

WE BELIEVE

Exploring the core beliefs
of our Christian Faith
Part 1



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How to use this workbook

This workbook is designed to help you consider the foundations of your Christian faith.

Each question in the workbook is based on the Nicene Creed or explores a concept that emerges from it.

Each question has a set of scriptures that will help you find answers. The answers are often in the scriptures.

Read the question and the scriptures and see if you can put down an answer. Write down your thoughts and ideas in the lines provided. Please try to answer the question and not just write down what you think you know about this subject.

GCI's answer to each question is located in the column along side, on the same page. We have occasionally added comments to assist you in understanding the concept.

Feel free to read other books and articles in order to understand the ideas presented. Studying theology is always very profitable when it's done in community, so it's a great idea to work with a friend or in a study group.

Some of the concepts in the Nicene Creed and therefore those in this booklet are hard to understand because they try to describe a God who is spiritual. Scholars have debated many of these concepts for centuries and not all of them agree. So don't be discouraged if you feel you need to question a concept or need to talk to someone about something you don't understand.

We pray that you will find great joy as you come to know our great God.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy, all-embracing and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Amen.



SECTION 1
THE TRIUNE GOD

1.1

Who is the God Christians worship?

* Mark 12:29 * Matt. 28:19 * Acts 20:28

* 2 Cor. 13:14 * Heb. 10:29 * 1 Pet 1:2

What do these scriptures tell us about God? 

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Christians believe that these Scriptures tell us the following about God: He is one divine being in three eternal, coinherent, equally divine persons.

What do these words mean? 

Eternal =

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Coinherent =

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Equally divine =

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Why is this important? 

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GCI Says:

In accordance with the testimony of the Holy Scriptures, the God we worship is one divine Being in three eternal, co-essential, yet distinct Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

*GCI Says:
God is the eternal communion
of holy love shared by the
Father, the Son, and the Holy
Spirit.*

1.2

**What does being triune tell us about
God's nature?**

* John 14:9 * 1 John 4:8 * Rom. 5:8 * Titus 2:11
* Heb. 1:2-3 * 1 Pet. 1:2 * Gal. 3:26

What do these scriptures tell us about
God? 

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What does the word communion mean
here? 

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What is the difference between "holy love"
and human love? 

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1.3

Does that mean there are three Gods?

Refer to the scriptures in question 1.1 and especially 1.2

* 2 Corinthians 13:14 * 1 Peter 1:2

Yes or No, are there three Gods? 

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Please explain why you chose which answer: 

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1.4

How can God be both one in Being and three in Persons?

What words would you use to describe the God's triunity? 

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GCI Says:

The Triune God is one God who exists eternally as three distinct Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Triune God is one in Being and three in Persons.

GCI Says:

Though we cannot know exactly how God's being functions since we are mere creatures, we can say that, unlike human persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are related to each other in such an absolutely unique and profound way that they are one in being. The oneness of God's being is a tri-unity.

GCI Says:

In the being of God there is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit who know, love and glorify each other for all eternity. There never was a time when God was not Triune.

Comment:

Each person in the Godhead has a distinct role. Statements a) and b) are false. The Trinity is not one God with three jobs. The persons cannot be equated with roles or ways.

GCI Says:

No, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equally eternal and divine and share the same authority and power, and have the same mind, will and purpose in all things.

1.5

Are the three Persons of the Trinity . . .

* Mark 12:29 * Matt. 28:19 * Acts 20:28

* 2 Cor. 13:14 * Heb. 10:29 * 1 Pet. 1:2

- a) three different ways the one God acts towards his creation, or
- b) three roles the one God plays?

Is either statement correct? Explain your answer: 

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1.6

Is one of the Persons of the Trinity the origin of the others, and thus superior?

* John 1:1-3

How would you describe the relationship between Father, Son, and Spirit? 

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1.7

Does the equality of the three divine Persons mean that they are interchangeable with each other?

* 1 Peter 1:2

Is it possible for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to change characteristics? 

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1.8

What are the unique relationships in the Being of the Triune God that are not interchangeable?

That is, do the relationships within the Trinity change? Can the Father be the Son or the Holy Spirit? 

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GCI Says:

No, the divine Persons are not interchangeable "parts" of God. Each has a unique relationship of holy love to the other two, and each has an eternal name that reveals their real personal distinction.

GCI Says:

The Father eternally begets the Son, the Son is eternally begotten by the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and through the Son.

Comment:

The term beget means to "bring forth" or to "produce." Begotten means being "brought forth" or "produced." This can seem as though there was a time when the Son didn't exist, which is why the term "eternally" is used. Same for the Holy Spirit. He proceeds "eternally" from the Father, through the Son. This relationship is constant.

GCI Says:

No, all the works of the Triune God toward his creation are indivisible since God is one in being and of one mind, will, authority and holy love.

Comment:

Our understanding of the Trinity is that they operate in complete harmony constantly. Therefore what any member does, is completely in line with the will and action and purpose of the others. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit do not act alone.

GCI Says:

There is a difference, for though the acts of the divine Persons are undivided, each contributes uniquely to the perfectly united works of the one Triune God.

Comment:

While they don't act independently, each person of the Trinity is necessary because their unique roles combine to form a perfect work or impact.

1.9

Do the three divine Persons act independently of each other towards creation?

* John 5:19

Would it be possible for any of the Trinity to act independently of one another? 

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1.10

Is there a difference in how the three divine Persons relate to creation?

* Gal. 4:4-5 * John 6:37-38 * John 14:26

Does this make two of the three persons in the Trinity irrelevant? 

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1.11

How can we speak of the unique contributions of the three divine Persons without separating their works?

* 1 Cor. 8:6 * John 10:30 * 1 John 5:7-8

* 1 Cor. 12:4-6

How can the persons of the Trinity be unique without being separate? 

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1.12

What are the primary acts of the Triune God towards creation?

* Rev. 4:11 * Tit. 2:13-14

What is each person of the Trinity known for? 

