

What We Believe

Introduction

II Timothy 2:1-2. Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus. 2 You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.

From the time of the Apostle Paul Christian leaders have faithfully learned the key doctrines of the faith and then passed them on to the next generation. This document represents our solemn attempt to summarize the key doctrines of the faith as recorded in the Bible and pass them on to you.

The Great Commission

After Jesus rose from the dead he gave a commission to his disciples. He told them I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Jesus' disciples responded to Jesus command by waiting for the Holy Spirit and then proceeded to plant churches in Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth. Their process of making disciples included both proclaiming the Gospel and teaching those who responded in faith how they should now live. These communities were gathered into congregations or (churches) and united, through the work of the ministers (servants) of the Gospel, with the other churches in the region.

The Gospel Proclaimed by the Apostles

- God made everything good in the beginning, we responded by rebellion. Every generation since the first man and women have repeated this rebellion. This rebellion, a refusal to acknowledge God as the rightful ruler of all, separates us from God.
- God, instead of immediately judging us for our sin, instead extends an offer of forgiveness and reconciliation to everyone. The apostles called this offer of grace, the gospel or good news.
- This good news was promised by God beforehand in the Bible and was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. He is fully man, a descendant of King David, and he is fully God, equal in essence to the Father. He lived a life of perfect sinless obedience to the Father, was murdered on a cross, was buried, and then bodily rose from the dead on the third day. Hundreds of people saw him die on the cross. Hundreds walked, talked, and ate with him after he rose from the dead.
- Jesus went through all of this willingly, obeying the Father's plan, as a sacrifice in our place, so that He might bear the wrath of God for our rebellion and deliver us completely from death and Hell.
- Jesus, after finishing the work he was sent to do, ascended to heaven and is now seated at the right hand of God the Father, where He reigns as Lord with all authority given to Him by the Father. He will come to earth again as the Judge of every person

who has ever lived. He will then abolish all earthly governments and authority, and rule as undisputed King.

- Those who hear the gospel and believe in Jesus to be their righteousness, and not in their own good works, are forgiven of their rebellion to God, given eternal life, adopted into God's family called the church, made new creations, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus comes back, those who believe in Him will get to spend eternity with Him and receive an eternal inheritance.
- Those who do not believe God's testimony about his son Jesus are effectively calling God a liar and will bear His wrath forever. Believing in Jesus is the only way to be reconciled to God.

Romans 1:1-5, 3:21-30; 4:24-25; Galatians 1:1-5; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 1:1-3:23; Col 1:13-20; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 1:1-5. John 3:16-18. I John 5:10-12, John 14:6

Life Changing Implications of the Gospel

1. Gospel Identity

- We believe that this good news gives us new identities. Knowing these identities gives us the ability and the motivation to live our life according to the Gospel. Because of who God is and what He has done, we are a family on mission sent by Him to serve our world as we follow Jesus through the Spirit's power.
- Family - God has always desired a people - an earthly family - who would live in such a way that the world would know what He is like. Jesus said that those who live in His ways and obey His Father are truly His family. Through Jesus we are (adopted as) children of God and brothers and sisters with each other, and we should care for each other as family. (*Genesis 12:1-3; John 1:12-13; Romans 12:10-16, Eph 2:11-22*)
- Servants - Fully God and fully human, Jesus willingly took on the posture of a servant. He gave His life, even to the point of death, so that others could experience salvation, peace, and restoration. *Jesus said, "I am among you as one who serves..."* All those who follow Jesus are called to serve in the same humility. This makes us servants of God who serve others as a way of life. (*Matthew 20:25-28; John 13:1-17; Philippians 2:5-11*)
- Missionaries - God sent Jesus to Earth to take on human form and live within the culture. He worked, ate, and interacted among the people; living in such a way that those around him could see and experience what God was truly like. Jesus came so that all people, places, and things could be restored to a right relationship with God. In the same way, we are missionaries sent into our culture by Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit to make disciples of Jesus and restore all things to God. (*Matthew 28:18-20; John 20:21; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21*).

2. Gospel Living

We believe that the gospel changes how we live. Living a changed life does not save us, instead, living differently is a result of being made new creations in Christ, having the Holy Spirit at work in us, and the result of faith in Jesus.

