



*Behold, I make all things new.
Revelation 21.5*

Restoration Road Church The Gospel Class 1

Introduction

What is the purpose of this class?

This class is designed to introduce you to Restoration Road Church. It is a comprehensive course offered to anyone, suggested for everyone, and required for those who wish to officially join the community of Restoration Road and participate in leadership. Its curriculum serves as a starting point, a foundation, a set of lenses through which you can understand why we do what we do. As an introduction to our church, this class should answer some commonly asked questions about what it means to be a *believer in Christ*, what it means to be a *part of the body of Christ* invisible, as well as what it means to be a *member of Restoration Road Church* in particular. We will also explore how you can best take advantage of and become involved in the multitude of opportunities that come with being a part of our community.

This class will provide a general overview of who we are. Through the time you spend in class and in reading the pages of information provided, we trust you will begin to see our vision as we discuss our core values, our essential doctrinal beliefs, our philosophy of ministry, and our mission in this world, and in Marysville, as a church of Jesus Christ. It is very likely that some of your more specific questions may remain unanswered and new ones will be formulated. Knowing this, we encourage you to freely ask any question in the class for clarification or contact any of the church staff members to find the answers. We believe that God has brought you here for a purpose, and we are dedicated to helping you discover, cultivate, and fulfill that purpose.

We hope that *The Gospel Class* will be the first step in a long and God glorifying process of spiritual growth and fruitful service *in our family to our community*.

Session Topics:

1. Introduction to the Gospel
2. The Bible
3. God
4. Creation & Sin
5. Salvation
6. Spiritual Warfare
7. Spiritual Disciplines
8. Stewardship
9. The Cultural Mandate
10. The Church

The Gospel is...JESUS IN MY PLACE.

The Gospel is the good news that God became man in Jesus Christ. He lived the life we should have and died the death we should have...in our place. Three days later, He rose from the dead proving that He is the Son of God offering the gift of salvation to all who will repent and believe in Him.

Why is the Gospel necessary?

The gospel is the news of what God has done to accomplish salvation through Jesus Christ in history. Our relationship with God was broken as a result of disobedience and the chasm that exists between God and Man is too vast for us to overcome. Because of Adam's sin, we have been found sinners by nature. Willfully, we have turned our back on God, becoming guilty by choice as we seek to answer questions of identity, purpose, and truth apart from Him. In that pursuit, we are miserable but try to convince ourselves otherwise. Enslaved to Sin, we seek our own glory and fall short of God's. We find we are indebted to God, sentenced to die, unwilling and unable to pay the wages required to save ourselves.

By His grace, God reaches out to those who refused to listen and loves them. By grace, He sacrifices His Son, the perfect sinless one, crucifying Him on a cross for the sins of man, paying the price that we could not. Through His willing sacrifice, Jesus redeems us, atoning for our sins, and through His resurrection frees us from the slavery of darkness and sin. In Christ, we are justified, deemed innocent before God, and declared righteous, as Jesus' own righteousness is imputed to our account. No longer under the wrath of God, all our sins covered, evil is defeated death is conquered, as we who were once dead in our sins are made alive through the resurrection Christ.

By trusting in what Jesus alone has done on the cross for our salvation, not in anything we can achieve or earn, God makes us holy and blameless without stain or wrinkle or any blemish. We are reconciled to God and enter into relationship with Him once again, having been freed from guilt and shame and freed to serve Jesus out of a heart of love and thankfulness.

The Gospel's Centrality

The gospel is not just the A-B-C's, but the A to Z of Christianity. The gospel is not just the minimum required doctrine necessary to enter the kingdom, but the way we the kingdom real in our lives here on earth. We are not saved by the gospel and then changed by obedience, but the gospel itself transforms us (II Cor. 5:17), is the way we grow (Gal. 3:1-3) and are renewed (Col. 1:6). It is the solution to each problem, the key to each closed door, the power through every barrier (Rom. 1:16-17).