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GCI Says:

We could say that one of the Persons initiates, or takes the lead, in one or another of the distinct and gracious acts towards the Triune God's creation, while the others perfectly follow in complete harmony with each other.

Comment:

It's important to note that when we talk about creation here, we are not just talking about the physical earth but rather everything that God has created, including us. So any of the Trinity can interact or initiate action with any part of the creation and be supported by the other members.

GCI Says:

The Father is most associated with creation, the Son with redemption, and the Holy Spirit with bringing all things to perfection. However, all three of the divine Persons are involved in all the works of the one Triune God.

Comment:

When we read the scriptures, the role of Creator is most often given to the Father and redeeming is associated with the Son. The Holy Spirit is said to accomplish in our lives the finished work of Christ.

GCI Says:

The Triune God is a living, loving and generative God who creates for the sake of communion and holy love with his creation.

Comment:

God's love and nature is expressed by sharing his life with his creation. Love is expressed in community.

GCI Says:

From the beginning, God's human creatures, in distrusting God, have alienated themselves and sought to live on their own from their good, faithful and life-giving Creator. But because the Triune God is a faithful and loving God who does not give up on his creatures, God made a way for them to be reconciled to him and thus return to fullness of communion with him as their Lord and Savior.

Comment:

Because God is far more faithful than we can imagine, he created a way for us to return to him. But he also knows that we can't do this by ourselves. Redemption is initiated by God and completed by God.

1.13

Why did the Triune God create?

Why the universe and why us? 

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1.14

Why did the Triune God redeem creation?

* 1 John 4:7 * 1 Pet. 2:9

What are God's motivations for redemption? 

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1.15

Why does the Triune God now work to perfect the creation?

* Matt. 5:48 * Ephesians 5:27

Your answer: 

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1.16

How can we finite creatures know, love and trust the Triune God?

* Matt. 11:27 * 1 John 4:18-19 * John 3:16

How does the physical relate to the spiritual? 

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GCI Says:

The Triune God is a communion of perfect holy love who created us to share in the Triune God's love and life for all eternity and in that way give glory to God.

Comment:

Sharing in God's life is an eternal experience involving our past, present and future. God's involvement in our lives is continuous as we are changed and molded and come into line with his purpose. This gives glory to God.

GCI Says:

The Triune God has the desire, will and ability to make himself known to his human creatures who do not have the desire, the will, or the ability to know God on their own. That revelation, which culminated in the Father's personal self-revelation in Jesus Christ, has, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, been preserved for us in the Holy Scriptures.

Comment:

God wants a relationship with us and through a combination of Jesus Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit and the Bible, he has made it possible for us to relate to him in a way that we can understand and cope with. We are able to respond because God came to us in our form. He aligned himself with us so that we could relate to him. God came to us.

1.18

What do Christians understand from the Holy Scriptures about the character of the Triune God revealed by Jesus Christ?

* John 10:30 * 14:9 * John 17:11; 21-22

* 1 John 2:23

In your own words, what does this say about the character of God as shown by Christ? 

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*GCI Says:
We learn that the character, mind, purpose, will and heart of the Triune God is identical to what we see and hear in Jesus Christ, demonstrated by what he accomplished in his earthly ministry. Those who have met and seen the Son have indeed met in him the Father. By knowing the Son, they are united in such a way that they have the same nature, character, heart, mind, will, authority, power and purpose.*

*Comment:
In simple terms Jesus was a walking, talking model of the Father. The manner in which he acted on earth reflected the manner and character of how the Father acts. They are so united that knowing the Son means that we know the Father.*

SECTION 2

GOD THE FATHER

2.1

Who is God the Father?

* John 1:1, 14; 14:16-17, 26

* John 15:26

Read the scriptures above to answer this question: 

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2.2

Why is the first of the three divine Persons of the Trinity called "Father"?

* Matt. 6:9 * John 14:9-10 * Rom. 1:7

* Rom. 8:15-17 * Gal. 4:4-7

Why is the term Father appropriate? 

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*GCI Says:
Our Lord Jesus called God his eternal Father and identified himself as his only eternal Son. Thus, the Father is, first of all, the Father of the Son. The Son also taught his disciples to address God as Father in prayer. The apostle Paul teaches that God adopts believers as his children, sending the Spirit of the Son into their hearts so they cry out, "Abba, Father." As adopted children in the Son, we may address the Father as Jesus does.*

- Comment:*
- ▶ *Jesus identifies himself as a Son.*
 - ▶ *We are adopted as God's children.*
 - ▶ *We have Jesus as a brother.*

GCI Says:

In calling God "Father," we acknowledge that God exists in personal relationship, and that God created us for personal relationship with him. God made humankind according to his image, which is revealed in his eternal Son. We were created to trust in God as our Creator, Sustainer, Protector and Provider, putting our hope in God as his children who, in Jesus Christ, are God's heirs.

Comment:

Calling God "Father" describes a personal relationship and we can have that because we bear a resemblance to God. In some ways we are like him. God takes on many roles that are related to our welfare and through Jesus we have a life with him.

GCI Says:

No. Only creatures having bodies can be either male or female. But God has no body, since by nature God is Spirit. The Holy Scriptures reveal God as a living God beyond all sexual distinctions. Scripture uses diverse images for God, female as well as male.

Comment:

God is not male or female. Some of God's attributes are (in Western society) more commonly associated with men, but others are more commonly associated with women (e.g., Galatians 5:22-23).

2.3

What is meant by calling God "Father"?

* Gen. 1:26 * Matt. 6:25-33

* Rom. 8:16-17, 29

What does calling God "Father" mean to us? 

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2.4

Does calling the first Person of the Trinity "Father" mean that God is male?

* Is. 49:15; 66:13 * Matt. 23:37

Which one of these scriptures best clarified this question for you? How so? 

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2.5

Why does the Creed say that God the Father is “Almighty”?

