No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

153. **Matthew 7:21** Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

154. **Romans 8:9** You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.

**1 John 2:3-6** And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. Whoever says "I know Him" but does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps His word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in Him: whoever says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Likewise, while God is love,<sup>155</sup> we see at least five ways in which the love of God is manifest in scripture:

### 1. Love Within the Trinity

The deepest most foundational expression of love and the ultimate model and source for all expressions of love is the intra-trinitarian love of God.<sup>156</sup> Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have loved each other through all eternity.

### 2. Love for All That He Has Made

God is the loving Creator who clothes the grass of the field, places glory in lilies, names each of the stars, gives birth to rain, feeds the lion, cares for mountain goats, and officiates at sparrows' funerals.<sup>157</sup> God loves all creation through His benevolent providence.

### 3. Love for All Humans

Of all creation God has a unique love for human beings. They are made in His image, are objects of His affection, and are given special dominion and blessings. God loves all human beings, invites them into relationship through

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155. **1 John 4:7-8** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

156. **John 3:35** The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.

**John 5:20** For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.

**John 14:31** but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

157. **Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31.** And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

**Matthew 6:28** And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

**Psalms 147:4** He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names.

**Job 38:28-30** Has the rain a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew? From whose womb did the ice come forth, and who has given birth to the frost of heaven? The waters become hard like stone, and the face of the deep is frozen.

**Job 39:1-4** Do you know when the mountain goats give birth? Do you observe the calving of the does? Can you number the months that they fulfill, and do you know the time when they give birth, when they crouch, bring forth their offspring, and are delivered of their young? Their young ones become strong; they grow up in the open; they go out and do not return to them. **See to the end of chapter 41.**

**Matthew 10:29-31** Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

the gospel call and takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.<sup>158</sup>

#### 4. Love for the Elect (i.e., Positional Love)

Of all human beings God has a unique love for the elect. He delights in His people.<sup>159</sup> This love is unconditional. It cannot be earned through obedience or lost through disobedience, for it is fully merited on our behalf in Jesus.<sup>160</sup> God chooses, blesses, pardons, renews, and loves people based on the righteousness of Christ.<sup>161</sup> This is true even of God's mercy expressed to His people living before Christ, for it was purchased at the cross.<sup>162</sup> There is

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158. **John 3:16** God so loved the world,<sup>1</sup> that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

**Ezekiel 33:11** Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

159. **Deuteronomy 7:7-8** It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

**Deuteronomy 10:14-15** Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day.

**Psalms 149:4** For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation.

**Jeremiah 32:38-41** And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.

160. **Romans 4:4-5** Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.

161. **Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our LORD.

**Romans 8:1** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

**1 Corinthians 1:30** And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

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

**Ephesians 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

**Titus 3:4-6** But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

162. **Romans 3:25-26** Whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

nothing a human can do to gain or lose this love; nothing can separate us from this love of God for us in Christ.<sup>163</sup> God is perfectly faithful to His loving promises,<sup>164</sup> and we can rest in the knowledge that He is for us and will never leave us nor forsake us.<sup>165</sup> Obedience and disobedience do not change or diminish this love of God for us, for it comes to us in Christ and is not affected by what we do or fail to do.<sup>166</sup>

## 5. Love for Obedience (i.e., Provisional Love)

Of the elect, God has a unique love for those who fear and obey Him.<sup>167</sup> We remain in this provisional aspect of His love through obedience<sup>168</sup> and can fall out of this love through disobedience. Our obedience does not affect us positionally in Christ, but it does affect our relationship with God provisionally.<sup>169</sup> This is a family matter. We always remain His children, but our

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163. **Romans 8:38-39** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

164. **2 Corinthians 1:20** For all the promises of God find their 'Yes' in Him. That is why it is through Him that we utter our 'Amen' to God for His glory.

165. **Romans 8:31** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

**Hebrews 13:5-6** Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

166. **Romans 5:8** But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

167. **1 Samuel 15:22** And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.

**Psalms 147:11** but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.

168. **John 15:9-10** As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love.

**Acts 13:43** And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.

**1 John 2:5** but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him:

**Jude 21** keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

169. **Deuteronomy 28:1-16** If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country . . . However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country.

**Matthew 7:24** Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock."

**Luke 11:28** But he said, Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

relationship is strained when we disobey the Father. Therefore, we must persevere and with great endurance finish the race, for our obedience testifies to the reality of our salvation that it is obligatory to our passing through judgment and receiving the crown of life promised to those who obey Him.<sup>170</sup>

God's love for His own people is expressed in both of these last two ways. His love is expressed positionally to people in Christ and provisionally conditioned on obedience. In this, as with many aspects of theology, it is essential that these two aspects of God's love are held in balance. When one aspect is exalted at the expense of the other, it becomes a form of heresy, like acknowledging part of God's character while denying another part.