The Gospel's core meaning

The gospel is not that we develop a righteousness apart from God so that we're deemed "good" and then he owes and accepts us, rather, that he develops a righteousness through Jesus Christ and gives it to us (II Cor. 5:21). The gospel is not that "it doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you've been good," but that "it doesn't matter if you've been good, as long as you believe in Christ as your Savior". The gospel is not that we go from being irreligious to being religious, it's that we realize that our reasons for both our religiosity and our irreligiously were essentially the same and essentially wrong. We were seeking to be our own saviors, develop our own righteousness, and thereby keep control of our own life. When we trust in Christ as our Savior, we

turn from trusting either self-determination or self-denial for our salvation — from either moralism or hedonism.

The Gospel avoids legalism or liberalism, moralism or relativism. Yet, the gospel does not produce “something in the middle”. Instead, it produces something different from both. By critiquing both religion and irreligion (Matt. 21:31), the gospel shows us a God far more holy than the legalist can bear (He *had* to die because we could not satisfy His holy demand), and yet, far more merciful than a humanist can conceive (He *had* to die because he loves us). Often both religion and irreligion are attempts to work their way to God’s acceptance. Much of our feelings despair, guilt, fear, and anger emerge in our life when we adopt a works-based mentality and allow something other than Jesus (career, family, moral performance, romance) operate as our *functional savior*.

The gospel affects everything we do at Restoration Road. We assume that most people have not heard or thoughtfully considered the deeper implications of the gospel. We exist to bring things “in line with the Gospel” (Gal. 2:14) which renews us spiritually, psychologically, corporately, and socially.

New way with God

We move from an impersonal “boss-employee” relationship to a personal “Father-child” relationship; from a fear-based self-interested way to be moral to a love-based desire to delight in our God.

New way with Lordship

We are saved by His grace at such an infinite cost to him. He can, therefore, ask anything of us and we can serve Him joyfully.

New way with the self

We no longer take our identity from what we or *others* think of us but from what God thinks of us in Christ (I Cor. 4:3-4). The gospel produces neither an inferiority complex (since we are a treasure in Christ), nor a superiority complex (since we are sinners standing only by grace). This unique boldness and humility at once is a sign of the transforming power of the Gospel.

New way with problems

We approach problems honestly. The moralist says: “repent, you are not living right”. The Psychologist says: “you must accept yourself just as you are”. The Gospel says: “only Jesus can be your functional savior and give meaning to our reality.”

Gospel reconciliation between individuals

In the gospel, Christians become a new people of God, united to Christ and to each other. As the gospel humbles us and assures us of God’s love, we are freed from either envy or pride, either inferiority or superiority. We no longer receive our sense of worth through the approval or power of men. Our relationships become things of beauty, driven by love (Gal. 5:6) in which we are neither using people nor overly “needy” of them. Instead we are freed to serve, affirm, or confront — whatever is best for the moment.

Gospel reconciliation between people

The gospel calls us to repent of ALL of our prejudices big and small. It removes cultural pride and brings down racial identity as a component of identity, making it possible to avoid idolizing one’s

cultural strengths and appreciating those of others. Essentially, the gospel makes us humble — which heals the racial/nationality brokenness (Gal. 2:14; Acts 2:1-12). We no longer use our culture's strengths for self-justification (racism). We now can look at others who are not like us and who are not even Christians and know that we can learn from them (since we are not saved because of our wisdom or performance, but because of Christ). Christianity becomes the greatest basis for civil relationships in a pluralistic society.

Sociologically, all injustice, violence, strife, dependency, intolerance come to the degree that something besides Jesus (wealth, race/blood, the state, human reason) is operating as our functional savior.

Gospel centered worship in the community

Worship is the process by which we continually attribute the most worth to Jesus. Many other things compete with Christ for this place of worthiness, and the Bible calls them idols. John Calvin referred to our hearts as “idol factories”, constantly manufacturing new objects of worship. As individuals and as a unified body, we highly value the identification of idols that compete with the one true God. Once these idols are identified, they are exposed (repentance) as unworthy and unfulfilling and then destroyed. Driven by faith in Jesus, our Worship declares Jesus as more worthy, more valuable, and more fulfilling than anything else.