* Lam. 3:22 * Song 8:7 * 1 John 4:8

What is the overarching theme of these scriptures? How do they relate to God being Almighty? 

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2.6

How do Christians understand the love and power of God?

* John 3:16 * Heb. 1:3 * 1 John 4:9

* Matt. 9:36 * Ps. 106:8

In what ways did Jesus demonstrate love? 

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GCI Says:

God the Father is “Almighty” as the God who is love—a holy love that is powerful beyond measure. God is omnipotent—he can do anything he wants to do.

Comment:

God is Almighty but the power is used and tempered by love towards mankind.

GCI Says:

We understand the love and power of God most clearly through Jesus Christ. In Jesus’ life of compassion, his death on the cross, and his resurrection from the dead, we see how vast God’s love for the world is—a love that is ready to suffer for our sakes, yet so strong that nothing will prevail against it. In the power of his love, God is for us and is eternally against all that is against us and his loving purposes for us.

Comment:

God’s love is personified in Jesus Christ. He lived out what it meant to love and showed that it could be victorious.

GCI Says:

This powerful and loving God is the one we may trust in all the circumstances of our lives, and to whom we belong both in life and death.

Comment:

Even when life gets tough and we don't understand the circumstances or the way through, we can cling on to God's love and trust in his purpose for us.

GCI Says:

That God not only preserves his creation, but also continually provides for it, attends to it, ruling and sustaining it with wise and benevolent care. God is concerned for every creature and, in the end, will eradicate all evil and deliver all of creation from it.

Comment:

In simple terms, providence means that God is in overall control of our lives. He doesn't create and then abandon the creation. Rather, he provides and preserves it.

2.7

What comfort do Christians receive from this truth?

* Ps. 12:6 * Rom. 8:38-39

In what ways are you comforted by these scriptures? 

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2.8

What do Christians mean by God's "providence"?

* Ps. 145:15, 17 * Gen. 50:20 * Rom. 8:28
* Eph. 1:9-10 * 1 Pet. 3:13 * Rev. 21:1

Look up the meaning of the word "providence" and describe what it means in relation to God. 

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2.9

What comfort do Christians receive by trusting in God’s providence?

* Ps. 146:9 * Is. 58:11 * 41:10

* 2 Cor. 1:3-5 * Ps. 30:5

How would you explain God's providence?



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2.10

What does the Creed mean in saying that God is “Maker of heaven and earth”? (the Nicene Creed is the statement at the beginning of this book)

* Rev. 4:11 * Gen. 1:1 * Heb. 11:3

How do you experience God as Creator?



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GCI Says:

The eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ watches over us continuously, blessing, guiding and compassionately correcting us wherever we may be. God strengthens us when we are faithful, comforts us when discouraged or sorrowful, raises us up when we stumble, and brings us at last to the fullness of eternal life.

Entrusting ourselves wholly to God's care, we receive the grace to be patient in adversity, thankful in the midst of blessing, courageous against injustice, and confident that no evil afflicts us that God will not turn to our ultimate good.

Comment:

There are many times during our lives when things often don't make sense and it's important to know that in those times God is still in charge, even if it doesn't feel like it.

GCI Says:

First, that God called heaven and earth, with all that is in them, into being out of nothing by the power of his Word.

Second, that by that same power all things are upheld and governed in perfect goodness, righteousness and wisdom, according to God's eternal purpose.

Comment:

God both creates and preserves by the power of his word. Making is more than just creating. Making involves long-term sustainability in every area.

GCI Says:

No. God would still be God, eternally perfect and inexhaustibly rich, even if no creatures had ever been created. Yet, without God, all created beings would fail to exist. Creatures can neither come into existence, nor continue, nor find fulfillment apart from God. God alone is self-existent and self-sufficient.

GCI Says:

God's decision to create the world was an act of grace. God chose to grant existence to the world simply to bless it. God created the world as a place to make known God's glory, to share the love and freedom at the heart of God's Triune being, and to give us eternal life in communion with God, all demonstrating the goodness and glory of God.

Comment:

Grace always comes from outside of us. The creation of the world and our lives is something that we can't do for ourselves. Grace is always a free gift, and the Christian life reflects God's giving nature.

2.11

Did God need the world in order to be God?

* Acts 17:24-25 * John 1:16

* John 5:26 * Eph. 1:22

Is there a word or phrase from these verses that helped you better understand God's sufficiency? 

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2.12

Why then did God create the world?

* Ps. 19:1 * 2 Cor. 3:17 * Ps. 67:6-7

* Eph. 1:3-4 * John 3:36

How would you describe God's motivation for creating the world? 

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SECTION 3
GOD THE SON

3.5

What do Christians affirm when they confess their faith in Jesus Christ as their “Lord”?

- * 1 Cor. 15:3-4 * Rev. 11:15 * Eph. 1:20-23
- * Phil. 2:9-11

What does the word "affirm" mean? 

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What does it mean to affirm your faith? 

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3.6

What is the significance of affirming that Jesus Christ is “true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father”?

- * John 20:28 * Matt. 11:27 * 1 John 4:14

Try to explain why the term “one being with the Father” is also important: 

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GCI Says:

Having been raised from the dead, Jesus Christ reigns with compassion and justice over all things in heaven and on earth, especially over those who confess him by faith; and that by trusting, loving and serving him above all else, we give glory and honor to God.

Comment:

The term “Confess your faith” means more than just telling people about Christ. It means being able to tell people in detail what you believe about him and how that affects your values and lifestyle. To “affirm” means to state without doubt. When you affirm, you mean it!

GCI Says:

Only God deserves worship and only God can reveal to us who God is. Only God can save us from our sins, forgive us, rescue us from all evil and bring about a new heaven and earth. Only God can make us truly and eternally his beloved children. Being truly one in being with the Father, Jesus meets these conditions. As true God, Jesus, the Son incarnate, is the proper object of our worship as the self-revelation of God and the Savior of the world.