### **Degree of Consequence:**

In regard to Christians who disobey, there are degrees of sin that result in different degrees of consequence and discipline within the church community and within a person's relationship with God. While all sin is an offense to God's holiness,<sup>171</sup> the severity of the consequence for all sin is not the same. Primarily there are five aspects of any given act which proportionately affect the degree of consequence.

1. First, is the relative strength of a person's declaration of trust in Christ. The stronger a person's profession of faith, the higher the expectation is for their obedience and thus the greater the consequence for their sin.<sup>172</sup>

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**Ephesians 6:7-8** Rendering service with a good will as to the LORD and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the LORD, whether he is a slave or free.

**Hebrews 12:6** For the LORD disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives.

**James 1:22-25** But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves... But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

170. **Matthew 7:21** "Not everyone who says to me, 'LORD, LORD,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

**Matthew 24:13** But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

**1 Corinthians 9:24-27** Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

**2 Corinthians 5:10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

**James 1:12** Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him.

171. **James 2:10** For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

172. **1 Corinthians 5:9-11** I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of

2. Second, is the level of a person's knowledge of God's will. The person who understands God's will and yet chooses to disobey pays a far higher consequence for their sin than the person who does not know God's will and yet disobeys. With knowledge comes responsibility and accountability.<sup>173</sup>
3. Third, is the degree to which a person's sin is deliberate. There is a difference between willful sin and sin that spontaneously manifests itself. The degree to which sin is deliberate is directly proportionate to the consequence.<sup>174</sup>
4. Fourth, is the degree in which a person's sin is an ongoing lifestyle. There is a difference between an act of disobedience and a lifestyle of disobedience. The more ongoing any particular sin is, the more severe the consequence it incurs.<sup>175</sup>
5. Fifth, is the degree to which a person's sin affects others. Leaders are held to a higher standard because their actions affect more people.<sup>176</sup> Any action that causes others to stumble, especially children, faces a stricter consequence.<sup>177</sup>

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brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

173. **Luke 12:47-48** And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

**2 Peter 2:20-21** For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.

174. **Numbers 15:30** But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among his people.

**Hebrews 10:26-27** For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

175. **Matthew 18:15-17** "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."

**1 John 3:9** No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

**1 John 5:18** We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

176. **James 3:1** Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

177. **Matthew 18:6-7** But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world

## GOVERNMENTS:

We believe God has ordained three basic governments: household government, church government, and civil government. We further believe that each of these governments is obligated to serve under God, recognizing Him as the supreme King.<sup>178</sup> Because these governments are subject to God, no submission to them is absolute. If any authority demands those things God forbids or impedes those things God requires, then Christians are to respectfully and humbly disobey.<sup>179</sup>

## Household:

We believe the household is the most basic institution in the world, and that every authority established on earth has the obligation to recognize the household as the building block by which all other governments are built.<sup>180</sup>

God wonderfully and immutably created all people distinctly male or female, man or woman.<sup>181</sup> Gender is therefore divinely ordered so that male and female together

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for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!

**Romans 14:20** Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats.

**1 Corinthians 8:9** But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

178. **1 Samuel 12:14** If you will fear the LORD and serve Him and obey His voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well!

**1 Corinthians 11:3** But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

**Colossians 1:18** And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent.

179. **Acts 5:29** But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men!"

**See also Acts 4:19-20** and **Daniel 5:29**.

180. **Numbers 1:44-45** These are those who were listed, whom Moses and Aaron listed with the help of the chiefs of Israel, twelve men, each representing his fathers' house. So all those listed of the people of Israel, by their fathers' houses, from twenty years old and upward, every man able to go to war in Israel.

**1 Corinthians 14:34-35** The women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

**1 Timothy 5:3-4** Honor widows who are truly widows. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.

181. **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.

**Genesis 5:2** Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created.

reflect the image and nature of God. The union of male and female so profoundly mirrors the intra-trinitarian love and oneness shared between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that it reveals the great mystery of Christ and the Church.<sup>182</sup> Therefore, the marriage covenant, a life-long union<sup>183</sup> between one man and one woman,<sup>184</sup> is the foundation and beginning of households. A safe, loving, and nurturing home reflects God's love and design.

Single heads of households exist but they generally originate from and often function under a marriage covenant. The marriage covenant forms biblically within the below guidelines. These guidelines are difficult to apply in today's world and are not intended to produce guilt but to uphold God's design and instruct in righteousness.

