



## Welcome!

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We are really excited that you are taking this important step toward understanding, appreciating, and committing to the local church! Membership in the local church in the New Testament was always assumed. Everyone who confessed Jesus as Lord was baptized, added to the church, and was engaged in mutual ministry to and with one another.

*Acts 2:41-47 — So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

They continued in one accord, gathering, and worshipping together, and continuing to have new believers “added” to the body (Acts 5:12-14). In the early church, and in much of the world today, there is little doubt about who genuinely understands and is committed to Christ and the Gospel. To make that profession and commitment through baptism often puts a person’s very life in danger. It is not culturally comfortable to be a Christian.

While we don’t see a membership process outlined in Scripture, we do see the patterns of “adding” to the number of those whose professions and actions evidenced belief and commitment to the gospel (Acts 5:12-14). We see the churches having a clear and distinct understanding of “removing” some and distinguishing who were the “insiders” and “outsiders” (1 Corinthians 5:10-13).

Centuries of cultural acceptance, doctrinal drift, and denominational confusion in Western and American Christianity makes it necessary to formalize a process for identifying, embracing, and committing to those who truly know and worship Jesus through the Gospel, and desire to commit to the ministry of His body through the local church.



## ***The Gospel***

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### ***Essential Truths about God***

#### **1. God is the Holy Creator.**

He has a right to your life. You belong to Him.

*Psalm 100:3 — Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

*Revelation 4:11 — Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.*

See also Romans 1:18-32; Acts 17:24.

#### **2. God is the Righteous Judge.**

God's righteous, holy character is seen in His perfect Law. As with any law, His law provides a standard for you to live by, punishment for those who don't meet that standard, and freedom to those that do meet the standard.

*Hebrews 9:27 — And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.*

See also 1 Peter 1:16 and Acts 17:22-31.

#### **3. God is Loving.**

God is loving to all men (even His enemies—see Matthew 5:43-48), but this does not mean all people are in right standing with God.

*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.*

#### **4. God is gracious to all who repent.**

The delay in the Lord's return reflects His desire to show patience and grace to those who repent.

*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.*



## ***Essential Truths about Man***

### **1. Man was created to know God.**

God wants men to seek Him and find Him. Genesis chapters 1 and 2 describes God creating mankind so they might worship Him, and He might dwell among them. The Bible's storyline—God's plan of redemption—is designed to recapture this purpose while putting all the attributes of God on display.

*Acts 17:26-27 — 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, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,*

*John 17:3 — And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*

### **2. Man sins against God.**

Sin is breaking God's law. Sin is falling short of the perfection of God. The Gospel enables man to be saved from his rebellion and sin.

*1 John 3:4 — Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.*

*Romans 3:23 — for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

### **3. Man cannot stop sinning; He is helpless in his sin.**

Romans 3:10-20 is an indictment on mankind and expresses our hopeless condition and helplessness in sin. In our natural-born state, humanity is dead in trespasses and sin.

*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.*

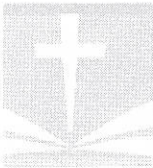
*Jeremiah 17:9 — The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?*

### **4. Man is separated from God because of His sin and bound for eternal death.**

Because we are alienated from God because of our sins we have incurred God's wrathful displeasure and apart from saving faith in Christ will be separated from God forever.

*Isaiah 59:1-2 — Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.*

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



## **Essential Truths about Jesus Christ**

### **1. Jesus Christ is God in human flesh.**

What was said about God is also true of Christ. He became a man to be a mediator between God and man.

*John 1:1, 14 — In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

*Colossians 2:9 — For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,*

*1 Timothy 2:5 — For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,*

### **2. Jesus Christ is the sin-bearer, or sin-substitute.**

*Isaiah 53:5-6 — But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. 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.*

*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.*

*1 Peter 3:18 — For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,*

Jesus Christ was the substitute payment for the penalty that we deserved for our sins. His death is God's only provision for the forgiveness of man's sin and the appeasement of God's wrath against Him. Christ's perfect life of obedience is imputed to us for our right-standing before God, and our sin is born by Christ in His own body on the Cross to atone for our sin.

### **3. Jesus Christ rose from the dead - He is alive today!**

The resurrection displays and guarantees the life-giving power of God through the gospel—that we too can be delivered from the death we deserve (Romans 6:23). The same power that raised Jesus from the dead gives life to sinners. The resurrection also declares that God was satisfied with Jesus Christ's payment of death on behalf of sinners.

*Matthew 28:5-6 — But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.*

*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 Corinthians 15:17 — And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.*

*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.*



#### 4. Jesus Christ is Lord.

All men must submit to Christ as their Master. It is impossible to say you truly believe in Jesus if you do not submit to Him in humble adoration and obedience. This worship and obedience is the goal of faith.

*Romans 10:9-10 — because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*

*Titus 2:11-14 — For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

#### **Essential Truths about Man's Response**

##### 1. Man's response includes faith.

"Faith" as it is used in Scripture has elements of knowledge (what you know), belief (what you embrace as true), and trust (what you rely upon because it is true). Any time a man has "saving faith" it contains all of these elements.

*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.*

*1 John 3:23 — And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.*

##### 2. Man's response includes repentance.

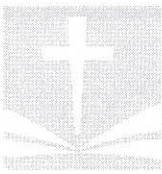
Repentance—a change of mind that causes a turning from sin, and to God—is a necessary part of obtaining salvation. It is a gift of God's grace that He would change our hearts, cause us to hate our sin and to desire Him, and enable us to turn and follow Him in repentant faith. Without repentance from sin and the fruit of good works, there is no evidence of genuine conversion. These two ideas of faith and repentance comprise the biblical idea of conversion.