Comment:

Jesus is just as much God as the Father. Jesus was not made or created or born in the sense that there was a time that he didn't exist. Rather, Jesus is eternal, as is the Father.

GCI Says:

Being truly human, Jesus entered fully into our fallen situation and overcame it from within. By his pure obedience of faith in his Father, he lived in unbroken unity with God, even to the point of accepting a violent death. As sinners at war with grace, this is precisely the kind of life we fail to live. When we accept him and what he has done for us by faith, Jesus by his Holy Spirit removes the alienation our disobedience causes, clothes us with his perfect righteousness, and restores us to the right relationship with God that he worked out in his humanity and earthly life.

Comment:

Because Jesus was human he was able to live the sort of life that we are not able to. Alienation means isolation or distance or separation but it's a perceived isolation, because in reality God never stops loving us. Sin prevents us from accepting it and makes us feel distanced.

3.7

What is the significance of affirming that Jesus is also “truly human”?

* Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15 * 5:8-9 * Rom. 5:19

How do these verses emphasize Christ's humanity?: 

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3.8

How can Jesus be both truly God and truly human?

* Mark 1:27, 4:41 * Matt. 28:18

* Luke 22:44 * John 1:1-5, 14 * Job 5:9

Describe Jesus' divine and human experience: 

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*GCI Says:
The mystery of Jesus Christ's divine-human unity surpasses our understanding; only faith given to us by the Holy Spirit enables us to affirm it. When the Bible depicts Jesus as someone with divine power, status and authority, it presupposes his humanity. When the Bible depicts Jesus as someone with human weakness, neediness and mortality, it presupposes his deity. Though we cannot understand how this could be, we can trust that the God who made heaven and earth and fashioned humanity according to his image revealed in his Son, is free to become God incarnate and thus to be God with us in this wonderful, awe-inspiring way.*

*Comment:
In simple terms we can't really explain this concept. It's something that God helps us to accept and believe. To presuppose is to assume that something is already in place. So when we talk of Jesus as a man we do it assuming that he is still God and vice versa.*

3.10

How did God use Israel to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus?

- * Gen. 17:3-4 * Ex. 6:4-5 * Gal. 3:14
- * Jer. 30:22 * 1 Pet. 2:9-10 * Zech. 1:6
- * Lev. 5:6 * Ps. 72:1, 4

What do we learn about God's character through his covenant relationship with Israel? 

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GCI Says:
When God extended the covenant to Israel, God said they would be his people and he would be their salvation. He also promised that through them all the peoples of the earth would be blessed. Therefore, no matter how often Israel turned away from God, God still cared for them and acted on their behalf. God sent them prophets to declare God's Word, priests to lead them in worship and to make sacrifice for the people's sins, and kings to rule justly in the fear of God, upholding the poor and needy, and defending the people from their enemies.

Comment:
God's faithfulness to Israel despite their faithlessness to him created the society into which Jesus was born. God also used Israel to create and preserve the scriptures.

GCI Says:

“Christ” means “anointed one.” Israel’s prophets, priests and kings were anointed and their offices culminated in Jesus. By fulfilling the offices of prophet, priest and king, Jesus transformed them. In doing so he fulfilled Israel’s election for the sake of the world.

Comment:

The term “Christ” was applied to Jesus because he embodied all the characteristics of a king, priest and prophet rolled into one. He was the longed for Savior and Redeemer Israel had hoped for.

GCI Says:

Jesus was God’s Word to a dying and sinful world; he embodied the love he proclaimed. His life, death and resurrection became the great “yes” that continues to be spoken despite how often we have said “no” to God. When we receive this Word by faith, Christ enters our hearts that he may dwell in us forever, and we in him.

Comment:

The job of a prophet was to speak to the people for God and tell them what he wanted. Jesus was a prophet because his life sent a message to Israel telling them of God’s love.

3.11

Why was the title “Christ” applied to Jesus?

* 2 Cor. 1:20 * Acts 10:37-38 * Luke 4:17-19

In the scriptures above how does Jesus represent a Christ figure? 

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3.12

How did Jesus Christ fulfill the office of prophet?

* Acts 3:20, 22 * John 1:18 * Eph. 3:17

What was the role of a prophet? 

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3.13

How did Jesus Christ fulfill the office of priest?

* Heb. 4:14, 2:17 * John 1:29

* Eph. 1:7

What was the role of a priest? 

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3.14

How did Jesus Christ fulfill the office of king?

* John 12:32; 9:19 * Phil. 2:5-8

* 1 Cor. 1:25

What is the role of a king? 

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GCI Says:
As the lamb of God who took away the sin of the world, Jesus was both our priest and sacrifice. Confronted by our hopelessness in sin and death, he interceded by offering himself in order to reconcile us to God. Jesus now mediates all the things of God to us and our responses back to God. He even mediates and leads in our worship.

Comment:
The role of a priest is different from a prophet. A priest intercedes for humanity to God i.e. a priest speaks to God on behalf of people. He presents our case.

GCI Says:
Jesus was the Lord who took the form of a servant, perfecting royal power in temporal weakness. With no sword but the sword of righteousness, and no power but the power of God's holy love, Christ defeated sin, evil and death by reigning from the cross. He continues to reign at God's right hand. He is Lord over all authorities and powers, whether earthly or heavenly, natural or human, private or political.

Comment:
Christ rules very differently from earthly kings. He is first and foremost a servant. It's important that the Church, the body of Christ reflects this type of leadership.

GCI Says:

First, that Jesus was rejected and abused by the religious and secular rulers of his day. His lordship was a threat to all evil powers and authorities since his righteousness exposed their injustice. Jesus' death at the hands of these authorities provided a display that exposed the guilt of all humanity in all times and places. Second, and even more importantly, though innocent, Jesus submitted to condemnation by an earthly judge so that through him we, though guilty, might be acquitted before our just heavenly Judge.

Comment:

Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate, at a specific time and place, but the significance of his death extends to all times and places. Scripture describes it in several ways: he died for us, he died for our sins, and we died with him.