1. Romantic or exclusive relationships (emotional, spiritual, and physical) between male and female are to be pursued only after both parties have reached a level of responsibility and of spiritual, emotional, and relational maturity so as to be fit for marriage.<sup>185</sup>

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**Matthew 19:4** He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female."

182. **Ephesians 5:31-32** "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

**1 Corinthians 11:3** But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

183. **Matthew 19:4-6** He answered, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

**Mark 10:11-12** "And He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

**1 Corinthians 7:39** A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

See also **Malachi 2:13-17; Matthew 5:31-32, 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:10-17.**

184. **Genesis 2:24** Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

**Romans 1:25-27** Because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

**1 Corinthians 7:2** But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

185. **Genesis 34:12** Ask me for as great a bride price and gift as you will, and I will give whatever you say to me. Only give me the young woman to be my wife. **{Exodus 22:16-17; Deuteronomy 22:29; 1 Samuel 18:25}**

**Song of Solomon 2:7** I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you

2. When people are prepared and ready for the responsibilities of marriage it is God's design that parents participate in the courting process.<sup>186</sup> Regardless of the parent's ability to fulfill this role, the church is often able to stand in the gap.
3. Sexual intimacy<sup>187</sup> is designed as a gift of oneness only to be shared between husband and wife in marriage.<sup>188</sup> This is because the spiritual nature of sex unites two people together in a life-long one-flesh union.<sup>189</sup> Purity of the marriage bed is of the highest order because sexual sin is against our own bodies, as temples of the Holy Spirit,<sup>190</sup> and because one-flesh relationships on earth reflect Christ's relationship with the church.<sup>191</sup>
4. Marriage is to be sought between two believers because scripture instructs us that a believer's closest relationships ought to be with other faithful followers of Jesus.<sup>192</sup>

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not stir up or awaken love until it pleases. **{3:5; 8:4}**

**Song of Solomon 8:6-7** Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.

186. See **Genesis 24:1-67**

**Genesis 2:24** Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

**Exodus 22:17** If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the bride-price for virgins.

187. To define appropriate boundaries of physical intimacy outside of marriage it is worth recognizing that biblically the behaviors that define fornication are the same as those that define adultery. So, what is inappropriate for a married person to do with someone other than their spouse is the same as for two unmarried people.

188. **1 Corinthians 6:18** Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

**Hebrews 13:4** Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

189. **1 Corinthians 6:16** Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh."

190. **1 Corinthians 6:18-19** Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own.

191. **Ephesians 5:31-32** "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

192. **2 Corinthians 6:14** Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

5. As we live in a fallen world, God allows for the possibility of divorce<sup>193</sup> in at least some situations (adultery and abandonment are two explicit biblical reasons).<sup>194</sup> Further, these reasons being mentioned in different contexts suggests that they are not exhaustive, and because they specifically defile “the leave, hold fast, one flesh”<sup>195</sup> nature of the marriage covenant, we believe other sins, such as abuse, may defile the marriage covenant to such an extent that divorce is warranted. Abuse is too complex to define in dogmatic terms, but suffice it to say, in some circumstances, abuse makes divorce allowable. This does not mean that divorce is the desired option, for God does not like divorce.<sup>196</sup> Likewise it does not speak to remarriage. We affirm that marriage is intended to be a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman that is dissolved only by death.<sup>197</sup>

We recognize three biblical views on remarriage. Some believe that marriage is a life-long covenant that is not revoked through divorce, and thus, remarriage is not permissible unless one is remarrying their original spouse or their first spouse dies.<sup>198</sup>

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193. **Matthew 19:8** He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

194. **Matthew 19:9** And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.

**1 Corinthians 7:15** But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.

195. **Genesis 2:24** Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

196. **Malachi 2:15-16** Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. “For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.”

197. **Matthew 19:6** So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

**Romans 7:2-3** For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

**1 Corinthians 7:39** A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

198. **Matthew 5:31-32** “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

**Mark 10:11-12** “And He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

**Luke 16:18** Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

**1 Corinthians 7:10-11** To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband

Others believe that in the case of a biblically justified divorce, remarriage is permissible.<sup>199</sup> Finally, some recognize that life does not unfold according to God's designs. Should divorce occur, even though it may not have been biblically justified, if people are genuinely seeking Christ in the present, forgiveness is always more powerful than sin.<sup>200</sup> All of these positions have biblical merit and are supported at New Life. We believe that Christians are called to explore scripture and be fully convinced in their own minds before acting. We support all marriages between one man and one woman equally, regardless of how they came about<sup>201</sup> and we rejoice in the transforming power of God who is able to reconcile and restore even the worst of relationships.<sup>202</sup>

Marriage is designed for the mutual help of both husband and wife<sup>203</sup> so that together they take dominion in the world for the glory of God.<sup>204</sup> It is for the support

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should not divorce his wife.

