

# Doctrine Statement

## The Scriptures

The Bible is the Word of God, expressed through multiple writers with various personalities and strengths, living in various cultural circumstances, but always under the clear guidance of the Holy Spirit, who could really be said to be the Author. [2 Timothy 3:16](#), [2 Peter 1:20](#) That said, the Bible(s) we have today are the product of thousands of years of transmission in various ways. It is literally nothing short of miraculous (as it should be, since it is the Word of God) that the various Bibles we have are as uniform as they are. A major factor in the differences between different versions is that they are *all* translations, and this church is certainly aware of the difficulties involved in going between languages. (There is currently a lot of reason to believe that Matthew was originally written in Aramaic, which means that even the Greek we have is a translation.) For this reason it is important to listen carefully to the Holy Spirit to know what He is saying through the words on the page, and also to compare various translations to pick up nuances that one group of translators might have missed.

All of this of course deals with the written text. However, it only becomes the Word of God when it is in our hearts [James 1:22](#). Seminary professor and missiologist W. O. Carver regularly asked his students how big their Bible was. If they answered in relation to the physical book they carried to class, he would say, “No, I’m talking about what’s in your heart.” That’s why a good Christian will respect the printed Bible but never worship it (as some religions do their scriptures), but rather worship God who caused the Bible to be written to communicate Himself to mankind.

## God (i.e. Trinity)

Words are powerful. In a discussion years ago with a very energetic member of Sokagakkai (kind of like the Buddhist equivalent of Jehovah’s Witnesses), he suddenly broke into the discussion to say, “Who is this ‘God’ you keep talking about? Define ‘God!’” Actually, he had a valid point, because the word used for God in contemporary Japanese Christianity is actually much closer in original meaning to “spirit,” or even “ghost.”

In simplest terms, God is the Creator [Revelation 4:11](#), the One who existed before time [Genesis 1:1](#), because as physicists will tell you, time is dependent on matter, and He is the One who created all matter. Since He is infinite, He has taken specific steps to reveal Himself to finite human beings, but our minds will continue to have trouble grasping more than the smallest part of who He is.

One difficulty we have is that whereas the Bible insists that God is One, it also speaks abundantly of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Nowhere does the Bible use the word “trinity,” but this is the word we use to try to describe One who is both three and one. A down-to-earth analogy that is often used is that of an apple, though an egg or various other things could be used equally. An apple is one apple, yet it has a skin, flesh, and seeds. All of those are equally part of the same apple, yet they have different functions, appearance, and names.

## Man

Man is the purpose of creation. God’s character is that of Father, as the Bible tells us in countless ways and references. The Bible specifies that we are “a little lower than the angels” in the hierarchy of Creation [Psalm 8:4-5](#), [Hebrews 5:6-7](#), which is to say that we have fewer powers and less strength. However, angels were created to serve God and serve man [Hebrews 1:14](#), whereas we were created for fellowship with the Father. That’s not to say we don’t serve Him, but it is to say that service without fellowship is essentially meaningless and unacceptable [Deuteronomy 10:12](#). We are to serve God because He loves us, not to try to make Him love us. Mankind is

fundamentally disposed to rebellion [Jeremiah 17:9](#), not necessarily in the sense of a revolution but in a headstrong desire to do things our way. However, that is part of the amazing gift of free will. Free will is the most valuable thing in the created universe, because if there were no free will, nothing would be sin and so Jesus would not have had to die to take the penalty for sin. God was not interested in creating robots or pets; He wanted children who would choose to love Him. However, for that to be a genuine choice, the possibility of our choosing *not* to love Him had to be real, so free will was created, and it is no illusion.