The implications of our new gospel identity on living that have been passed on from the Apostles in the Bible (the Apostles called this the Teaching, or the Didache) can be summarized as follows:

- Because we have been made new creations and adopted as God's children, believers should lay aside our old life, let the Bible shape our thinking instead of the things taught in our day, and (letting God transform you by changing the way we think - see *Romans 12*) conform our new life to the will of God.
- This new life is characterized by a set of virtues summarized as love towards God and people. Everything we do should be done in faith for the glory of God. These virtues cannot be accomplished with only human strength, but are possible because believers have been freed from slavery to sin and are empowered by the Holy Spirit. (*Matthew 22:34-40; John 15:5; Romans 6:15-23; 12:1-2; 14:23; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:17-23; 5:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-10, James 1:22-25; 1 Peter 1:13-16*)
- Believers should be baptized with water to symbolize our new life in Jesus and publicly declare our faith in Him. Believers should also regularly partake of the Lord's Supper to remember Jesus' sacrifice for us. (*Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38, Luke 22:14-20*)
- To live out our new identity in Christ, believers are to take responsibility for our personal affairs by cultivating our relationship with God, persevering through times of suffering, making the most of the resources God has given us, praying regularly, thankfully enjoying His good gifts without worshipping them, and keeping on the alert for Satan and his strategies in our lives, as we eagerly await the return of Jesus. (*Romans 1:21-25; 5:1-5; Ephesians 5:15-17; Philippians 3:8-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Peter 5:6-11*)
- Families are to imitate the fellowship, complementary roles, and order that is found in the Trinity. Since God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit all are equal and yet have distinct roles, our families are made up of people made in God's image, and are equal with distinct roles. Husbands and wives, parents and children are to strive for unity, remaining humble, and sacrificially loving each other in their respective roles according to God's created order. Single believers have a valuable role as brothers and sisters in Christ, but also have the added value of the ability to live with undivided devotion to the Lord. (*Ephesians 5:22-6:4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Peter 3:1-7, 1 Corinthians 7*)
- Since we are members of God's family, believers are obligated to personally care for the needs of one another - both physically and spiritually. To do this, believers are to form and cultivate relationships with other believers so that we can help each other to walk with Jesus and sacrificially love each other in the ways laid out in the Bible. Believers are to treat all other believers with humility, kindness and respect, being unified around the gospel, and forgiving each other. (*Romans 12:9-20; 14:1-7; Ephesians 4:1-6; Titus 2:1-8; Hebrews 10:24-25*)
- As God's family, believers should be organized into churches according to the plan laid out in the Bible. Regional Ministers of the Gospel are responsible to guard the deposit of sound doctrine, see that new churches are planted, unify local churches,

and assist local bodies in the appointing of elders. Local churches should be led by qualified elders, assisted by qualified deacons and deaconesses, and each believer should serve with the gifts supplied by the Holy Spirit. Believers should joyfully follow those in spiritual authority over them. The purpose of the church is to proclaim and protect the truth that was delivered once and for all through the Apostles in the Bible and to equip the believers in the church so that we can grow in their relationship with God, proclaim the gospel to others and sacrificially love each other. In this way God's wisdom and grace is put on display to the whole universe through the church as He works to restore and redeem a broken, fallen world. (*Acts 6:1-7; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; Ephesians 3:1-4:16; 1 Timothy 2:8-3:16; Hebrews 13:17*)

- Since we are missionaries and servants, believers are to show people outside the church who Jesus is by loving them, serving them, and sharing the gospel with those who don't know Jesus. Living out the gospel with good deeds towards our neighbors and those in need, and respecting government leaders, employers, and other people in authority. Those in positions of authority should treat those under them with justice, remembering that they are still under God's authority. (*Matthew 5:3-16; Romans 13:1-7; Ephesians 6:5-9; Titus 2:9-3:8; 1 Peter 2:9-25; 3:8-17*)

Elders Commitments

We believe that Elders should set the example for the congregation. Therefore we commit to the following.