**1 Corinthians 7:39** A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

199. **See Footnote #187**

200. **Romans 5:20-21** Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

201. **1 Corinthians 7:24** So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.

202. **Luke 1:37** For nothing will be impossible with God.

203. **Genesis 2:18** The LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

**Genesis 2:24** Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

204. **Genesis 1:26** Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

**Psalms 8:5** Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned Him with glory and honor.

and development of the spiritual life,<sup>205</sup> for the propagation and holy training of children,<sup>206</sup> and is a picture of the love of Christ for His church.<sup>207</sup>

In marriage, God has made two one,<sup>208</sup> uniting man and woman and displaying the love between Himself and His people through their union.<sup>209</sup> God has ordained the husband to be spiritually responsible for everyone in his household.<sup>210</sup> This is to reflect the relationship between Christ (the bridegroom) and the church (the bride), and is for the sake of service, in no way diminishing the worth, value, or ability of a

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205. **Ephesians 5:22-27** Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the LORD. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, His body, and is Himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

206. **Genesis 1:28** And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

**Genesis 18:19** For I have chosen Him, that he may command His children and His household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has promised him.

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

**Psalms 78:4-6** We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and His might, and the wonders that He has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children.

**Malachi 2:15** Did He not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.

**Ephesians 6:4** Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the LORD.

207. **Ephesians 5:31-32** Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

208. **Genesis 2:24** Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

209. **Ephesians 5:31-32** "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

210. **Genesis 3:9** But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

**Ephesians 5:28** In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

woman.<sup>211</sup> Both are equally created in the image of God.<sup>212</sup> Yet in the created order, before the fall, God ordained roles for male and female which establish male responsibility in headship.<sup>213</sup> In the fall, the sinful nature was disposed to rebel against this order.<sup>214</sup> So while we stand against abuses of these roles we also recognize that when a marriage reflects God's created intent to demonstrate Christ's love for the church and the church's respect for Christ, it is a beautiful thing.<sup>215</sup> The husband is called to sacrificially give his life to love, serve, lead, protect, and provide for his family as a servant leader.<sup>216</sup> The wife is called to love, respect, nurture, care for, and encourage her family as a servant leader.<sup>217</sup> Together, both husband and wife are responsible to provide their children with godly instruction.<sup>218</sup>

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211. **Galatians 3:28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

212. **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.

213. **Genesis 2:18-23** Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."... So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said... "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

**1 Corinthians 11:8** For man was not made from woman, but woman from man.

**Ephesians 5:23** For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, His body, and is Himself its Savior.

**1 Timothy 2:13** For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

214. **Genesis 3:16** To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

215. **John 13:14-15** If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

**1 Corinthians 11:3** But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

216. **Genesis 3:9** But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

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

**1 Timothy 5:8** But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

217. **Titus 2:4-5** And so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

218. **Ephesians 6:1-3** Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first "commandment with a promise), that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."  
**{Deut. 5:16}**

Regarding godly instruction, it is a Christian parent's duty to strive to pass on the tenets of the faith to their spouse, children, and children's children.<sup>219</sup> Ultimately faith is a gift of God, but this does not negate the calling to pass faith on within the household. Children in a Christian home are to some extent sanctified through their parents' faith.<sup>220</sup> To this end, parents have the responsibility to intentionally disciple their children, practice spiritual disciplines, and worship in their homes.<sup>221</sup>

### **Church:**

We believe the universal Church is made up of all the elect who have been, are, or ever will be united by saving faith in Jesus Christ. While there has always been a people of God, the Church in the New Covenant era had a unique historical beginning at Pentecost. In the Old Testament, saving faith looked forward to Christ,<sup>222</sup> but He is now revealed.<sup>223</sup> The Church visibly expresses itself in local bodies where the Word of God is preached and a biblical trust in Jesus Christ is expressed. These local bodies are called together in worship, unity, and in a common mission to make disciples of all nations.

All churches are evidenced by these chief attributes: a submission to God's Word and a biblical trust in Jesus Christ. Beyond this, while recognizing churches with different practices than ours, scripture guides us in the following convictions:

### **Baptism:**

Because scripture does not associate baptism with church partnership, and because we want to preserve a pure motive of response and commitment to God in baptism, we do not link baptism and partnership.