Through an emphasis on the gospel, we seek to promote this ongoing process in the private lives of those we serve. On the corporate level we hope to see people go through this process as we gather to celebrate the “good news”. If there is no personal transformation occurring in the body, then corporate worship will be like a lifeless committee meeting instead of an encounter with the living God. If, on the other hand, we are being personally transformed, then our worship will be alive and outsiders will be attracted to what is happening (1 Cor. 14:24,25).

Gospel Respect

The gospel teaches us to have deep respect for non-Christians. Since we are saved only by grace, it is our responsibility to humbly demonstrate our reliance on Christ, and live out our security and peace as we boldly tell His story.

Gospel Hope

The gospel teaches us to have hope for non-Christians. No one is ever seen as “too far away”, since every conversion, including your own, is a supernatural miracle of the heart.

Gospel Courage

The gospel keeps us from over-dependence on appearances and in the approval of others. This clears the way for speaking God's truth directly. The gospel should also prevent us from speaking arrogantly as we remember our own redemption.

Gospel Love

The gospel prevents us from defensiveness and the need to win arguments and prove ourselves through witnessing. We no longer need take things personally. We do not love people now in order to evangelize; we evangelize only because we love them.

Gospel Mission

Paul says that the gospel does not just have power, but rather it is the power of God (Rom. 1:16-17). We see this power in the gradual of inexorable growth of the kingdom of God (Matt. 11:12, 13:1-23).

A movement of priests

Every believer is a prophet, priest and king — we are a “royal priesthood” (I Pet. 2:9). At Restoration Road the laity is released to pastor, nurture and minister.

A movement of churches

We aim to plant churches with the same gospel based core values into every neighborhood and people group of the city. It will take, not a church, but a movement, to transform our city more on this subject in lesson 10).

A movement of giving

The gospel makes us generous — which heals the social brokenness. For people with means, it gives us a model of sacrificial giving in Christ (II Cor. 8:2) which we now owe to others (Matt. 18:21-35), even to those who are undeserving, like we were (Is. 64:6; Luke 6:32-35). One of the marks of a heart truly touched by grace is a life poured out in deeds of mercy and justice (Is. 1:10-17; Matt. 25:35-36; Jms. 2:12-14). At the same time, the gospel empowers the poor to self-sufficiency through its hope (Luke 1:52).

All of our work matters to God

The institutionalized church has made religion and the Christian establishment into an idol. The gospel clears out religiosity and makes so called “secular” work as valuable and God-honoring as Christian ministry. When you use your gifts in work — whether by practicing law, tilling the field, mending broken bodies, or nurturing children — you are answering God’s calling to serve the human community.

God matters to all our work

We also believe that the gospel shapes and affects the motives and methods we use in our work. We encourage Christians to offer up their work to the God who saved them, transforming their vocational lives by working in line with the gospel. We do not want Christians to privatize their faith away from their work, nor to express it in terms of subculture. We desire to see growing Christians working in their vocations both with excellence and Christian distinctiveness, thus transforming the culture from the inside out.

What is Restoration Road's basic strategy and structure?

Led by our commitment to the Gospel and Core Values, Restoration Road seeks to organize the ministries of our church so that we can work together, by the power of the Spirit, to effect change in Everett and to effectively call the people of our city and surrounding communities to a relationship with Jesus Christ through the transformation of the Gospel. Here are some strategies:

1. **We are a worshipping community.** We are called to worship God in spirit and in truth. Our worship services are designed to glorify God, to build up those who believe, and to challenge and help those who doubt or seek.
2. **We are a loving community.** We desire to be identified by our love for one another. The heart of our church is a unified bond reaching beyond all prejudices through which real friendships, needed encouragement and genuine caring develops.
3. **We are family community.** We support each other through intimate relationships as singles, couples, and families. We nurture our children within a gospel-centered community as we teach to them their need of Christ and model Christ-likeness before them.
4. **We are a supporting community.** Through our different groups, classes and sessions we provide a context for spiritual growth. Restoration Road aims to have or already has counseling and Elders and Deacons who respond to spiritual, emotional, economic and practical needs.
5. **We are a learning community.** Many of us who become followers of Jesus, lack an understanding and familiarity with spiritual truth, and have little if any Christian background. Our classes are designed to teach the basics of the faith and help Christians grow into servant leadership.
6. **We are a praying community.** Without prayer and reliance on God's grace, all of our plans are hollow. God has commanded us to pray and ordained many things to come to pass through prayer. We have monthly prayer times to seek God's favor and praise him for what he has already done.
7. **We are a giving community.** We match people with ministries. We give of our time and resources (financial, people, skills) where we are best created to serve within the church.
8. **We are a marketplace community.** We seek to work with excellence and Christian distinctiveness in our vocations.
9. **We are a merciful community.** Community development and ministry of social service help reweave the physical and social fabric of our community.
10. **We are a witnessing community.** We share the good news through our witness in Marysville and beyond.

What does it mean to be a member of Restoration Road?

To be a member of our church is to make a promise to live according to the Word and to support the work of the congregation. In the Bible this is called “a covenant”. Every believer is part of the church as *organism* (the Spiritual Body of Christ), but we are called to be a part of the local church as a *gathering*. A covenant is the basis for all society, according to the Bible: marriage, employment, citizenship, church membership, etc. are all relationships of accountability.

Membership in a church is not like membership in a social club or other organizations. Most organizations see their members as consumers, the ones whom the organization serves. The Church of Christ is a completely different community — membership means *ministry and service*, means going from being a consumer to becoming a co-owner who provides God’s love and care to others. At Restoration Road, we take seriously that we are a church not for ourselves, but for others.

Why formal membership in a Church?

Of course, many of the benefits of a vital congregation are available to anyone who becomes involved, whether they are members or not. The term “Church” in the NT usually meant the specific local church like that at Ephesus or Corinth. Whether the believers actually joined local churches formally or simply maintained an informal association is clear. Here are five scriptural indications and our rationale for formal membership:

1. ***The instructions for church discipline***
Matt. 18:15-17 & 1 Cor. 5 talk about putting a person out of the church (“remove” NASB, “expel” NIV) and treating him like an unbeliever. Since unbelievers were welcome at worship, removal of such a person must have indicated a distinct formal association.
2. ***The meaning of the word “join”***
After the fiery end of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:13, no non-Christians “dared join them [the church], but the people [unbelievers] esteemed them highly.” The Greek word for “join” has strong connotations of commitment. The same word is also used to speak of sexual relationships (1 Cor. 6:16) and joining to the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17).
3. ***The meaning of “the whole church”***
In 1 Cor. 14:23, Paul writes, “if the whole church comes together in one place...” In order for the leaders to have known if the “whole church” was there implies that a formal relationship had been established.
4. ***The instructions for pastoral oversight and spiritual leadership***
Pastors/overseers/shepherds were to care for “all the flock” (Acts 20:28; cf. 1 Tim. 3; Acts 20; Phil. 1:1 & Titus 1). Leaders of the citywide churches must have had some listing of believers. Since leaders were accountable for the souls of the flock under their care (Heb. 13:17), they must have had some commitment for care.
5. ***The biblical metaphors used to describe local churches***
Flock, temple, body, and household, are used specifically of local churches (Acts 20; Eph. 2; 1 Cor. 12; 1 Tim. 3). Each of these metaphors has a clear distinction of who is part of the church, and who isn’t.

“In the New Testament there is no such person as a Christian who is not a church member. Conversion was described as ‘the Lord adding to the church’ (Acts 2:47). There was no spiritual drifting.” (Douglas Millar).

What are the benefits of membership at Restoration Road?