1. The Elders at Soma Eastside commit to care for the congregation willingly, not grudgingly, not for what we will get out of it, but because we are eager to serve God. We will not lord over the congregation, but rather lead by our good example. (*1 Peter 5:1-3*)
2. The Elders at Soma Eastside commit to teaching the complete Gospel to the congregation as it was entrusted to us. (*Acts 20:25-32*).
3. The Elders at Soma Eastside commit to protecting the congregation by prayer and skillful servant leadership. (*Acts 20:25-32*). We commit to praying for the congregation regularly including when they are sick. (*James 5:14*)
4. The Elders at Soma Eastside commit to being just with cases brought before us to mediate. (*1 Corinthians 6*).
5. The Elders at Soma Eastside commit to living a life that is consistent with the gospel. Above reproach, faithful to our spouse, self-controlled, wise with a good reputation. We look forward to sharing life with the congregation and sharing our homes and lives with those that don't yet know Jesus. We put aside drunkenness, quarrels, love of money, arrogance, quick tempers, and violence. We embrace a devout and disciplined life, gentleness with everyone, and commit to raising our own children well, and managing our own households well. (*Titus 1, 1 Timothy 3*).
6. The Elders commit to not appointing other Elders that are new in their faith or have poor reputations with people outside the church. (*1 Timothy 3*)

Current Elders at Soma Eastside Church - Paul Dean, Nick Volk, Brian Janous, Jason Messer

Membership Commitments

In light of the gospel and its implications, followers of Jesus live a certain distinct way. This way is not following human tradition or a certain group of preferences, rather doing what Jesus is asking them to do. This cannot be done without the help of the Holy Spirit. This cannot be done without discipline and saying no to evil desires that tempt us. This distinct life is counter-culture and will likely cause some degree of disapproval from co-workers, friends, neighbors, or even family members. However, we encourage followers of Jesus to carefully search the scriptures and follow God's clear commands. If we follow God's commands we know that we are followers of Jesus. If we openly, repeatedly rebel against what God is asking us to do we have real cause to question whether or not we know and love Jesus and believe the Gospel. Since we believe that this document is a summary of the Biblical teachings of scripture we encourage you to commit to following Jesus in the following areas. We know that perfection won't happen until heaven, but we also know that a deliberate walk with Jesus is much more effective than an undisciplined life. We also urge you to seek the help of the Holy Spirit and ask your brothers and sisters in Christ for help to live up to these commitments.

7. I commit to live my whole life under the lordship of Jesus Christ, carefully stewarding everything that He has given me and using it for His glory as instructed in the Bible, including my time, body, sexuality, gifts and talents, thoughts, emotions, relationships, finances and possessions.
8. I commit to cultivating a close relationship with Jesus through regular Bible reading, prayer, and learning from my fellow believers in Soma Eastside Church.
9. I commit to following the elders/pastors at Soma Eastside Church and to respect deacons and missional community leaders that the Elders appoint for the sake of order and making disciples in the congregation.
10. I commit to love and nurture my family as laid out in the Bible. If I am married I will honor my marriage vows and sacrificially love my spouse. If I am a husband I will humbly lead my family. If I am a wife I will respect and follow my husband as he follows Jesus. If I have children I will bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. If I am single I will live with undivided devotion to the Lord with all purity⁴.
11. I commit to form and cultivate relationships with other believers in Soma so that we can help each other to walk with Jesus and sacrificially love each other in the ways laid out in the Bible. Because deep relationships are very difficult to form on Sunday mornings alone I commit to regular interaction with other believers throughout the week. I will treat all other believers with love, humility, kindness and respect. I will follow the biblical procedures of confronting those who have sinned against me, and will submit myself to biblical correction if needed.
12. I commit to participate in the mission of Soma Eastside Church of making disciples who make disciples. I will use my spiritual gifts, time, and resources to further this mission. I will give financially to Soma Eastside Church regularly, sacrificially, and cheerfully. If I have a problem with the Biblical principles summarized in this covenant I will request a meeting and discuss this with an Elder rather than openly contradicting them and causing confusion and division. If I am not satisfied with their response I will

ask for mediation from the Elders of our sister churches or another respected Christian leader.

13. Since the mission of Soma Eastside Church is done in a decentralized way, I commit to specifically participating in the mission of my MC _____ group, neighborhood, etc. that the MC believes God is sending them to show and share the gospel with) in light of my Gospel identities of family, servant, and missionary.
14. I commit to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final judge on all spiritual, moral, church, and theological issues. I will submit to and respect the Soma Eastside Church elders. I will submit to and respect my government leaders and employer. If I am in a position of authority I will treat those under me with justice and compassion serving them rather than lording over them.
15. I commit to confess and repent when I fall short of these commitments. I will notify the Soma Eastside elders if at any time I can no longer commit to this covenant.