



WE BELIEVE

Exploring the Core Beliefs of Our Christian Faith

Teacher's Edition

Copyright September 5, 2018

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SECTION 1: THE TRIUNE GOD

1.1 Who is the God Christian worship?

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

"Jesus answered, 'The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.' (Mr 12:29 ESV)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Mt 28:19 ESV)

"Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." (Ac 20:28 ESV)

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2Co 13:14 ESV)

"How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?" (Heb 10:29 ESV)

"according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you." (1Pe 1:2 ESV)

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

"Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (Joh 14:9 ESV)

"Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1Jo 4:8 ESV)

"but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Ro 5:8 ESV)

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people," (Tit 2:11 ESV)

"2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," (Heb 1:2-3 ESV)

"according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you." (1Pe 1:2 ESV)

"for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith." (Ga 3:26 ESV)

1.3 Does that mean there are three Gods?

No. 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.

1.4 How can God be both *one* in being and *three* in Persons?

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.

1.5 Are the three Persons of the Trinity three different ways God acts towards his creation, or three roles the one God plays?

No, 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.

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

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.

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

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.

1.8 What are the unique relationships in the being of the triune God that are not interchangeable?

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.

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

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

1.10 Is there no difference, then, in how they three divine Persons relate to creation?

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.

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

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.

1.12 What are the primary acts of the triune God towards creation?

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.

1.13 Why did the triune God create?

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

1.14 Why did the triune God redeem creation?

From the beginning, God's human creatures, in distrusting God, have alienated themselves and sought to live autonomously 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 himself made a way for them to be reconciled to him and thus returned to fullness of communion with him as their Lord and Saviour.

1.15 Why does the triune God now work to perfect the creation?

Because the triune God is a communion of perfect 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.

1.16 How can the finite creatures know, love and trust the triune God?

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.

1.17 What do the holy Scriptures say about the triune God?

The Bible records Jesus' teaching concerning the eternal names of the divine Persons of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and the relationship in the eternal being of God, most specifically knowing, loving and glorifying one another. Coming from the eternal communion of the Trinity, Jesus is the only one who can tell us surely and authoritatively that God, from eternity, is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Only the Father knows the Son, and only the Son knows the Father and those to whom the Son has chosen to reveal him. (Luke 10:22; Matthew 11:27; John 1:18; 17:25; Matthew 28:19; 2Corinthians 13:14).

"All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." (Lu 10:22 ESV)

"All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." (Mt 11:27 ESV)

"No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." (Joh 1:18 ESV)

"O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me." (Joh 17:25 ESV)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Mt 28:19 ESV)

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2Co 13:14 ESV)

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

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. We know 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. (John 10:30; 14:9; 17:11, 21-22; 1John 2:23)

"I and the Father are one." (Joh 10:30 ESV)

"Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" (Joh 14:9 ESV)

"And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one." (Joh 17:11 ESV)

"21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one," (Joh 17:21-22 ESV)

"No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also." (1Jo 2:23 ESV)

Teaching Notes: The Triune God

As you have seen in the part 1 Q&A, We Believe begins with the doctrine of the triune God (also called the doctrine of the Trinity). Why? Because what we believe about God is our most important belief. In accord with GCI's incarnational Trinitarian theology, the doctrine of the Trinity, rather than being just one of several doctrines, is the primary doctrine of our Christian faith, which gives shape to all the others.

Some people object to the doctrine of the Trinity, noting that the word "Trinity" is not in the Bible. That concern is addressed in GCI's article, Is the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Bible?

Other common questions and concerns related to the doctrine of the Trinity are addressed in the following GCI articles (see GCI website – www.gci.org to read articles online):

- The Trinity: Just a Doctrine?
- Does the Doctrine of the Trinity Teach Three Gods?
- The Trinity: 1 + 1 + 1 = 1?
- How Many Gods Does God Say There Are?
- What Does Deuteronomy 6:4 Mean?
- Only One God

Having begun with the triune God (the doctrine of the Trinity), We Believe now proceeds to address each of the three Persons of the triune God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

SECTION 2: GOD THE FATHER

From The GCI Statement of Beliefs:

God the Father is the first Person of the triune God, of whom the Son is eternally begotten and from whom the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds through the Son. The Father, who made all things seen and unseen through the Son, sends the Son for our salvation and gives the Holy Spirit for our regeneration and adoption as children of God.

2.1 Who is God the Father?

God the Father is the first person of the Trinity, of whom the Son is eternally begotten and from whom the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds through the Son. (John 1:1, 14; 14:16-17, 26; 15:26)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (Joh 1:1 ESV)

"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." (Joh 1:14 ESV)

"16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." (Joh 14:16-17 ESV)

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (Joh 14:26 ESV)

"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me." (Joh 15:26 ESV)

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

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. (Matthew 6:9; John 14:9-10; Romans 1:7; 8:15-17; Galatians 4:4-7)

"Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.'" (Mt 6:9 ESV)

"9 Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.'" (Joh 14:9-10 ESV)

"To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (Ro 1:7 ESV)

"15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!' 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 ¶ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." (Ro 8:15-17 ESV)

"4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God." (Ga 4:4-7 ESV)

2.3 What is meant by calling God "Father"?

In calling God "Father," we acknowledge that God exists in personal relationship, and that we were created by God 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. (Genesis 1:26, Matthew 6:25-33; Romans 8:16-17, 29)

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'" (Ge 1:26 ESV)

"25 ¶ 'Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.'" (Mt 6:25-33 ESV)

"16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 ¶ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." (Ro 8:16-17 ESV)

"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." (Ro 8:29 ESV)