GCI Says:

That Jesus died, just like we do, showing that there is no sorrow he has not known, no grief he has not borne, and no price he was unwilling to pay to reconcile us to God. Jesus' real death (confirmed by his burial) shows that he has taken on the ultimate consequence of sin, which is death. Rather than shrinking back, he endured death in order to overcome it. There is nothing we go through, not even death, that Jesus cannot redeem.

Comment:

The Creed says he "suffered death and was buried" but the statement is deeper and more profound than many of us imagine.

3.15

What does the Creed affirm in saying that Jesus "was crucified under Pontius Pilate"?

* Luke 18:32 * Is. 53:3 * Ps. 9:9 * Luke 1:52
* 2 Cor. 5:21 * 2 Tim. 4:8

Take the time to read slowly. Read through the Nicene Creed on page 4.

What is the significance of the reference to Pontius Pilate? 

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3.16

What does the Creed affirm in saying that Jesus "suffered death and was buried"?

* Matt. 26:38-39 * Is. 53:5 * Gal. 3:13
* Heb. 2:9 * 2 Cor. 5:19

What is the impact of Jesus' suffering on our experience? 

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3.19

What does the Creed affirm in saying that Christ “ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father” and that he will “come again in glory”?

* Acts 1:6-11 * Col. 3:1 * 1 Tim. 2:5

* Heb. 7:25

How do Jesus' ascension and imminent return affect your current reality? 

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*GCI Says:
Forty days after his bodily resurrection, Jesus was taken up bodily and visibly into heaven to be with the Father. He did not leave his human nature behind, but remains fully human, though now glorified. One with us and with the Father, Jesus is the one mediator between human beings and God. As one of us, he continues his intercessions on our behalf. Though now hidden from us, Jesus is not cut off from us in the remote past, nor is he in a place from which he cannot reach us. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is present to us by grace. From heaven he reigns with the authority of the Father, protecting us, guiding us, and interceding for us until he returns visibly and bodily to earth in glory. We now live between the times of his first and second advents, awaiting his return.*

*Comment:
Look at 1 Tim 2:5. You may not have noticed this but the scripture tells us that Jesus is still a man, that is he still retains his humanity even at the right hand of God.*

GCI Says:

Scripture teaches that all humans will stand in the general resurrection before the judgment seat of Christ. The Judge before whom they will stand is the one who submitted to God's judgment for our sake. By him our sin is identified and judged as evil, and in him it is condemned to obliteration so that we can be separated from our sin and be saved in him from evil's ultimate destruction. That is the grace of God's judgment in Jesus Christ.

GCI Says:

Standing personally before the One who is their Lord and Savior, everyone will give an answer as to whether they will bow to him willingly and enter the kingdom of God prepared for them, or unwillingly bow and refuse to enter and exist under his gracious lordship forever. Thus, there will be a final separation of all those who repent and acknowledge their sin and their need for grace to deliver them from sin and be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, and those who refuse to repent and receive God's grace.

3.20

What does the Creed mean when it says that Jesus, when he returns in glory, will “judge the living and the dead”?

* John 5:22 * 2 Cor 5:10 * Rom. 14:10-11

How does God's grace have an impact on our judgment? 

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3.21

What will be the results of such a judgment?

* Phil. 2:10-11

What happens when we surrender to Jesus as our Lord and Savior? 

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3.22

What will be the spiritual condition of those who refuse to acknowledge their need for forgiveness, refuse to repent and confess their sin, and despise God's grace for them in Jesus Christ?

* Matt. 12:32

* Heb. 2:3; 4:1-2; 6:3-6; 10:36-39

What reasons would someone give for knowingly rejecting the saving grace of Jesus? 

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GCI Says:

All those who refuse will have rejected God's righteous and merciful judgment in Christ, and the separation of themselves from their sin that is available in Christ. They will have come to the place of knowingly and deliberately blaspheming or repudiating the Spirit who draws them and extends to them forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God accomplished for them by Jesus according to the Father's will. Clinging to their sin in pride, they will condemn God and justify themselves against God, charging God with being evil.

Comment:

This describes a situation where a person knowingly and deliberately rejects Christ. This is not a situation where a person is deceived or confused. This is an informed or consciously chosen decision.

GCI Says:

Repudiating God's grace to deliver them from evil, bound to their sin, they will experience the ultimate condemnation of evil. They will experience this condemnation, not so much because of their sins, but because of their refusal to repent and the rejection of the grace extended to them through the merciful judgment executed upon sin for them in Jesus Christ.

Comment:

While God never stops loving people, it looks like there will be some sort of final separation from God. This is not driven by God's desire to punish but the outcome of a final and blanket refusal to acknowledge Christ and the grace that he offers. If someone freely chooses not to be included, God is not going to force him or her to be so.

3.23

What will be the ultimate consequences for those who self-righteously repudiate and despise God and all his benefits in Jesus Christ?

* 2 Cor. 5:10 * Eccl. 12:14 * Acts 17:31

* Rom. 8:38-39 * 1 John 4:17

* 1 Cor. 3:12-15 * Acts 10:42

What happens when we reject Christ's sacrifice for our sins? 

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SECTION 4
GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

4.1

Who is God the Holy Spirit?

* Matt. 28:19 * Acts 2:38

* John 14:16-17, 26; 5:26

Describe the person of the Holy Spirit in your own words: 

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4.2

How are Jesus and the Holy Spirit related?

* Matt. 1:20, 12:18

* Luke 1:3; 3:22; 4:18; 10:21; 23:46; 24:49

* Heb. 9:14

Which verse(s) describes their relationship most clearly to you? 

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GCI Says:

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, eternally proceeding from the Father through the Son. The Holy Spirit is the comforter promised by Jesus Christ, who unites us with the Father and the Son, and transforms us into the image of Christ.

Comment:

To eternally proceed means there was never a time when the Holy Spirit didn't exist.