## **The Father**

It is of enormous significance that God refers to Himself as Father. Perhaps a majority of people in the world today bear what has been called a “father wound” because of the failings of their human fathers. The Creator is everything our human fathers should have been and far more. He is love, He is holy, He is righteous, He is understanding, He is unchanging, and a host of other things as well. And He desires nothing more than He desires for His children, us, to recognize Him for who He is and love Him as He loves us. [Deuteronomy 6:5](#), [Matthew 23:37](#)

## **Jesus Christ**

It’s amusing how many people think “Christ” is Jesus’ last name! Jesus (Yeshua in Hebrew) means “Yahweh saves,” or “Yahweh is salvation.” [Matthew 1:21](#) “Christ” is the English rendering of the Greek word for messiah, which is to say, “anointed one.” To me, the first chapter of the Gospel of John is very helpful in understanding who Jesus is, because of how it speaks of Him as “The Word.” Words are expressions of the intent and will of the speaker (or writer). Jesus is the expression of the Father’s will, which is one of many reasons it is vitally important that He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Not my will, but Yours be done.” [Matthew 26:39](#) Just as the intent is present before words are spoken, so Jesus existed before He was given a physical body. It is of utmost importance that the physical Jesus was fully God as well as fully human. Had He not been fully human, He could not have taken the penalty for our sins on the cross as our representative. However, had He not been fully God, His death would have been nothing more than a solitary human death; it could not have been the atonement for the sins of mankind. [Isaiah 53:5-6](#)

## **Holy Spirit**

The Bible speaks of the Spirit of God [Genesis 1:2](#), the Spirit of Jesus [Philippians 1:19](#), and the Holy Spirit [Psalm 51:11](#), [Matthew 1:18](#), all obviously referring to the same Being. Since, as Jesus said, God is spirit, why have the Holy Spirit as a separate entity in the Trinity? The Holy Spirit is the agent of God’s direct interaction with us on the spiritual level. The “Oneness” theological camp goes a bit too far, but we do ourselves a disservice when we get wrapped up in distinctions within the Godhead. When Jesus speaks of our abiding in Him as He is in the Father, and the Holy Spirit abiding with us forever, and Him abiding in us, He’s obviously not dealing with things in three dimensions like we’re used to doing!

## **Salvation**

Salvation is of great importance, not only because we need it, but because Buddhism lacks the very concept of salvation. The Buddha saw human will as the source of all suffering, and in a way he was right, but he saw the solution as being to empty yourself, with the ultimate goal being

nothingness. (How's that for nihilistic philosophy!) The Bible teaches that in our self-will we turn our backs on God, which is sin, and that as a perfectly holy Being God cannot receive anything that is contaminated with sin. Since cleansing ourselves of our sin is analogous to a surgeon performing surgery on himself in a cesspool, we need a Savior! What salvation accomplishes is God's sovereign rescue, lifting us out of that cesspool and cleaning us off. (see Sanctification and Justification below) Salvation is available in no other way than through Jesus Christ. [John 3:16-17](#), [John 14:6](#), [Acts 4:12](#)

## **Sanctification**

Sanctification is, by definition, being made holy. Every believer is by definition sanctified by the blood of Christ shed on the cross [1 Corinthians 6:11](#), [Hebrews 10:10](#), but the problem is, we don't live that out. The first letter of John is very instructive here, as is the letter of James. John wasn't writing to unbelievers but to believers when he said, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness [1 John 1:9](#)." Repentance, confession and forgiveness are ongoing in the life of every believer. However, that's not to be an excuse to sin "because God will forgive me." Paul dealt with that fallacy in writing to the Romans [Romans 6:1-14](#)! We should be living so that we can say, as Paul did, "I know of nothing against me [1 Corinthians 4:4](#)." At the same time, whenever we stumble, we should be quick to repent, claim and receive the forgiveness God offers through Christ.

## **Justification**

Anyone dealing with typography is familiar with the term justification, as in, "right justified" or "left justified," as opposed to centered text. If you just say "justified," it means the text is lined up on both sides. In our natural selves, we are incapable of lining up with God's perfect standard (being justified). Jesus Christ lined up perfectly with God's holy standard, so if we are in Him, we are then lined up with God, that is, justified. By ourselves we are certainly "ragged edge," and we certainly aren't centered on anything but ourselves! By a more traditional definition, justification is being accepted by God as righteous, not on the basis of what we have done but on the basis of the perfect, sinless life and sacrifice of Christ. [Romans 3:22-24](#)