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219. **Deuteronomy 6:6-9** And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

**Ephesians 6:4** Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the LORD.

220. **1 Corinthians 7:14** For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

221. **Genesis 18:19** For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.

**Psalms 78:4-6** We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and His might, and the wonders that He has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children.

222. See **Hebrews 11**; especially **v.26** He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

223. **Colossians 1:26** The mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.

We practice believer's baptism, seeing a new birth<sup>224</sup> evidenced by a commitment to follow Christ<sup>225</sup> as the prerequisite to biblical baptism. Baptism identifies a person as a disciple and shows outwardly how a Christian has been spiritually united in the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord.<sup>226</sup> To best represent this we normally practice baptism by immersion.

While not requiring baptism for partnership, we recognize that if a person is not yet spiritually ready to be baptized, they may not be ready for partnership. Therefore, baptism is made available to every new partner. Additionally, elders are available to guide any persons through the biblical instruction on this great sacrament.

### **Elders:**

Each local body is to be governed by a group of men called elders, each of whom must meet the qualifications of church leadership.<sup>227</sup> At New Life, elders and pastors function as elders and need to meet the biblical qualifications.

In the church, as within the family, God has ordained a framework of male headship<sup>228</sup> which reserves the office of elder for men who meet the standards of godly character and trustworthiness that are outlined in scripture.<sup>229</sup> God has created

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224. **Acts 10:47** "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have."

225. **1 Peter 3:21** Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

226. **Romans 6:1-7** What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.

227. **1 Timothy 3:1-7** The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

**Titus 1:6-9** If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

228. **1 Corinthians 11:8** For man was not made from woman, but woman from man.

**1 Timothy 2:11** Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness.

229. **See footnote #222**

men and women equal in regard to worth, dignity, and humanity. Yet He has designed them to function within sovereignly designed roles in both home and church. Again, this is a matter of responsibility, and in no way speaks to the worth, giftedness, or equality of men and women. Both are equal in the sight of God.<sup>230</sup>

We believe that women are equally gifted in the ministry, and ought to function in every task (including teaching)<sup>231</sup> and serve in every office apart from elder (including deaconess).<sup>232</sup> Headship is fundamentally an issue of authority,<sup>233</sup> and therefore the most important issue is that as women serve in the church, that they do so under the authority of headship (elders and husbands). There is a difference between someone serving independently, functioning by his or her own rules, and someone serving with a submissive spirit.

Of the qualifications for elder,<sup>234</sup> the clause of being “the husband of one wife”<sup>235</sup> deserves special attention. As individuals we must follow our own conscience, but we believe that this clause means that if married, an elder must be a godly, devoted, faithful, and loving husband. We do not believe it requires marriage or speaks to the issue of divorce and remarriage. Below are the two main reasons we have interpreted this clause in this way:

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230. **Galatians 3:28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

231. **1 Corinthians 11:5** “But every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head.” This key passage establishes two things: First, that women should pray and prophecy publicly in church as long as they do so in submission to male headship. Secondly, its context (see 14:1-25) establishes that prophecy is an exercise of proclaiming God’s Word (parallel with preaching and teaching).

232. **1 Timothy 3:11** Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.

**Romans 16:1** I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae.

233. **1 Corinthians 11:10** That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

**1 Corinthians 14:32-35** And the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. (This passage, often taken out of context, clearly speaks to the circumstance of authoritatively and publicly correcting teaching in the church. This is not a role for women).

**1 Timothy 2:11-12** Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.

234. **1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; and 1 Peter 5:1-3**

235. **1 Timothy 3:2** Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.

**Titus 1:6** If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

## 1. Context:

In both passages, the “one wife” clause is part of a list of clauses that are all universally held to refer to present tense behavior. When it says that an elder must not be given to drunkenness or violence – it is not saying that elders have never been given to these things. In fact, like Paul, God may have saved an elder from these behaviors. But these are things of their past. Their current lifestyle is defined by temperance and gentleness. Likewise, when it says that an elder must be self-controlled, hospitable, blameless, respectable, and able to teach, it is not saying that these men have always been these things. In their past they may have been none of these things (certainly without Christ it is not even possible). But their lifestyle today is defined by all of them.

Thus, if we interpret the “one wife” clause consistently with the other requirements in the list (and every rule of biblical interpretation and logic requires we be consistent) we are compelled to read it as a requirement that speaks to a man’s current lifestyle not his past.

The grammar of the text fully supports this as well. The verb requiring elders to be husbands of one wife is a present active indicative. This is used to require present ongoing or continuous action.