There has been much debate regarding the need for membership. Past negative experiences, fear of commitment, or simply misunderstanding of exactly what it means. We don't want to "sell" you on the benefits of membership so that you're persuaded to join us. There are, however, some significant benefits to taking ownership in the church:

1. You have the benefit of accountability to spiritual leaders. Every believer is called to "obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls" (Heb. 13:17). This command assumes that you have a covenant with certain spiritual leaders. They are responsible for you and you to them. Some people may say, "I am accountable only to God". Ultimately, only God has authority over you. But the doctrine of sin should sober us about making ourselves the sole judges over our own hearts, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9). Heb. 3:13 say we need others to exhort us "daily" lest we become hardened by sin.
2. You shamelessly identify with Christ or his people (Mark 8:38). Our hope is that you can speak with confidence and love about your identification with Christ and His church community. We all desire to see people share, talk about, and stand for Jesus. We also desire community that we want to talk about and share with others as opposed to inviting others because of a sense of duty or guilt.
3. You stop being an independent Christian (Matt. 18:15-17; Heb. 13:17). Community is a core value because God's very nature declares it. The early chapters of Genesis declare that we are not made to be alone. As a part of our community, you have a family there to love you, cry with you, laugh with you, and serve you.
4. You participate in a stronger more unified effort of God's people. Ecclesiastes 4.9 teaches that TWO people can accomplish more than TWICE as ONE. There is strength in numbers.
5. You may have opportunity lead church ministries or serve as a church officer. You will not find a verse that says you must be a member to lead a Bible study. It does say, however, that pastors must watch over and protect the flock from false teachers and false doctrine. Membership is one means through which we can protect the purity of the word and the church. As a member, you agree to uphold the teachings of the church and respect its leadership decisions. It is both practical and wise to ensure those leading the flock do so from the same foundation under the same authority.
6. You have greater opportunities to use your spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4). As part of the body of Christ, you serve a particular purpose. Without you we're missing parts! The body might function, but it certainly is not robust. When you are using your God given skill, gift, talent or resource for the body, you are fulfilling God's ideal for His community.
7. You openly manifest the reality of the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12.27)
8. You encourage new believers to commitment to the gathering of the local body (Heb. 10:24).
9. You may experience priority in pastoral and private counseling, and church ceremonies such as marriage.

What are the membership commitments?

Membership at Restoration Road means that you have committed yourself to our family of believers — that you have agreed to participate as fully as you are able in the life, ministry and government of our church. Therefore, Restoration Road members must affirm the following promises as a vow unto the Lord:

You must believe the Gospel (see Session 5)

1. Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope except through his sovereign mercy?
2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?

You must seek to grow into the likeness of Christ, not through proud self-reliance, but through constant repentance and reliance on the Holy Spirit. (see Session 7)

3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes a follower of Christ?

Regular involvement in the life and ministry of the congregation. (see Session 8 and 10)

4. Do you promise to support the Church in its God-glorifying worship and work to the best of your ability?

You hold yourself accountable to the leadership and one another to live up to the above promises and seek to be a Biblical peacemaker in your relationships. (see Session 10)

5. Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to strive for its purity and peace?

What are the expectations of membership?

We encourage all of our members to live out their membership in the context of Scripture's expectation for the Christian life. God wants more than just a name on a list. He expects that you will actually grow into active membership at Restoration Road and flesh out your promise to "support the Church" through involvement in the ministry not just your checkbook.

There is, however, a proper balance between active involvement and over-commitment. Restoration Road seeks members who are thoughtful in their involvement levels. We feel it is important to serve but not to "burnout" in the name of the Lord. Our ministry activity should not become a barrier to living a God-honoring life. Your Christian walk ought to, therefore, be lived out in the following specific, practical ways:

1. ***Daily walk with God***
Regular, daily use of the "means of grace" - Bible reading and prayer - methodically for your own spiritual growth. See Mark 1:35.
2. ***Weekly worship with the people of God***
Attend services regularly and worship even when you are away from your home congregation. See Heb.10:24-25.
3. ***Membership in a Community (R.O.A.D.) Group***
Community groups are the main way that pastoral care occurs at Restoration Road. For your own spiritual growth as well as others, you need to belong to a group. See Eph. 4:15-16.