GCI Says:

Jesus' whole life was lived in intimate communion with the Holy Spirit. He was conceived by the Spirit in the womb of Mary, baptized with the Spirit, and on the cross fulfilled his sacrificial ministry to the Father in the Spirit. Jesus now ministers in the world by sending the Spirit, who ministers in accordance with the finished work of Christ.

Comment:

The Holy Spirit and Jesus have a ministry that is intricately interwoven.

GCI Says:

Yes, the Spirit was at work at creation and in the history of the world, with a focus on the people of Israel, the particular people God called to be a blessing to all peoples—blessings given ultimately in and through Jesus. The Spirit's on-going ministry will eventually bring all creation to full maturity, harmony and perfection. He is the Lord and the giver of life.

Comment:

The Holy Spirit works in multiple areas to bring about the salvation of mankind. He is essential to the salvation process.

4.3

Was the Holy Spirit at work in the world before the incarnation of the Son of God?

- * Gen. 1:1-2 * Joel 2:28 * Ezek. 11:19
- * Luke 24:49 * Acts 2:1-21 * Rom 1:4
- * Rom 8:22-24 * 1 Pet. 1:2

How is the Holy Spirit's work demonstrated? 

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4.4

What do Christians believe in confessing their faith in the Holy Spirit?

* John 14:24; 26 * 1 Cor. 12:3 * Rom. 5:5

* 1 Cor. 6:17; 19, 3:16

How would you respond to this question in your own words? 

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GCI Says:

Apart from the Spirit, our Lord Jesus Christ can neither be known, loved or served. The Holy Spirit is the personal bond by which Jesus Christ unites us to himself. He is the teacher who opens our hearts to Christ, and the comforter who leads us to repentance. He is the liberator who frees our enslaved wills, empowering us to live joyfully and freely in Christ's service. By the working of the Spirit, our love, knowledge and service of Christ are inseparably related.

Comment:

The term "confession" here doesn't mean telling people that we have sinned. It implies that we believe in the Holy Spirit. To "confess our faith in the Holy Spirit" means that we can't know, experience or even understand Jesus without the work of the Holy Spirit. He is the means through which we can have a relationship with the Father and Son.



SECTION 5
THE KINGDOM OF GOD

5.1

What is the kingdom of God?

- * Luke 17:20-21 * Rom. 8:12-17
- * 1 Cor. 15:24-28 * Gal. 4:7 * Col. 1:13
- * Rev. 1:6; 11:15; 21:3, 22-27; 22:1-5

Write your own definition for the kingdom of God: 

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GCI Says:
In the broadest sense, the kingdom of God is God's supreme sovereignty—his reign over all the world through the operation of the Holy Spirit based on the completed work of Jesus Christ. That reign is now partially and provisionally manifest in the Church and in the life of each believer as they submit to God's Word and will. The kingdom of God will be fully manifest over the whole world after the return of Jesus Christ when he delivers all things to the Father and all are either willingly or unwillingly in submission to his rule and reign.

Comment:
The kingdom is seen at all sorts of levels. God rules everything in the world, but we can also see the kingdom in the Church and in individual Christians. It all comes together at the return of Christ, when the rule will be seen to be working in every area.

GCI Says:

We are praying to God to bring about his ultimate purpose so that the whole creation may enjoy full restoration to its rightful Lord, that all things be put right, and that God's full glory shines forth to all.

Comment:

The restoration of the kingdom is not merely about justice and peace for humans. It involves the entire creation: animals, sea creatures, plants, trees, land. It's all included.

GCI Says:

God's rule and reign on earth, which was foreshadowed in the Old Testament, founded in Christ's incarnation, established with his ascension, and is ever more widely proclaimed with the fulfilling of the Great Commission by the Church, will come to fullness when Christ delivers the kingdom to God the Father following the final judgment at his return.

5.2

When Christians pray for God's kingdom to come, what are they desiring?

* Rom. 8:22-25 * Phil. 2:9-11

Is there something you most look forward to in God's kingdom? 

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5.3

How does God's kingdom come?

* 2 Chron. 7:1-4 * Matt. 10:5-8; 28:18-20
* Luke 24:1-12 * Acts 1:6-11 * 1 Cor. 15:19-28

What does the concept of the fullness of the kingdom mean to you? 

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Does God's kingdom come only after the return of Christ? What about now? 

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5.4

How do Christians live now in God's kingdom?

* Rom. 14:17 * Eph. 4:1-6 * Col. 1:13-14

* Col. 3:4 * 1 Thess. 4:11

In what ways are we in the kingdom now? 

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*GCI Says:
As Christians, our kingdom life now consists of living with faith, joy, hope and peace as children of God, citizens of heaven and faithful disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. We become glad worshipers of God and witnesses to the coming kingdom by embodying in our lives now temporary, partial and provisional signs or parables of the kingdom that is coming in its fullness when Christ returns.*

*Comment:
There is a sense around the kingdom of God, of past, present and future. We are in the present age of the kingdom not yet at the fullness but definitely able to experience the benefits of a relationship with God. It's important that our lives reflect that fact. Christianity should not be hidden.*



— SECTION 6 —
HUMANITY

6.1

What is God's purpose for humanity?

* 2 Cor. 13:14

What can you say about God's purpose for humanity? 

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6.2

How do Christians live by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ?

* Col. 1:2; 3:17 * Eph. 5:20

How has receiving God's grace made an impact on your life? 

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GCI Says:

That through a never-ending life of worship we will share in the eternal love and life of the Triune God: by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the love of God, in the communion of the Holy Spirit.

GCI Says:

The Lord Jesus Christ loved us so much that he sacrificed himself so that we might have eternal life. In response to that grace, we entrust ourselves completely to his care, giving thanks each day for his wonderful goodness. We reject all idolatry, most especially any hope or desire to justify ourselves before God or apart from God's grace. Rather, we receive our identity, meaning, significance, security and destiny from him alone, which he freely gives us out of his abundant goodness and generosity. We live in total gratitude for God's justifying, sanctifying and glorifying grace.