An added element in this line of thought is simply the power of God to forgive and transform His people. The entire Bible proclaims God’s grace to forgive and to transform. Sometimes people apply these truths to the rest of the requirements in the lists, but treat divorce differently. We see nothing in the text to suggest this inconsistent interpretation.

## 2. Words:

In both passages the actual Greek wording used is literally that the elder must be a “one woman man” (μιάς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα). The context associates this as a description of his character, but it does not carry any connotations or references to either marriage or divorce. To import the subject of divorce on this passage is to import a meaning that is not covered in the actual passage.

Additionally, there are a multitude of issues surrounding remarriage that go beyond the scope of the wording. What if a divorce occurred before salvation? What if a divorce was biblically allowable? Is remarriage allowable in any, some or all circumstances after divorce? What if a man was unfaithful to his wife or has been with more than one woman<sup>236</sup> even though he has never been divorced or remarried? What if a man lost his wife to cancer and married a second time? These

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236. **1 Corinthians 6:16** Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.”

issues are important, but they are not covered by the single phrase, “one woman man.”

To close this subject, it is important to recognize what the “husband of one wife” clause does mean. We believe it is a far more radical statement than an issue of remarriage. A man could be married for 60 years and not be a godly, devoted, faithful and loving husband. Sometimes commendable women have persevered in marriages with men who fall far short of this standard. Conversely a remarried man may be incredibly loving, devoted, and faithful to his wife.

### **Deacons:**

Each local body, when size requires it, can also be served by a group of deacons and deaconesses, each of whom must meet the qualifications of church service.<sup>237</sup> This position may go by another name and yet follow the pattern of deacon. At New Life, Team Leaders and Connection Group Leaders serve in this role.

### **Civil:**

We believe Christians are to live peaceful lives in submission to all civil authorities, whom God ordains as His servants for His purposes.<sup>238</sup> While it is God’s will that all civil authorities honor Him in their service, Christians are to submit to them regardless of their moral or spiritual character.<sup>239</sup> There is blessing in submitting to God even through unrighteous leaders.<sup>240</sup> Our submission is not absolute,

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237. **1 Timothy 3:8-12** Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.

238. **Romans 13:1** Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

**1 Peter 2:13** Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme.

**Daniel 2:21** He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;

**Daniel 4:17** The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.

239. **John 19:11** Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”

Consider the historical context of the above verses. When Paul wrote Romans in 57 A.D. in the early years of Nero’s reign. When Peter wrote in the early 60’s A.D. Nero had implemented horrendous persecutions of Christians.

240. **1 Samuel 24:6** He said to his men, “The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD’s anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the LORD’s anointed.”

but conditioned by obedience to Christ as Lord. When civil authorities require what God forbids, or forbid what God requires, we are to obey God above men.<sup>241</sup>

Jesus is the center of our worldview and He unifies us with other believers beyond ideology. That means we have more in common with political rivals who love Jesus than political allies who do not know God.<sup>242</sup> Politically, we are not partisan nor place ideology above theology. There is no political party that wholly represents our beliefs while there are aspects of most political parties that we agree with. This doesn't mean parties equally reflect God's truth, nor that Christians should withdraw from political engagement.

We uphold the sanctity of all human life from at least conception to natural death.<sup>243</sup> That means we want laws and policies to see the greatest number of unborn children born<sup>244</sup>, to provide safe and supportive care for women navigating unplanned pregnancy (regardless of circumstances)<sup>245</sup>, to promote childbirth and

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**Titus 3:1-2** Titus 3:1-2 Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

241. **Acts 5:29** But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."

**Exodus 1:17** But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.

**Hebrews 11:23** By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

242. **Galatians 3:28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

243. **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.

**Psalms 139:13-16** For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

**Jeremiah 1:5** "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

244. **Exodus 1:21** And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families.

245. **Isaiah 40:11** He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.

childrearing, to recognize the value and purposes of every human being, particularly of seniors and those with physical and mental challenges.<sup>246</sup>

Moreover, we are concerned for the welfare of the outcast and those who lack influence and power.<sup>247</sup> We believe marriage is a life-long covenant between one man and one woman<sup>248</sup>, but we believe those who practice differently have equal worth and value as God's creations and deserve the same respect as image bearers and fellow citizens.<sup>249</sup>

The Church is ultimately all nations, so while we promote good citizenship as patriotism<sup>250</sup>, we recognize the kingdom of God has no earthly flag.<sup>251</sup> We believe the

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246. **Exodus 4:11** Then the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?"

**1 Corinthians 12:22-23** On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty,

**Leviticus 19:32** "You shall stand up before the gray head and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the Lord."