4. **Ministry involvement**

Besides attending worship and a community group each member should find one way to minister to others. Use your gifts! See I Pet. 4:10-11.

5. **Stewardship of finances through tithes and gifts**

Give of your first fruits to support the work of God and do it joyfully from a pure heart. See Mal. 3:8-10; I Cor. 16:1-2; Acts 4; Mark 12:41-44

6. **Bring and include new people**

Let the gospel overflow from your life into the lives of those around you - at home, at work, in your circle of friends. Help those whom you bring to Restoration Road to be able to connect into the life of the church. See Acts 2:41-47.

How do I become a member of Restoration Road?

Your first step is attendance at *The Gospel and our Church Class*. The classes run for 10 consecutive weeks. You must complete all 10 classes, although you may make up missed sessions during the next cycle. Attendance at the seminar in no way obligates you to pursue formal membership— you may simply use the class to find out more about Restoration Road's vision, goals or what position we take on certain Christian doctrines.

When you have decided you want to belong to the Restoration Road family and have completed the above class, call the church office and schedule your membership interview with one of the pastors by emailing info@rdchurch.com. Generally, these meetings last about 45 minutes.

The interviews are designed for several purposes: *First*, it gives us a chance to get to know you better, to hear your experience in coming to know God in Christ and to see what is happening presently in your spiritual life. *Second*, you have an opportunity to ask any questions you might have — about the church, its position on certain issues and how the church operates. This is your opportunity to interact, to make sure you are comfortable with your decision to join Restoration Road.

If you have never been baptized, we would be delighted to baptize you after we meet at the next available opportunity. Let the pastor know during your interview and we will schedule your baptism.

What if I chose to *not* become a formal member?

If you decide to stay involved with Restoration Road without membership, there will be no effort to pressure you into joining. Do not join unless you are ready to be committed! A broken promise is worse than no promise at all.

We believe that membership in Restoration Road is a privilege. It is not required for full participation in church activities. We encourage you to join our covenant family, but we do not intend to exclude anyone from family activities if they have chosen not to pursue formal membership. Non-members may worship with us, be active in a home group or other ministry, go on the church retreats, etc.

We encourage you to continue this class even if you do not intend to join Restoration Road. There will be no pressure or obligation toward formal membership.

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Restoration Road Church - Official Doctrinal Statement

GOD'S NATURE: THE TRINITARIAN GODHEAD

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love and in his holiness. He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration. Immortal and eternal, he perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning, sustains and sovereignly rules over all things, and providentially brings about his eternal good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation, to the praise of his glorious grace. (Genesis 1:26; 11:7; Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:1-2,14,18; Romans 8; Hebrews 1:8-9; 1 Peter 1:2; Revelation 1:5-6; 22:3)

GOD'S REVELATION: THE BIBLE

God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in the created order, and has supremely revealed himself to fallen human beings in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word. Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by his Spirit has graciously disclosed himself in human words: we believe that God has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are both the record and means of his saving work in the world. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error (inerrant and infallible) in the original writings, complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. We confess that both our finitude and our sinfulness preclude the possibility of knowing God's truth exhaustively, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God's revealed truth truly. The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and do the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel. (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21; Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:5-6; John 16:12-13, 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Revelation 22:18).

GOD'S CREATION: MAN & WOMAN

We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in his own image. Adam and Eve belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and

devoted fellowship with their Maker (Genesis 1:1-31). Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church, and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church (Ephesians 5:22-33). In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship (i.e. responsible, servant leadership) in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. The distinctive leadership role of pastor within the church given to qualified men is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments.

GOD'S JUDGMENT: THE FALL

We believe that Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original blessedness— for himself and all his progeny — by falling into sin through Satan's temptation. As a result, all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (e.g. physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, spiritually) and condemned finally and irrevocably to death — apart from God's own gracious intervention. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to himself. (Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 3:10-18,22-23; 5:12; Ephesians 1-3,12)

GOD'S PLAN: REDEMPTION

We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation, and to this end foreknew them and chose them. We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace have faith in Jesus, and that he will one day glorify them— all to the praise of his glorious grace. In love God commands and implores all people to repent and believe, having set his saving love on those he has chosen and having ordained Christ to be their Redeemer.