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

No. Only creatures, having bodies, can be either male or female. For God has no body, since by nature God is Spirit. The Holy Scriptures reveal God as a living God beyond all the sexual distinctions. Scripture uses diverse images for God, female as well as male. (Isaiah 49:15; 66:13; Matthew 23:37)

"Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you." (Isa 49:15 ESV)

"As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem." (Isa 66:13 ESV)

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" (Mt 23:37 ESV)

2.5 Why does the Creed say that God the Father is "Almighty"?

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. (Lamentations 3:22; Song 8:7; 1John 4:8)

"The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;" (La 3:22 ESV)

("Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD." (So 8:6 ESV)) "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised." (So 8:7 ESV)

"Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1Jo 4:8 ESV)

2.6 How do Christians understand the love and power of God?

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 – the 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 in his loving purposes for us (John 3:16; Hebrews 1:3; 1John 4:9; Matthew 9:36; Psalm 106:8)

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (Joh 3:16 ESV)

"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," (Heb 1:3 ESV)

"In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him." (1Jo 4:9 ESV)

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." (Mt 9:36 ESV)

"Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power." (Ps 106:8 ESV)

Teaching Notes: God the Father

Concerning God the Father For an article about how God the Father is addressed in Scripture, see **What the Gospels Teach Us About God** (www.gci.org)

Concerning God as Creator In discussing this doctrine, the issue of creation will typically arise, along with related questions such as How did God create? and When did God create? In answering these and similar questions, it is good to be aware of what GCI says (and doesn't say) concerning such topics as science and the Bible, the days of creation, evolution, etc. Here are relevant resources found on GCI's website:

From the We're Often Asked section of the GCI website:

GCI teaches that the God of the Bible is the Creator. We believe in the inspired declaration of Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." We believe that God gave the record of nature for our instruction and that there is no conflict between the Bible and scientific discovery. We believe that when the Bible and scientific discovery appear to conflict, one or the other has been misunderstood. Therefore, we do not deny the evidence from science that indicates a long history of life on this planet, nor do we deny that God could have created an evolutionary process for the development of species. We believe that only God can create life, and that the Bible does not reveal exactly how he has done this. Therefore, if evolution is true, we believe God is the author of it.

GCI articles: (www.gci.org)

- Must We Choose Between Science and the Bible?
- Genesis 1: The Evolution vs. Creation Controversy
- Genesis 1: Are the Six Days of Creation Literal or Figurative?

SECTION 3: GOD THE SON

3.1 Who is God the Son?

The son of God is the second Person of the Trinity, eternally begotten of the Father. Like the Father, there was never a time when the Son did not exist. The Son is the eternal Word and the express image of the Father. The Father created all things through the Son, and the Son sustains all things by his Word. He was sent by the Father to be God revealed in the flesh for our salvation, Jesus Christ. (John 1:1, 10, 14; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:3; John 3:16)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (Joh 1:1 ESV)

"He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him." (Joh 1:10 ESV)

"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." (Joh 1:14 ESV)

"15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Col 1:15-17 ESV)

"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," (Heb 1:3 ESV)

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (Joh 3:16 ESV)

3.2 What to do Christians believe in confessing their faith in Jesus Christ as "God's only Son"?

That without ceasing to be the uncreated Son of God, the eternal Son was sent by God the Father "from above" to be a unique work in the Spirit as a true human being, here "below." There is only one eternal Son of God by nature. We become the adopted children of God by the grace of the only eternal Son of God, sharing in the gift of his sonship. (Luke 3:21-22; 12:49-50; John 8:23)

"21 ¶ Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."" (Lu 3:21-22 ESV)

"49 "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! 50 I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!" (Lu 12:49-50 ESV)

"He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world." (Joh 8:23 ESV)

3.3 How do Christians understand the *uniqueness* of Jesus Christ?

No one else will ever be God incarnate. No one else can reconcile God and humanity in his own Person. No one else can make us true sons and daughters of God except the Son of God. No one else will ever die for the sins of the world, judge all sins, and overcome all evil and the death it brings. Only Jesus Christ is such a Person. Only he could do such a work, and he has done it. Jesus Christ is himself the only true mediator between God and humanity. (Isaiah 53:5; John 1:29; Colossians 1:15-20; 1Timothy 2:5)

"But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed." (Isa 53:5 ESV)

"The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (Joh 1:29 ESV)

"15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." (Col 1:15-20 ESV)

"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," (1Ti 2:5 ESV)

3.4 What does the Creed mean when it says that Jesus was "conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary?"

First, that being born of woman, Jesus was truly a human being. Second, that the Lord's incarnation was a supernatural, holy event, brought about solely by the free divine grace of the Holy Spirit, surpassing any human possibilities. Third, that from the beginning of his life on earth, Jesus was set apart by his unique origin that joined his divine nature with human nature in the womb of Mary, all for the sake of accomplishing our salvation. (Luke 1:31, 35; Hebrews 2:14; Philippians 2:5-7)

"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus." (Lu 1:31 ESV)

"And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God." (Lu 1:35 ESV)

"Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil," (Heb 2:14 ESV)

"5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." (Php 2:5-7 ESV)

3.5 What do Christians affirm when they confessed their faith in Jesus Christ as their "Lord"?

That 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 by trusting, loving and serving him above all else, we give glory and honour to God. (1Corinthians 15:3-4; Revelation 11:15; Ephesians 1:20-23; Philippians 2:9-11)

"3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures," (1Co 15:3-4 ESV)

"Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."" (Re 11:15 ESV)

"20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." (Eph 1:20-23 ESV)

"9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Php 2:9-11 ESV)

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"?