*Matthew 3:2 — [John the Baptist preached] "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

*Acts 20:20-21 — [Paul said] ...I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Matthew 4:17 — From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

*Acts 2:38 — And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*



*Acts 17:30 — [Paul preached that] The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,*

*Titus 1:16 — They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.*

*James 2:14, 17 — What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

### **3. Repentance and Faith are gifts given by God in Regeneration.**

Man's response in saving faith and repentance is initiated by God at the New Birth, (2 Cor. 5:17, John 3:3-7) at which time He is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. This is an act of free grace on the part of God and a consequence of Divine election and foreknowledge from before the beginning of time. Sinners who repent and believe with saving faith do so by the effectual calling of God through the Word and by the Spirit which enables them to believe and repent.

*1 Corinthians 2:12-14 — Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. NASB*

*Ephesians 2:8-9 — For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; NASB*

*John 6:65-65 — And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father." NASB*

*Acts 16:14 — And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. NASB*

*Romans 8:28-30 — And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. NASB*



## *Core Values*

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“Core Values” are fundamental and foundational values from which our practices logically flow.

The Scriptures place a pre-eminent importance on these principles, as you will see. That is why they are at the “core” of all that we say and do. They are important, necessary, and influential. In fact, these core values undergird and energize everything we do here at Heritage Christian Fellowship. Their fundamental and foundational nature leads us to do ministry in a certain kind of way, our Philosophy of Ministry. Because we are all on the same team, working toward a common goal (Philippians 1:27), it is important that we all understand and allow these values to inform our ministry together (Ephesians 4:11-13). This is how we both glorify and enjoy God in our local church.

- Here is a list of the Core Values of Heritage Christian Fellowship:
- A High View of God
- A High View of Scripture
- The Gospel
- Commitment to the Local Church
- Progressive Sanctification
- Discipleship

Now we will take a detailed look at each of these values and their importance.

### *A High View of God*


We value the Triune God far above everything, for He is the most worthy and valuable being that exists. It is imperative to see Him as He really is, the Creator of everything and paragon of all virtue, the Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is our utmost desire to glorify God by pursuing a **high view of God**. To know God and to love Him is the all-consuming passion of our lives. The continual proclamation of His character and nature is a fundamental element in our worship. In fact, this is the definition of worship, to ascribe worth to God and to see, comprehend, experience, and exalt the glory of God.

### *A High View of Scripture*

We value the special revelation of God He has given us in His written Word, the Bible. Since the Holy Scriptures are in fact all-sufficient, infallible, and inerrant, we seek to always have a **high view of Scripture**. The 66 books of the Christian Canon which make up the Holy Scriptures contain all that we need for life, faith, and godly living because they are a true and divine revelation of God Himself. We therefore seek always to understand the Bible better and teach the Bible very clearly. Clear and expository Bible teaching is a fundamental element in our worship.

### *The Gospel*

We value **the person and the work of Jesus Christ**, and this Gospel message of the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ is at the center of our worship. Christ’s perfect life of obedience to God’s Law, His atoning sacrifice, and Resurrection are the most important events in the history of creation, and the Gospel is the message of what He has accomplished for those who believe with repentant faith. The Gospel was the fulfillment of Christ’s work as our High Priest and the full payment for the redemption of mankind from his sins. In the



Gospel we have the completed work of justification, which is available to us by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. The cross is central to the attitude of Christian living and the supreme example of God's love to mankind. If there ever was an act of divine wonder to worship and glory in, it is the cross of Jesus Christ, who is Himself fully God and fully human, our supreme treasure!

### ***Commitment to the Local Church***

We value **the Church** because it is central to all that Christ is doing in the world. Every Christian is baptized into the body of Christ, the universal Church, upon conversion by the Holy Spirit, and is called to live out his or her Christian life in a local assembly. The local church is the primary institution where Christian sanctification happens, where we live out the many "one another" commands with each other to thereby glorify God. Much of the New Testament is given to instructing Christians about how to be fruitful and effective worshipers in the local church. Therefore, we strive to model Heritage Christian Fellowship after the biblical standard, and nurture it to grow and build itself up in love, as each member uses their gifts for the strengthening of it. Christians must have strong affection for the local church, commit themselves to a specific local church, and consider the other members of the local church to be their family.

### ***Progressive Sanctification***

We value **progressive sanctification** and personal holiness. Becoming like Christ is chief among our pursuits and the way we glorify God and enjoy Him. Sanctification is something we continually strive for so that we take on the character and likeness of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds. True saving faith in Christ brings about an obedience to God's commandments which powerfully changes our lives. Bearing the fruit of the Spirit in our daily lives is our humble desire. This is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in sanctification, and our cooperation with Him is a central element of our worship. Humility and forbearing love are values of importance in our relation to God and to one another.

### ***Discipleship***

We value the ministry of **discipleship** within the body of Christ. This is the biblical method and divine example of true spiritual ministry within the church. The principles of fellowship, teaching, mentoring, spiritual authority, and accountability are vital to the spiritual growth of Christians. We strive to form and equip mature disciples of Jesus Christ who will themselves become disciple makers. Through the mutual encouragement of discipleship and the expression of each of our own personal spiritual gifts, we seek to be effective and productive ministers of the Gospel. This is a vital part of the Christian life for all who seek to obey Christ.

### ***Conclusion***

These core values are foundational principles that we desire to undergird and energize every aspect of ministry at Heritage Christian Fellowship. A robust understanding and practice of these values produce a fully informed worshipper of God and a mindset that informs our philosophy and methods for ministering the Gospel of Christ to and with one another. Because we are all on the same team, working toward a common goal (Phil. 1:27), it is important that we all understand and allow these core values to inform our ministry together (Eph. 4:11-13).