GOD'S NEWS: THE GOSPEL

We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ. Utter folly to the world, even though it is the power of God to those who are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18), this good news is christological, centering on the cross and resurrection: the gospel is not proclaimed if Christ is not proclaimed, and the authentic Christ has not been proclaimed if his death and resurrection are not central (the message is “Christ died for our sins . . . [and] was raised”, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4). This good news is biblical (his death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), theological and salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), historical (if the saving events did not happen, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and we are to be pitied more than all others, 1 Corinthians 15:19), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events, Ephesians 2:20), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual persons are saved, Romans 10:9-13).

GOD'S SON: JESUS CHRIST

We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to his Father, the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh, fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures (John 1:1-3,14). The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life (Hebrews 4:15), performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. As the mediatorial King, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father (Romans 8:34), exercising in heaven and on earth all of God's sovereignty, and is our High Priest (Hebrews 2:17) and righteous Advocate (1 John 2:1). We believe that by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21): on the cross he canceled sin, propitiated God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. By his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death and defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all his people; by his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Because God chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, no human being can ever boast before him — Christ Jesus has become

for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:27-30).

GOD'S WORK: JUSTIFICATION

We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. (Romans 5:1). By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf (1 Peter 2:24). By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. Inasmuch as Christ was given by the Father for us, and his obedience and punishment were accepted in place of our own, freely and not for anything in us, this justification is solely of free grace, in order that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners (Ephesians 2:8,9). We believe that a zeal for personal and public obedience flows from this free justification.

GOD'S SPIRIT: HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that this salvation, attested in all Scripture and secured by Jesus Christ, is applied to his people by the Holy Spirit. Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and is present with and in believers. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8), and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith, and in him they are baptized into union with the Lord Jesus, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God's family; they participate in the divine nature and receive his sovereignly distributed gifts (1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12). The Holy Spirit is himself the down payment of the promised inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14), and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

GOD'S REIGN: THE KINGDOM

We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God through union with Christ by faith, and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit, enter the kingdom of God and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins, the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God, and the prospect of the glory yet to be revealed. Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace. Living as salt in a world that is decaying and light in a world that is dark, believers

should neither withdraw into seclusion from the world, nor become indistinguishable from it (Matthew 5:13-16): rather, we are to do good to the city, for all the glory and honor of the nations is to be offered up to the living God. Recognizing whose created order this is, and because we are citizens of God's kingdom (Ephesians 2:19), we are to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:31), doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God (Galatians 6:10). The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation. The kingdom of God is an invasive power that plunders Satan's dark kingdom and regenerates and renovates through repentance and faith the lives of individuals rescued from that kingdom. It therefore inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.

GOD'S PEOPLE: THE CHURCH

We believe that God's new covenant people have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem; they are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies (Ephesians 2:6). This universal church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only Head; thus each "local church" is, in fact, the church, the household of God (Ephesians 2:19), the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). The church is the body of Christ, the apple of his eye, graven on his hands, and he has pledged himself to her forever. The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, and, above all, by her love for God, and by her members' love for one another and for the world. Crucially, this gospel we cherish has both personal and corporate dimensions, neither of which may properly be overlooked. Christ Jesus is our peace (Ephesians 2:14): he has not only brought about peace with God, but also peace between alienated peoples. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility (Galatians 3:28). The church serves as a sign of God's future new world when its members live for the service of one another and their neighbors, rather than for self-focus. The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world.

GOD'S SACRAMENTS: BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself (Matthew 28:18-20; Matthew 26:26-29). The former is connected with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal. Together they are simultaneously God's pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of

submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of his return and of the consummation of all things.

GOD'S FUTURE: RESTORATION

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust — the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all and his people will be enthralled by the immediacy of his indescribable holiness, and all things will be made new (Revelation 21:5).

This confessional statement is adapted, in large part, from the Confessional Statement of The Gospel Coalition.