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. (John 20:28; Matt 11:27; 1John 4:14)

"Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"" (Joh 20:28 ESV)

"All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." (Mt 11:27 ESV)

"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world." (1Jo 4:14 ESV)

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

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

"17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." (Heb 2:17-18 ESV)

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Heb 4:15 ESV)

"8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. 9 And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him," (Heb 5:8-9 ESV)

"For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." (Ro 5:19 ESV)

3.8 How can Jesus be both truly God and truly human?

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 presuppose 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. (Mark 1:27; 4:41; Matt 28:18; Luke 22:44; John 1:1-5, 14; Job 5:9)

"And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, 'What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.' (Mr 1:27 ESV)

"And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?'" (Mr 4:41 ESV)

"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.'" (Mt 28:18 ESV)

"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Lu 22:44 ESV)

"1 ¶ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 ¶ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (Joh 1:1-5 ESV)

"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." (Joh 1:14 ESV)

"who does great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number:" (Job 5:9 ESV)

3.9 Was the covenant that God made with Abraham everlasting?

Yes. The covenant, made first with Abraham, was extended to Israel, then expanded, confirmed and fulfilled in the coming of Jesus. By faith in Jesus, Gentiles were welcomed into the covenant with God, thus confirming the promise that through Israel, God's blessing would come to all peoples. Although for the most part Israel has not yet accepted Jesus as the Messiah, the God who has reached out to unbelieving Gentiles will not fail to show mercy to Israel as his people in an everlasting covenant. (Jer 31:3; 2Sam 23:5; Rom 11:29)

"the LORD appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you." (Jer 31:3 ESV)

"For does not my house stand so with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?" (2Sa 23:5 ESV)

"For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." (Ro 11:29 ESV)

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

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

"3 Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, 4 ¶ "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations." (Ge 17:3-4 ESV)

"4 I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. 5 Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant." (Ex 6:4-5 ESV)

"so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith." (Ga 3:14 ESV)

"And you shall be my people, and I will be your God." (Jer 30:22 ESV)

"9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (1Pe 2:9-10 ESV)

"But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? So they repented and said, As the LORD of hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us." (Zec 1:6 ESV)

"he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation for the sin that he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat, for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin." (Le 5:6 ESV)

"«OF SOLOMON.» Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son!" (Ps 72:1 ESV)

"May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor!" (Ps 72:4 ESV)

3.11 Why was the title "Christ" applied to Jesus?

"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. (2Cor 1:20; Acts 10:37-38; Luke 4:17-19)

"For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory." (2Co 1:20 ESV)

"37 you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." (Ac 10:37-38 ESV)

"17 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Lu 4:17-19 ESV)

3.12 How did Jesus Christ fulfill the office of *prophet*?

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. (Acts 3:20, 22; John 1:18; Eph 3:17)

"that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus," (Ac 3:20 ESV)

"Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you.'" (Ac 3:22 ESV)

"No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." (Joh 1:18 ESV)

"so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love," (Eph 3:17 ESV)

3.13 How did Jesus Christ fulfill the office of *priest*?

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. (Heb 4:14; John 1:29; Heb 2:17; Eph 1:7)

"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession." (Heb 4:14 ESV)

"The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (Joh 1:29 ESV)

"Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." (Heb 2:17 ESV)

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace," (Eph 1:7 ESV)

3.14 How did Jesus Christ fulfill the office of *king*?

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. (John 19:19; Phil 2:5-8; 1Cor 1:25; John 12:32)

"Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." (Joh 19:19 ESV)

"5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Php 2:5-8 ESV)

"For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1Co 1:25 ESV)

"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." (Joh 12:32 ESV)

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

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

"For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon." (Lu 18:32 ESV)

"He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not." (Isa 53:3 ESV)

"The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble." (Ps 9:9 ESV)

"he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate;" (Lu 1:52 ESV)

"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2Co 5:21 ESV)

"Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing." (2Ti 4:8 ESV)

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

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

*"38 Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me."
39 And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." (Mt 26:38-39 ESV)*

"But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed." (Isa 53:5 ESV)

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—" (Ga 3:13 ESV)

"But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone." (Heb 2:9 ESV)

"that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (2Co 5:19 ESV)

3.17 Why did Jesus have to suffer as he did?

Because grace is more abundant, and sin more serious, than we suppose. However cruelly we may treat one another, all sin is primarily against God. God condemns sin, yet never judges apart from grace. In giving Jesus to die for us, God took the burden of our sin into himself, where he judged it and removed it once and for all. The cross in all its severity reveals an abyss of sin endured and swallowed up by the suffering of divine love. Undoing sin and its consequences involves great cost to God—the price Jesus paid to make all things right, a price he willingly paid "for the joy that was set before him." (Ps 51:4; Rom 8:1, 3-4; 1Cor 1:18; 5:8; Col 1:20; James 2:13; Heb 12:2)

"Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment." (Ps 51:4 ESV)

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Ro 8:1 ESV)

"3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous

requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." (Ro 8:3-4 ESV)

"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1Co 1:18 ESV)

"Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1Co 5:8 ESV)

"and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." (Col 1:20 ESV)

"For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment." (Jas 2:13 ESV)

"looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb 12:2 ESV)

3.18 What does the Creed affirm in saying about Jesus that "on the third day he rose again"?

That our Lord could not be held by evil and the power of death. Through his life, death and resurrection, Jesus overcame all evil and its ultimate consequence, renewing and restoring human nature to reach God's intended purposes for all human beings. Jesus rose triumphant from the grave in a new, exalted kind of human life. In showing his followers the scars on his hands, feet and side, the one who was crucified revealed himself to them as the living Lord and Savior of the world. (Acts 2:24; 1Cor 15:3-4; Luke 24:36-40; John 20:15-18; 1Cor 15:5-8; John 20:27)

"God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it." (Ac 2:24 ESV)

"3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures," (1Co 15:3-4 ESV)

"36 ¶ As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" 37 But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. 38 And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." 40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet." (Lu 24:36-40 ESV)

"15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her." (Joh 20:15-18 ESV)

"5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared

to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.” (1Co 15:5-8 ESV)

“Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”” (Joh 20:27 ESV)

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”?