## **Assurance**

Assurance is very important, because without it we are easily "blown about by every wind of doctrine [Ephesians 4:14](#)," a convenient play-thing for the devil. The difficulty with assurance is that it isn't emotional. As one preacher said, "If salvation depended on the emotions, I'd be lost every Monday morning!" The Holy Spirit is the agent of assurance, speaking "Abba, Father" to God in our hearts even when our minds and emotions might want to run the other direction. [Romans 8:15](#) Assurance of what Christ has done for us and who we are in Him is vital. [1 John 5:13-15](#)

## **Spiritual Gifts**

There is a great deal of controversy over spiritual gifts, which is ironic because they are provided by God to equip the Bride of Christ, the Church, to do her job. [1 Corinthians 12:7](#), [1 Peter 4:10-11](#) There are gifts that correspond to personality types ([Romans 12:6-8](#)), gifts that are actually offices in the Body of Christ ([Ephesians 4:11-13](#)), and gifts that are given to believers on an as-needed basis ([1 Corinthians 12:8-11](#)). It is these last gifts that tend to generate controversy, with some

contending, on the basis of [1 Corinthians 13:8-10](#), that such gifts disappeared with the Early Church, saying that the “perfection” referred to in verse 10 is the canon on the New Testament. However, a careful look at Church history will show that such gifts have been operative over the entire 2000 years since Pentecost. Paul specifically tells us to seek such gifts. [1 Corinthians 14:1](#) The important thing to remember is that these gifts are always given to build up the Church, and not to puff up the pride of the individual through whom they are given. [1 Corinthians 14:12](#).

## **The Church**

The Greek word consistently translated as “church” means, very simply, “gathering.” It was Christians, and Jesus Himself [Matthew 16:18](#) who gave the word the special meaning it has today. In the Revelation of Jesus to John, the Bible speaks of the Church as the Bride of Christ [Revelation 21:9-10](#), just as Paul did in [Ephesians 5:25-27](#). The Church exists as the total Body of Christ [1 Corinthians 12:12-13](#), consisting of everyone in the world who acknowledges Jesus as God become man, who died for our sins and rose again, and confesses Him as Lord. That Church is manifested in many local bodies, which are indeed parts of the Body of Christ but can no more claim true independence than a hand can claim independence from the rest of the body it belongs to. [1 Corinthians 12:14-27](#) Local church bodies should seek the well-being, growth, and over-all blessing of the other churches in their area, regardless of the sign out front, understanding that Christ only has one Body.

## **Christian Life**

Christian life should be the active pursuit of what Jesus commanded [Matthew 22:36-40](#). Loving God means pressing into Him through regular reading of His Word [Psalm 119:11](#) and walking with Him in prayer at all times and in all circumstances [1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#). That means regular fellowship with other believers as well [Hebrews 10:25](#). We need one another!

## **Ordinances**

Jesus ordained Baptism [Matthew 28:18-20](#) and Communion (Lord’s Supper) [1 Corinthians 11:23-26](#) in His final days on this earth. Both acts are symbolic, surely, but go beyond mere symbolism. God operates through our physical obedience to work spiritual reality in our hearts. The qualification for Baptism is repentance, faith, and commitment [Acts 2:38-39](#). The qualification for Communion is humility on the part of a baptized believer [1 Corinthians 11:27-29](#).

## **Angels**

Angels were created to serve God and serve man [Hebrews 1:14](#) Every Biblical episode of their appearing to people indicates the people were frightened. They aren’t little cupids! The Bible records various acts of angels on behalf of believers and in punishment of the rebellious, but angels are never to be worshiped [Revelation 22:8-9](#). Angels are something to be thankful for, but not to be focused on.

## **Second Coming**

The Bible is very clear that Jesus is coming to earth again, not as a little baby but as King of kings and Lord of lords [Matthew 24:30-31](#). We are not to get distracted by trying to predict the exact time of Jesus' return [Matthew 24:36](#), [Acts 1:7](#), but we are to live in active obedience so that we can rejoice when He does come [Matthew 24:42-46](#). After all, everyone alive today will have to face God's judgment in less than 100 years!