247. **Psalms 139:13-14** For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

**Proverbs 31:8-9** Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.

**Isaiah 1:17** Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

**James 1:27** Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

248. **Genesis 2:24** Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

**Matthew 19:4-6** He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

249. **Genesis 1:26-27** Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

250. **Jeremiah 29:7** But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

251. **Isaiah 9:6-7** For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

**Philippians 3:20** But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

**Revelation 1:5** and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood

**Revelation 19:16** On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

fall has corrupted everything and are therefore skeptical of concentrations of power and loath injustice wherever it is found.<sup>252</sup> We see all governing systems as dysfunctional to varying degrees because of the fall. For this reason, while we put no confidence in earthly kings nor endorse particular candidates, we seek to be salt and light to our world<sup>253</sup>, pray for our leaders<sup>254</sup>, and pursue justice and mercy as God's ambassadors.<sup>255</sup> We passionately believe in the sovereignty of the King of Kings and live at peace knowing He governs all nations and calls us to good citizenship.<sup>256</sup>

### **Spiritual Gifts:**

We believe in the continuance of all biblical spiritual gifts. Four passages list a total of 19 gifts;<sup>257</sup> but none is comprehensive, and from the context of each we can see that no attempt is made to define a precise list. Thus, it is possible that some spiritual gifts exist that are not specifically mentioned. Because of the confusion and division that has resulted from the way some gifts have been practiced, we here outline several truths that govern all gifts, and further define tongues and prophecy.

1. All Christians have the Holy Spirit indwelling them. There is no such thing as a "Christian" who subsequently needs to be baptized in the Spirit.<sup>258</sup>

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252. **Isaiah 10:1-2** Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey!

253. **Matthew 5:13-16** "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

254. **1 Timothy 2:1-2** First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

255. **Micah 6:8** He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

256. **Daniel 4:34-35** At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

**Isaiah 46:9-10** remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'

257. See **Romans 12:6-8**; **1 Corinthians 12:8-11**; **1 Corinthians 12:28**; and **Ephesians 4:11**.

258. **Romans 8:9** You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.

2. The evidence of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life is the existence of "fruit of the Spirit," not a spiritual gift.<sup>259</sup>
3. All Christians are spiritually gifted to play a significant role in the Body of Christ.<sup>260</sup>
4. All spiritual gifts are given by God for the edification of the body and the glory of Christ.<sup>261</sup> There are no spiritual gifts given for the primary purpose of private edification.
5. Spiritual gifts are part of a Christian's stewardship. They need to be practiced and developed.<sup>262</sup>

### **Tongues:**

We accept two biblical interpretations of the gift of tongues. First is the understanding that there are two distinct manifestations of tongues in the Bible. Second is the understanding that there is one manifestation of the gift of tongues. Both interpretations agree that the gift of tongues continues today while denying that the gift of tongues is evidence of one's "full baptism" in the Spirit. All believers have been baptized into the Spirit.<sup>263</sup>

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259. **Galatians 5:22-23** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

260. **Romans 12:6** Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith.

**1 Corinthians 12:7** To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

**Ephesians 4:7** But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

**1 Corinthians 12:18-25** But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as He chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 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." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor... that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

261. **1 Corinthians 12:7** To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

**1 Peter 4:10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

262. **2 Timothy 1:6** For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

263. **Romans 6:3-4** Do you know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

**Romans 8:9** You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

The two critical books to interpret regarding the gift of tongues are Acts and 1 Corinthians. The two schools of thought interpret the tongues in Acts and 1 Corinthians as follows:

### **Acts:**

Both schools of thought agree that in the book of Acts there is a supernatural enabling of the Apostles to speak in languages they did not previously know.<sup>264</sup> This manifestation needs no interpretation and is evangelistic in that it appeals to non-Christians. This manifestation of tongues is a communication between people.

### **1 Corinthians:**

One school of thought believes that the tongues that Paul references in his letter to the Corinthians was the same gift of tongues that was evidenced in the book of Acts. This school of thought believes that because all gifts are given “for the common good,”<sup>265</sup> Paul is not referring to a private prayer language unknown to humans. So, when Paul exhorts the Corinthians to not “utter speech that is not intelligible,”<sup>266</sup> he is simply saying that it is unhelpful to speak a language unknown to an audience, even though it is an earthly language.<sup>267</sup>

The other school of thought holds that in Corinth there was another form of tongues that was a supernatural enabling to speak from God or to God in the Spirit.<sup>268</sup> This language does not engage the mind<sup>269</sup> and must be followed by an interpretation if spoken in public.<sup>270</sup> This form of tongues is not evangelistic. In fact, when spoken

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264. **Acts 2:4** And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

**Acts 2:6** And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.

**Acts 2:11** Both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians - we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God!