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 visibly 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. (Acts 1:6-11; Col 3:1, 1Tim 2:5; Heb 7:25)

“6 ¶ So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” 9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”” (Ac 1:6-11 ESV)

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” (Col 3:1 ESV)

“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,” (1Ti 2:5 ESV)

“Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.” (Heb 7:25 ESV)

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

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. (John 5:22; 2Cor 5:10; Rom 14:10-11)

“The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,” (Joh 5:22 ESV)

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” (2Co 5:10 ESV)

"10 Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; 11 for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."" (Ro 14:10-11 ESV)

3.21 What will be the results of such a judgment?

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. (Phil 2:10-11)

"10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Php 2:10-11 ESV)

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?

All those who refuse will have rejected God's righteous and merciful judgment in Christ and any separation of themselves from their sin in Christ. They will have come to the place of knowingly and deliberately blaspheming or repudiating the Holy 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. (Matt 12:32; Heb 2:3; 4:1-2; 6:3-6; 10:36-39).

"And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." (Mt 12:32 ESV)

"how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard," (Heb 2:3 ESV)

"1 ¶ Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. 2 For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened." (Heb 4:1-2 ESV)

"3 And this we will do if God permits. 4 For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they then fall away, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt." (Heb 6:3-6 ESV)

"36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. 37 For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; 38 but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." 39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls." (Heb 10:36-39 ESV)

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

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. (2Cor 5:10; Eccl 12:14; Acts 17:31; Rom 8:38-39; 1John 4:17; 1Cor 3:12-15; Acts 10:42)

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." (2Co 5:10 ESV)

"For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil." (Ec 12:14 ESV)

"because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." (Ac 17:31 ESV)

"38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ro 8:38-39 ESV)

"By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world." (1Jo 4:17 ESV)

"12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire." (1Co 3:12-15 ESV)

"And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead." (Ac 10:42 ESV)

Teachers' Notes

From *The GCI Statement of Beliefs*:

The Son of God is the second Person of the triune God, eternally begotten of the Father. He is the Word and the express image of the Father. The Father created all things through the Son, and the Son sustains all things by his word. He was sent by the Father to be God revealed in the flesh for our salvation, Jesus Christ. Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, fully God and fully human, two natures in one Person. He is the Son of God and Lord of all, worthy of worship, honor and reverence. As the prophesied Savior of humanity, he suffered and died for all human sin, was raised bodily from the dead, and ascended to heaven. Taking on our broken and alienated humanity, he has included the entire human race in his right relationship with the Father, so that in his regeneration of our humanity we share in his sonship, being adopted as God's own children in the power of the Spirit. As our representative and substitute, he stands in for all humanity before the Father, providing the perfect human response to God on our behalf and reconciling humanity to the Father. He will come again in glory as King of kings over all nations.

Concerning our union with Jesus Christ

Addressing the topic of the Son of God will often lead to questions concerning Jesus' union with the Father (and the Spirit), and Jesus' union with humanity. Here are some notes concerning **three types of union** that will help you answer these questions:

1. The union of the three divine Persons (the *ontological union*)

The Nicene Creed addresses the union of the Son of God with the Father by saying that the Son is "of one Being with the Father." That phrase, which in Greek is *homoousios to Patri*, is of great consequence in the Creed and thus in the historic, orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. *Homoousios* means *of one being* (or *of one substance*). In saying that Jesus is of one being *with the Father*, the Creed is declaring that both the Father and the Son (Jesus) are God (and later creeds say the same for the Spirit). In short, the three Persons of the Trinity share the one Being of God. Theologians call this union of the Godhead the *ontological union* (a union pertaining to God's Being).

2. The union of God and humanity in Jesus Christ (the *hypostatic union*)

A fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith is the Incarnation. Through the Incarnation, the eternal Son of God maintained his eternal divine nature while assuming to himself our human nature. In doing so, the Son of God remained fully one with God (divine) while becoming fully human. In this way, through the union of the two natures in the one Person of the eternal Son of God, God was joined to humanity in Jesus Christ. This union is referred to by theologians as the *hypostatic union*. Because of the hypostatic union and all it means, GCI declares that *all are included* (and the related phrase, *you're included*). By these phrases we mean that in and through Jesus Christ, God has reconciled all humanity to himself. God is not estranged from humanity; he has included all people in his love and life. In and through the humanity of Jesus, God has set humankind on a new footing with himself. Jesus is the Head of all humanity and on that basis alone, we are to "be reconciled" to God, that is, we are to *live out* or *live into* that gift of reconciliation with God already given in Christ (Eph 1:10; Rom 5:14; 1Cor 15:22; 1Cor 15:45-47; 2Cor 5:18-20 "as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." (Eph 1:10 ESV)

"Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come." (Ro 5:14 ESV)

"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (1Co 15:22 ESV)

"45 Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. 47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven." (1Co 15:45-47 ESV)

"18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." (2Co 5:18-20 ESV).

Does the hypostatic union mean that God and humanity have, in Christ, been fused into a common or shared being?

No. In the Incarnation, God did not turn into a man, nor was humanity converted into God (or some sort of divine being). In Jesus, the two natures (divine and human) remain distinct—they are not fused or confused with one another. Nor did the unity of the two natures in Jesus result in a third kind of being that was neither God nor human. Rather than an impersonal fusion of being, the hypostatic union is a dynamic and personal unity—the perfect harmonization of the two natures in the one Person of Jesus Christ.