Comment:

Note the term "receive" here. Grace is not something we have naturally or are born with, it is something we are given. It comes from outside of us.

GCI Says:

God, who is love, gave us life in and for love. The Father loved us so much that he gave his one and only Son to deliver us from the sin that destroys life and negates love. Sharing in God's love for all people, we reach out to love those in need, knowing that God loves them no less than he loves us.

GCI Says:

The Holy Spirit unites us with the Lord Jesus Christ. We are baptized into the body of Christ, the Church. As members of this community of faith and under the Lord's headship over us, we trust in God's Word, share in the Lord's Supper, and turn to God in prayer. As we grow in grace and knowledge, we are led by the Spirit to participate with God in the good works God intends for our lives. Those works are the fruit of our daily fellowship with God by the Holy Spirit, according to his living Word, Jesus Christ, and his written word, the Holy Scriptures.

Comment:

Our participation in the work of the Holy Spirit is a function of how close we are to God. Closeness drives growth and growth translates into reflecting God in our lives. So living in communion produces fruit.

6.3

How do Christians live for the love of God?

* John 3:16 * 1 John 4:19 * 2 Cor. 5:14

What are some ways you are inspired to share God's love with others? 

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6.4

How do Christians live in the communion of the Holy Spirit?

Describe what happens to us when we are in the communion of the Holy Spirit: 

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6.5

What does it mean that human beings were “created in God’s image”?

- * Gen. 1:26-27 * Col. 1:15; 3:10 * 2 Cor. 3:18
- * 1 Cor. 15:49 * Rom. 8:29 * Luke 3:21-22
- * John 1:18; 5:19; 17:21-22

What is it about humans that mirrors the image of God? 

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GCI Says:
Jesus Christ is the image of God and we were created to be his representatives, bearing his image. We were created to be images of Jesus, who is the perfect Image of God. Jesus, as one of us, lived in total dependence on the Father by the Spirit—a relationship of faithful, free and holy love. In accordance with God’s purpose for us to be the image of Jesus, we live in total dependence upon God and in a relationship of love and freedom with one another. Toward those ends, God has given us the human capacities of reason, imagination and volition.

Comment:
What are the characteristics of humans that reflect God’s image? Among scholars there is a wide school of thought as to what these characteristics are and what this term means.

6.7

Was God's image lost when humankind turned from God by falling into sin?

* John 8:34 * Rom. 1:21; 3:10, 23

* Is. 59:1-3

How would you express the answer? 

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GCI Says:

Yes and no. Because of sin, our relations with God and his creation became distorted and confused. Although we did not cease to be with God, our fellow human beings, and other creatures, we did cease to be for them. Although we did not lose our distinctive human capacities completely, we did lose our ability to use them rightly, especially in relation to God. Having ruined our connection with God by distrusting and then disobeying God's will, we are persons with hearts curved in upon ourselves. Having become enslaved to sin, we are unable to free ourselves. Though some freedom remains for us as sinners, our freedom is exercised only within the bounds of sin and is always exposed to the power of sin, which looks to take advantage of the weakness of human nature.

Comment:

While we didn't lose the image of God, sin damaged our capacity to reflect it. We are severely limited by our sinful nature, which is why we tend to be inconsistent in our faithfulness and loyalty to God.



SECTION 7
THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

7.1

What are the Holy Scriptures?

How do the Holy Scriptures affect your life ? 

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*GCI Says:
By God's grace, the Holy Scriptures are sanctified to serve as God's inspired Word and faithful witness to Jesus Christ and the gospel. They are the fully reliable record of God's revelation to humanity, culminating in his self-revelation in the incarnate Son. The Bible is therefore foundational to the Church and is viewed as infallible in all matters of faith and practice.*

*Comment:
The Holy Scriptures are a continuous story of God's relationship to humanity and means used to reveal Jesus to us. However, the Bible is not a manual that has specific answers for every situation that we may face. We see God's constant character and faithfulness. We also see our stories overlapping with the multiple stories recorded in Scripture.*

GCI Says:

The Bible is made up of 66 books—39 in the Old Testament, and 27 in the New Testament. The Old Testament contains the record of God's creation of all things, the revelation of God's design and provision for humanity, humankind's original disobedience, God's covenant with Abraham, God's calling of Israel to be his people, God's law, God's wisdom, God's saving deeds, and the teaching of God's prophets who present God's promises. The Old Testament points to Jesus, revealing God's intention to redeem and reconcile the world through Christ in fulfillment of God's promises. The New Testament contains the record of Jesus' birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension, the Church's early ministry, the teaching of the apostles, and the revelation of Christ's return and the fullness of his eternal kingdom. The New Testament shows us God's ultimate purposes and their consummation.

Comment:

Although there are 66 books in the Bible, it is considered one story, God's love story for all of humanity. The Bible shares this message through many types of literature. In it we see poetry, history, prophecy, prose, stories and letters written by different authors, in different languages over a huge span of time. As we read, we need to take this into account.

7.2

What is in the Holy Scriptures?

* 2 Pet. 1:20 * 1 Thess. 2:13 * 1 Cor. 2:13

* Gal. 1:12

How would you express the main idea of the Holy Scriptures? 

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7.5

What does it mean that the Holy Scriptures are “the written Word of God”?

How is God involved in the content of the Holy Scriptures? 

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7.6

Why is Jesus Christ called “the living Word of God”?

* John 1:1, 14

What is the connection between Jesus and the Bible? 