265. **1 Corinthians 12:7** To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

266. **1 Corinthians 14:9** So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air.

267. **1 Corinthians 14:10-11** There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me.

268. **1 Corinthians 14:2** For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit.

**1 Corinthians 14:28** But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God.

269. **1 Corinthians 14:14** For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful.

270. **1 Corinthians 14:28** But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God.

publicly, without an interpretation, it is unprofitable for mature Christians and damaging to young Christians and unbelievers.<sup>271</sup>

For this reason, in corporate church gatherings, we value intelligible gifts much more than tongues,<sup>272</sup> and we trust that all tongues, if of God, will be followed by an interpretation. For the sake of order in the church,<sup>273</sup> any person feeling an urging to speak in a tongue must submit themselves to an elder. If the elder deems it appropriate, the speaker will then, for the sake of accountability, speak through a microphone (if available) so that it can be recorded.

### **Prophecy:**

We believe prophecy is the proclamation of God's Word. In the Old Testament, God ordained certain men to speak on His behalf. In this, God put His words in their mouths<sup>274</sup> and they spoke authoritatively from the Lord. In the New Testament this gift significantly changed. God has communicated through Jesus Christ the living Word<sup>275</sup> and through His written Word.<sup>276</sup> Therefore the gift of prophecy in the New Testament has to do with proclaiming Jesus Christ and proclaiming the Bible. To this end, it is not in itself authoritative,<sup>277</sup> and is akin to teaching and preaching.<sup>278</sup>

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271. **1 Corinthians 14:22-23** Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds?

272. **1 Corinthians 12:31** But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

**1 Corinthians 14:1** Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy

**1 Corinthians 14:19** Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

273. **1 Corinthians 14:33** For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

**1 Corinthians 14:40** But all things should be done decently and in order.

274. **Deuteronomy 18:18** I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

275. **Hebrews 1:1-2** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.

276. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

**Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

277. **1 Corinthians 14:32** And the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.

278. **Acts 17:11** Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

**Titus 2:1** But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

## End Times:

We believe that when Christians die they are instantly received into the glorious presence of Christ and experience a joy that is better by far than any experience on earth.<sup>279</sup> However, even in His presence, there is a longing for the completion of Christ's work when our resurrected spirits will be united with our resurrected bodies.<sup>280</sup>

We further believe that Christ will return in glory,<sup>281</sup> with a loud trumpet call – personally, publicly, physically<sup>282</sup> and suddenly,<sup>283</sup> at the end of the age to gather His elect,<sup>284</sup> raise the dead, judge the nations,<sup>285</sup> and consummate His eternal

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279. **Luke 23:43** And He said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

**2 Corinthians 5:8** Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the LORD.

**Philippians 1:23** I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

280. **2 Corinthians 5:2-3** For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked.

281. **1 Thessalonians 4:16** For the LORD Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

**2 Thessalonians 1:10** When He comes on that day to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

**Titus 2:13** Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

282. **Matthew 24:30** Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

**Acts 1:11** "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven"

283. **Matthew 24:44** Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

**2 Peter 3:10** But the day of the LORD will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

**1 Thessalonians 5:2** For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the LORD will come like a thief in the night.

**Revelation 16:15** "Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!"

284. **Matthew 24:31** And He will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

285. **John 5:28-29** Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

**2 Corinthians 5:10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Kingdom.<sup>286</sup> In this, the righteous will be perfected in His glory and enter into the everlasting goodness of God.<sup>287</sup> The unrighteous will face a conscious and eternal anguish and condemnation.<sup>288</sup>

As to the timing of Christ's return as it relates to the Millennium (Rev. 20:1-6) or the Tribulation (Dan. 12:1; Mt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14), we specifically choose not to adhere to a single view as the only correct interpretation. Instead, being familiar with all of the millennial views, and the tribulation views associated with Pre-millennialism, we find strengths and weaknesses in every position. Therefore, while individuals may hold certain convictions, we do not as a church teach one single view as the truth.

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286. **1 Corinthians 15:23** But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at His coming those who belong to Christ.

**Luke 22:29** And I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom.

287. **Matthew 25:23** His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master!'

**1 Corinthians 15:52** In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

**Colossians 3:4** When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

**1 John 3:2** Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.

**Jude v.24-25** Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

288. **Matthew 13:42** And throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**Revelation 14:9-12** And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of His anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.

**This doctrinal statement has been affirmed by the Elders and Pastoral Staff, and was incorporated into the by-laws of New Life Bible Fellowship on February 5, 2008.**

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