What happened to human nature as the result of the hypostatic union?

Our human nature, under the conditions of the fall (i.e. our fallen human nature), was assumed and then turned around, renewed and regenerated in Jesus, step-by-step through the course of his entire human life—from conception, through life, death, resurrection and ascension. Jesus' whole life was thus salvific (of saving value), culminating in the cross and resurrection as he lived a life of faithful obedience in the power of the Holy Spirit, and in perfect holy and loving communion with the Father. This could happen only in the Son of God who remained what he was (divine) while assuming to himself also what was ours—our human nature. Thus, our whole salvation was complete and finished in Jesus Christ (Titus 3:5; Luke 2:52; Heb 5:8; 2:11; John 17:19; 1Cor 1:30).

"he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit," (Tit 3:5 ESV)

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man." (Lu 2:52 ESV)

"Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered." (Heb 5:8 ESV)

"For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers," (Heb 2:11 ESV)

"And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth." (Joh 17:19 ESV)

"He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption." (1Co 1:30 ESV)

3. The union of God with believers (the *spiritual union*)

Because of the regeneration of human nature in Jesus, who is the new Head of humanity, the Holy Spirit is able to minister in a new and deeper way in the lives of all people so that they might share in the new human nature forged for them in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit thus works out in us what Christ has accomplished for us. By the Holy Spirit, we can share in the Son's relationship of sonship with the Father, and so by grace become God's adopted children who live in communion with the Father through the Son (Eph. 2:15 "by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace," (Eph 2:15 ESV)). In the New Testament, our personally receiving and sharing in the Son's communion with the Father is called *union with Christ*, or being *in Christ*, or being *in the Lord*. Through that union (which in GCI we refer to as the *spiritual union*) believers, in and by the Holy Spirit, share in what was accomplished by Jesus in the hypostatic union. The Holy Spirit thus acts and ministers on the basis of the hypostatic union to establish the spiritual union

by which individuals personally respond and freely receive the freely-given gift of our salvation that, already, is complete in Christ.

Section 4: God the Holy Spirit

4.1 Who is God the Holy Spirit?

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. (Matt 28:19; John 14:16; 15:26; Acts 2:38; Matt 28:19; John 14:17, 26)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Mt 28:19 ESV)

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever," (Joh 14:16 ESV)

"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me." (Joh 15:26 ESV)

"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.'" (Ac 2:38 ESV)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Mt 28:19 ESV)

"even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." (Joh 14:17 ESV)

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (Joh 14:26 ESV)

4.2 How are Jesus and the Holy Spirit related?

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. (Matt 1:20; Luke 1:35; 4:1, 18; Matt 12:18; Luke 3:22; 10:21; 24:49; 23:46; Heb 9:14)

"But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.'" (Mt 1:20 ESV)

"And the angel answered her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.'" (Lu 1:35 ESV)

"And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness" (Lu 4:1 ESV)

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed," (Lu 4:18 ESV)

""Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles." (Mt 12:18 ESV)

"and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."" (Lu 3:22 ESV)

"In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will." (Lu 10:21 ESV)

"And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."" (Lu 24:49 ESV)

"Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last." (Lu 23:46 ESV)

"how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (Heb 9:14 ESV)

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

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 ongoing ministry will eventually bring all creation to full maturity, harmony and perfection. He is the Lord and the giver of life. (Gen 1:1-2; Joel 2:28; Ezek 11:19; Luke 24:49; Acts 2:1-21; Rom 1:4; 8:22-24; 1Pet 1:2)

"1 ¶ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." (Ge 1:1-2 ESV)

""And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions." (Joe 2:28 ESV)

"And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh," (Eze 11:19 ESV)

"And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."" (Lu 24:49 ESV)

"1 ¶ When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." "5 ¶ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia,

Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” 12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” 13 But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”” 14 ¶ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. 15 For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16 But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: 17 “ ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; 18 even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. 19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; 20 the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. 21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Ac 2:1-21 ESV)

“and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,” (Ro 1:4 ESV)

“22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?” (Ro 8:22-24 ESV)

“according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.” (1Pe 1:2 ESV)

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

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. (John 14:26; 1Cor 12:3; Rom 5:5; 1Cor 6:17, 19; 3:16; John 4:24)

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” (Joh 14:26 ESV)

“Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.” (1Co 12:3 ESV)

“and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” (Ro 5:5 ESV)

“But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.” (1Co 6:17 ESV)

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,” (1Co 6:19 ESV)

“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1Co 3:16 ESV)

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”” (Joh 4:24 ESV)

4.5 How do Christians receive the Holy Spirit and what is the result?

We receive the Spirit by receiving the Word of God. As the midwife of the new creation, the Spirit arrives with the Word, frees us to hear, accept and trust in it as the Word of God, brings us to rebirth and assures us of eternal life. The Spirit nurtures, corrects and strengthens us with the pure spiritual milk of the Word. By the Spirit, we are conformed to the character of Christ, growing in faith, hope and love in personal and responsive relationship with the Father through the Spirit. (Eph 6:17; John 14:16-17; John 3:5-6; Luke 11:13; 1Thess 1:5; John 16:8; Rom 8:15-16; 1Pet 2:2)

"and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," (Eph 6:17 ESV)

"16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." (Joh 14:16-17 ESV)

"5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (Joh 3:5-6 ESV)

"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Lu 11:13 ESV)

"because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake." (1Th 1:5 ESV)

"And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:" (Joh 16:8 ESV)