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GCI Says:

Because the Holy Spirit inspired the Bible, it is rightly called the written word of God. Though God is revealed to us in his mighty works (including the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the living Word of God), God’s works and will are made known to us through the inspired words of Scripture, the written word. The written word of God is to be understood and interpreted as the Word that belongs to Jesus Christ, who personally appointed authoritative representatives to preach and preserve in writing an authorized witness to him, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

GCI Says:

The fullness of God’s revelation is found in Jesus Christ, who not only fulfills the Holy Scriptures (the written word of God) but is himself the living Word of God. Ignorance of the written word is thus ignorance of Jesus, the living Word. We worship and pray to him, not to the Bible, for Jesus alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life. But he has given us his written word through his appointed apostles, and so we cannot truly know him apart from the Holy Scriptures.

Comment:

Because Jesus is the “Word,” there is complete harmony between the Scriptures and what Jesus wants. Jesus will never ask us to do something that is not in line with Scripture.

7.10

How do Christians relate to the Holy Scriptures?

* Matt. 4:4 * 2 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 10:17

* Col. 3:16 * Luke 4:4

How does God desire for us to approach the Bible? 

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GCI Says:
We expect God to use them uniquely to teach, rebuke, correct and train us to live in communion with God. The written word of God is God's gift to grow in us faith, hope and love for God and to teach us how to live out that relationship in all we think, do and say. Therefore, on a regular basis, even daily, we seek to hear, read, study, learn and inwardly digest the Bible. By becoming intimately familiar with the whole of Scripture, seeing its parts in terms of the whole and its living Center, Jesus Christ, we will understand that the biblical story is our story as well. This encourages us to live in ways that conform to that story rather than to worldly influences.

Comment:
We need to be both familiar and responsive to Scripture. As Christians we need to be willing to change in accordance with direction from Scripture.



SECTION 8
THE SACRAMENTS

8.1

What is a “sacrament”?

- * Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-25
- * John 6:53 * 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:25
- * 2 Cor. 1:22

How are sacraments important to our faith? 

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GCI Says:
It is a special act of Christian worship, instituted by Christ, which uses a visible sign to proclaim and receive the promise of the gospel for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. A sacrament is received in faith, trusting in God to minister to us by the Holy Spirit through it. By God’s grace, the sacrament seals God’s promise to believers and is a special means to convey to us what is promised by the sign. In baptism, the sign is that of water; in the Lord’s Supper, the sign is that of bread and wine.

Comment:
A sacrament proclaims, it teaches, and it is an opportunity for us to receive the teaching.

GCI Says:

While baptism is received only once, the Lord's Supper is received again and again. Being unrepeatable, baptism indicates not only that Christ died for our sins once and for all, but that by grace we are also united with him once and for all through faith. Being repeatable, the Lord's Supper indicates that as we turn unfilled to him again and again, our Lord continually meets us in the power of the Holy Spirit to fill us—to renew and deepen our faith.

Comment:

We are baptized only once because we are brought into the Body of Christ only once.

GCI Says:

Baptism is a sign and seal through which we are joined in union with Christ. It proclaims that we are saved by Christ alone and not through our own repentance and faith. It is a participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in which our old nature has been crucified and renounced in Christ and we have been freed from the shackles of the past and given a renewed nature through his resurrection. Baptism proclaims the good news that it is only in Christ that we receive the new life of repentance and faith. Grace Communion International typically baptizes adults by immersion and infants by sprinkling.

8.4

What is the main difference between baptism and the Lord's Supper?

* Acts 2:41 * John 6:33, 51, 56

* 1 Cor. 11:26

How would you describe the difference in between baptism and the Lord's Supper? 

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8.5

What is the meaning of baptism?

* Rom. 4:11; 6:3-6 * Gal. 3:26-27

* Col. 2:12 * Acts 2:38

What is the significance of baptism? 

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GCI Says:

They hope and pray that the Spirit who indwells them will help them become active members of a Christian community; participate in worship; come to love studying the Bible; continually repent and so return to God; serve their neighbors; strive for justice and peace; mature in the faith, love and hope that are theirs in Christ; and purposefully share in Christ's mission to the world through the Church and their vocations.

GCI Says:

In the Lord's Supper (also called Communion and the Eucharist), we partake of bread and wine in remembrance of our Savior, proclaiming his death until he comes again. The Lord's Supper is a participation in the death and resurrection of our Lord. Just as the bread and wine become part of our physical bodies, so we are made by grace to partake spiritually of Jesus Christ in his body and blood. Thus, the Lord's Supper declares to believers that in every aspect of their Christian life they rely not on any obedience or righteousness of their own, but solely upon the grace of God in Christ.

8.7

What signs of the Holy Spirit's work do Christians hope and pray to see as a result of their baptism?

* Heb. 10:25; 12:14 * 1 Pet. 3:15

* 1 John 1:9; 2:1 * Acts 1:8

How would you describe the spiritual benefits of baptism? 

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8.8

What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper?

* Matt. 26:26-28

* 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:16-17; 10:16; 11:23-26

* 2 Tim. 1:9

What does Communion symbolize? 

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8.9

What is required of people when they come to receive the Lord's Supper?

* 1 Cor. 11:27-32

From what perspective do you participate in receiving the Lord's Supper? 

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*GCI Says:
That in response to the proclamation of the Word of God, they come to receive the grace of God made available to all through Jesus Christ. They are to come to the Table with open hearts ready to be identified with Christ, ready to depend upon him, ready to follow him, ready to give up whatever stands in the way of living out of trust in him and in his Word to them. Coming to his Table, they will have repented of their sins and be ready to leave behind any sin that might be revealed even at the Table. They will come intending to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit to depend on Christ and his faithfulness. Above all, they will receive Christ anew, rejoicing in the gift of communion they can have with him and through him with the Father and the Spirit. They will do so looking forward to Jesus' return and the coming of the fullness of the kingdom of God.*

8.11

What is expected of people after they have shared in the Lord's Supper?

With what call to action are we sent out from the Communion table? 

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Having been renewed in their union with Christ and his people through sharing in the Lord's Supper, it is expected that they will continue by the Spirit and under the written Word of God to live in holiness, avoiding sin, showing love and forgiveness to all, and serving others freely in gratitude and in the hope of Christ's return in power and glory.