"15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God," (Ro 8:15-16 ESV)

"Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation—" (1Pe 2:2 ESV)

4.6 Why do we not, by the Spirit, experience here and now all that Christ has done for us?

We live in the time between Christ's resurrection and return, which the Bible calls "the present evil age." During this "time between the times," we do not experience all that Christ has for us, though we are assured that we will when he returns. In the meantime, we are given the Spirit as a "down payment"—the "first fruits" and "sealing" of the fullness yet to come. (Eph 1:13-14; 4:30; Col 1:12; 1Pet 1:4; Gal 1:4; 2Cor 1:22; 5:5; Rom 8:23)

"13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory." (Eph 1:13-14 ESV)

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (Eph 4:30 ESV)

"giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col 1:12 ESV)

"to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you," (1Pe 1:4 ESV)

"who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father," (Ga 1:4 ESV)

"and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." (2Co 1:22 ESV)

"He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee." (2Co 5:5 ESV)

"And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." (Ro 8:23 ESV)

4.7 What is the Holy Spirit's ministry to believers?

Sent by Jesus, the Holy Spirit ministers to all people on the basis of Christ's finished work. The Spirit then ministers to believers in a particular way, helping them share in all that Jesus has accomplished on their behalf (John 7:39; 16:7; Gal 3:13-14).

"Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." (Joh 7:39 ESV)

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you." (Joh 16:7 ESV)

"13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"— 14 so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith." (Ga 3:13-14 ESV)

The Holy Spirit's particular ministry to believers includes many things:

- **Renewing believers by sharing with them Christ's resurrected, glorified human nature.** (Rom 8:2, 10-11; Titus 3:4-6)

"For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." (Ro 8:2 ESV)

"10 ¶ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you." (Ro 8:10-11 ESV)

"4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and

renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior," (Tit 3:4-6 ESV)

- **Opening their hearts and minds to Jesus and his teachings.** (Acts 26:8; John 14:26; 15:26)

"Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?" (Ac 26:8 ESV)

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (Joh 14:26 ESV)

"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me." (Joh 15:26 ESV)

- **Granting them repentance by which they see their need for forgiveness and confess their sin.** (John 16:8-11; 1Thess 4:1-6)

"8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged." (Joh 16:8-11 ESV)

"1 ¶ Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. 2 For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, 5 not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you." (1Th 4:1-6 ESV)

- **Granting them faith by which they affirm from the heart that Jesus is Lord.** (1Cor 12:3)

"Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit." (1Co 12:3 ESV)

- **Indwelling them, thus uniting them to Christ in a spiritual union.** (John 14:17; 17:23; 1Cor 6:19; Rom 8:11)

"even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." (Joh 14:17 ESV)

"I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me." (Joh 17:23 ESV)

"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own," (1Co 6:19 ESV)

"If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you." (Ro 8:11 ESV)

• **Granting them freedom and comfort, enabling them to pray when they are at a loss for words.** (2Cor 3:17; Acts 9:31; John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; Rom 8:26-27)

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." (2Co 3:17 ESV)

"So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied." (Ac 9:31 ESV)

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever," (Joh 14:16 ESV)

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (Joh 14:26 ESV)

"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me." (Joh 15:26 ESV)

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you." (Joh 16:7 ESV)

"26 ¶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." (Ro 8:26-27 ESV)

• **Joining them to other believers as brothers and sisters within the one body of Jesus Christ, the Church, where they experience a unity and harmony that embraces the diversity of the Church's many members.** (1Cor 12:13; Eph 2:22; 4:4; Rom 12:5; 1Cor 12:27)

"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit." (1Co 12:13 ESV)

"In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." (Eph 2:22 ESV)

"There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—" (Eph 4:4 ESV)

"so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." (Ro 12:5 ESV)

"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." (1Co 12:27 ESV)

• **Granting them the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is Christ's love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.** (Gal 5:22-23)

"22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." (Ga 5:22-23 ESV)

• **Granting them gifts for ministry in and through the Church, by which they participate with Christ in his ministry to fulfill the Father's mission to the world.** (1Cor 12:4, 11; Matt 28:16-20; Acts 1:8; 13:4; 15:28; 16:6; 21:4)

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;" (1Co 12:4 ESV)

"All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills." (1Co 12:11 ESV)

"16 ¶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."'" (Mt 28:16-20 ESV)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."'" (Ac 1:8 ESV)

"So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus." (Ac 13:4 ESV)

"For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements:" (Ac 15:28 ESV)

"And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia." (Ac 16:6 ESV)

"And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem." (Ac 21:4 ESV)

• Leading them to use these gifts in ways that express the fruit of the Spirit, thus avoiding the self-centeredness that leads to division within the body of Christ. (1Cor 12:31-13:13)

"31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. 13:1 ¶ If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. 4 ¶ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 ¶ Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. 13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (1Co 12:31-13:13 ESV)

4.8 What is the Holy Spirit's ministry to unbelievers?

The Spirit is at work in the world, continuing the earthly ministry of Jesus, reaching out with God's compassion and wisdom to all people, because Christ died for all. The Holy Spirit is present in many ways to the world, including ministering to unbelievers, often in ways unseen to us, though often involving the Spirit-led ministry of the Church (John 3:8; Acts 8:26-39; John 12:32; Heb 7:25).

"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."'" (Joh 3:8 ESV)

"26 ¶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' This is a desert place. 27 And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 And the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over and join this chariot.'" 30 So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. 33 In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth." 34 And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. 36 And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 37 38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing." (Ac 8:26-39 ESV)

"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." (Joh 12:32 ESV)

"Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them." (Heb 7:25 ESV)

The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the lives of unbelievers includes many things:

- **Seeking to bring all to repentance and faith.** (2Pet 3:9; 2Tim 2:25)

"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." (2Pe 3:9 ESV)

"correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth," (2Ti 2:25 ESV)

- **Preparing and freeing unbelievers to receive God's forgiveness, to accept God's freely-given grace, to die to pride and any hope of justifying oneself, and to experience the benefits of what Christ has already done for them, including sending the Holy Spirit to draw them to Christ.** (John 16:8-11; 1Thess 4:1-6, Acts 10:43)

"8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged." (Joh 16:8-11 ESV)

"1 ¶ Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. 2 For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, 5 not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you." (1Th 4:1-6 ESV)

"To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." (Ac 10:43 ESV)

- **Resisting the resistance of those who seek to avoid or reject the grace of God.** (*Acts 26:8; John 14:26; 15:26*)

"Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?" (Ac 26:8 ESV)

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (Joh 14:26 ESV)

"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me." (Joh 15:26 ESV)

4.9 What happens to unbelievers who resist the Holy Spirit's ministry?

The Spirit does not indwell people who, in resisting him, do not receive Christ through repentance and faith. Because the Spirit does not unite unbelievers to Christ in a spiritual union, they are not incorporated into the body of Christ (the Church) in the way believers are. People who continually refuse to repent, die to self and receive God's grace are not able to enjoy the benefits of the completed work of Christ done on their behalf. The Bible gives strict warnings concerning the consequences of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, thus rejecting his ministry on their behalf. (John 14:17; Acts 2:38; 1Cor 2:14; 1John 4:6; Heb 4:2; Mark 3:29; Acts 26:18)

"even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." (Joh 14:17 ESV)

"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." (Ac 2:38 ESV)

"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." (1Co 2:14 ESV)

"We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error." (1Jo 4:6 ESV)

"For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened." (Heb 4:2 ESV)

"but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"—" (Mr 3:29 ESV)

"to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." (Ac 26:18 ESV)

Teaching Notes: God the Holy Spirit

From The GCI Statement of Beliefs:

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the triune God, eternally proceeding from the Father through the Son. He is the Comforter promised by Jesus Christ, who unites us with the Father and the Son, and transforms us into the image of Christ. The Spirit works out in us the regeneration Christ

accomplished for us, and by continual renewal empowers us to share in the Son's glorious and eternal communion with the Father as his children. The Holy Spirit is the Source of inspiration and prophecy throughout the Scriptures, and the Source of unity and communion in the Church. He provides spiritual gifts for the work of the gospel, and is the Christian's constant Guide into all truth.

Here are GCI articles that address the topic of the Holy Spirit:

- *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*
- *The Holy Spirit • The deity of the Holy Spirit*
- *Can you hear the Holy Spirit?*
- *Can you trust the Holy Spirit to Save You?*

Concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit.

While some doctrinal formulations (including some forms of the Nicene Creed) say that the Holy Spirit proceeds "from the Father and the Son," The GCI Statement of Beliefs states that the Holy Spirit proceeds "from the Father through the Son." GCI accepts both formulations as valid representations of the biblical teaching concerning the Spirit, when properly understood. These statements should not be taken in such a way as to either call into question the unity of the being of the one triune God, or the full divinity of the Son, nor regard the Holy Spirit as a second Son.

Section 5: The Kingdom of God

5.1 What is the kingdom of God?

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

"20 ¶ Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, 21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."" (Lu 17:20-21 ESV)

"12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 ¶ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." (Ro 8:12-17 ESV)

“24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. 28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.” (1Co 15:24-28 ESV)

“So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.” (Ga 4:7 ESV)

“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,” (Col 1:13 ESV)

“and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (Re 1:6 ESV)

“Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”” (Re 11:15 ESV)

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.” (Re 21:3 ESV)

“22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” (Re 21:22-27 ESV)

“1 ¶ Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.” (Re 22:1-5 ESV)

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

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. (Rom 8:22-25; Phil 2:9-11)

“22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved.

Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” (Ro 8:22-25 ESV)

“9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Php 2:9-11 ESV)

5.3 How does God’s kingdom come?

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

“1 ¶ As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. 2 And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD’s house. 3 When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.” 4 Then the king and all the people offered sacrifice before the LORD.” (2Ch 7:1-4 ESV)

“5 ¶ These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, 6 but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.” (Mt 10:5-8 ESV)

“18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”” (Mt 28:18-20 ESV)

“1 ¶ But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. 2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. 5 And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? 6 He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7 that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” 8 And they remembered his words, 9 and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, 11 but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. 12 But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.” (Lu 24:1-12 ESV)

“6 ¶ So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my

witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” 9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”” (Ac 1:6-11 ESV)

“19 If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. 20 ¶ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. 28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.” (1Co 15:19-28 ESV)

5.4 How do Christians live now in God’s kingdom?

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. (Rom 14:17; Eph 4:6; Col 1:13-14; 3:4; 1Thess 4:11)

“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Ro 14:17 ESV)

“one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Eph 4:6 ESV)

“13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Col 1:13-14 ESV)

“When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” (Col 3:4 ESV)

“and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you,” (1Th 4:11 ESV)

Teaching Notes: The Kingdom of God

From The GCI Statement of Beliefs:

The kingdom of God in the broadest sense is God's supreme sovereignty. God's reign is now manifest in the Church and in the life of each believer who is submissive to his 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.

Here are GCI articles that address the topic of the kingdom of God:

- The Kingdom of God (essay at gci.org/god/kingdom)

- The Present and Future Kingdom of God (at gci.org/gospel/kingdom)
- Your Invitation to the Kingdom (at gci.org/gospel/invitation1)
- Matthew 13: Parables of the Kingdom (at gci.org/bible/matthew13)

Section 6: Humanity

6.1 What is God's purpose for humanity?

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. (2Cor 13:14)

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2Co 13:14 ESV)

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

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. (Col 1:2; 3:17; Eph 5:20)

"To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father." (Col 1:2 ESV)

"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Col 3:17 ESV)

"giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," (Eph 5:20 ESV)

6.3 How do Christians live for the love of God?

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. (John 3:16; 1John 4:19; 2Cor 5:14)

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (Joh 3:16 ESV)

"We love because he first loved us." (1Jo 4:19 ESV)

"For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;" (2Co 5:14 ESV)

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

By the Holy Spirit, we are united 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.

6.5 What does it mean that human beings were "created in God's image"?

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, through his earthly life 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. (Gen 1:26-27; Col 1:15; 3:10; 2Cor 3:18; 1Cor 15:49; Rom 8:29; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:18; 5:19; 17:21-22)

"26 ¶ Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Ge 1:26-27 ESV)

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." (Col 1:15 ESV)

"and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." (Col 3:10 ESV)

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." (2Co 3:18 ESV)

"Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven." (1Co 15:49 ESV)

"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." (Ro 8:29 ESV)

"21 ¶ Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'" (Lu 3:21-22 ESV)

"No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." (Joh 1:18 ESV)

“So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.” (Joh 5:19 ESV)

“21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,” (Joh 17:21-22 ESV)

6.6 What does our creation in God's image reflect about God's love for us? Out of his love, God created us for eternal fellowship and communion with himself. When we live wholeheartedly for God, we honor our Creator as the source of all good things. We also honor God by loving others as God loves them. We were created to live like Jesus, who obeys the two Great Commandments: to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength; and to love others in a way that reflects how God loves us. (Ps 9:1; 1John 4:7; 4:11; Matt 5:14-16)

“«TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO MUTH-LABBEN. A PSALM OF DAVID.» I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.” (Ps 9:1 ESV)

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.” (1Jo 4:7 ESV)

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” (1Jo 4:11 ESV)

“14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Mt 5:14-16 ESV)

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

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. (John 8:34; Rom 3:23; 3:10; 1:21; Is 59:1-3)

“Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.” (Joh 8:34 ESV)

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Ro 3:23 ESV)

“as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one;” (Ro 3:10 ESV)

“For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” (Ro 1:21 ESV)

“1 ¶ Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; 2 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. 3 For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies; your tongue mutters wickedness.” (Isa 59:1-3 ESV)

6.8 How does Jesus restore to us the image of God?

Though humankind turned from God by falling into sin, God did not turn from us. Instead, he sent Jesus to restore our broken humanity. In living completely for God, Jesus gave himself completely for us, even to the point of dying on our behalf. In doing so, he perfectly fulfilled the two Great Commandments on our behalf: loving God with all he is and all he has; and loving all people in a way that reflects how the Father loves him. By living so completely for others in the name of the Father, Jesus manifested what he was—the perfect image of God. In union with Christ by the Spirit, we, by grace, become conformed to Christ through faith. In communion with Christ, we share by the Holy Spirit in his regenerated human nature. In fellowship with our risen Lord, our humanity is renewed in such a way that the image of God that was lost in Adam is restored in us. (Is 65:2; Phil 2:8; Col 1:15; Rom 8:29)

“I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices;” (Isa 65:2 ESV)

“And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Php 2:8 ESV)

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.” (Col 1:15 ESV)

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” (Ro 8:29 ESV)

Teaching Notes: Humanity

From The GCI Statement of Beliefs:

God created humanity male and female in the image and likeness of God. God blessed them, telling them to multiply and fill the earth. In love, the Lord gave humans stewardship over all the earth and its creatures. Typified by Adam who sinned, humanity lives in sin against its Creator, thus spreading suffering and death in the world. Despite human sinfulness, humanity continues in and is defined by having been created according to God’s image. Thus all humans, collectively and individually, deserve love, honor, and respect. The eternally perfect image of God is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the last Adam. God creates through Jesus Christ the one new humanity over which sin and death have no power. In Christ, humanity bears perfectly the image of God, and in union with Christ, humanity is included in the relationship Christ has with the Father.

Here are GCI articles on the topic of humanity:

- What Are Human Beings? (at gci.org/humans)
- Humans in the Image of God (at gci.org/humans/image)

We Believe now moves on to two sections that address what is often referred to as “Word and sacrament.” Word (Section 7) in this case refers to the written word of God, the Bible (the Holy Scriptures). Sacrament (Section 8) refers to the two sacraments of the Church—baptism and the Lord’s Supper (also called Communion and the Eucharist). Word and sacrament are principal ways by which the Church encounters and is nourished, through the Holy Spirit, by its Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the living Word of God.

Section 7: The Holy Scriptures

7.1 What are the Holy Scriptures?

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.

7.2 What is in the Holy Scriptures?

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. (2Pet 1:20; 1Thess 2:13; 1Cor 2:13; Gal 1:12)

“knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation.” (2Pe 1:20 ESV)

“And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.” (1Th 2:13 ESV)

“And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.” (1Co 2:13 ESV)

“For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” (Ga 1:12 ESV)

7.3 How are the Old Testament and New Testament related?

The Old Testament shows us God's covenant promises revealed first to Abraham, then to Israel. The New Testament reveals to the renewed people of God (the Church), the ultimate fulfillment of those covenant promises. The Old Testament prepared the people of God to recognize and receive the fulfillment of God's Word in Jesus Christ. It also shows how the people of God were to live by faith in the promises of God as Israel, a particular chosen people. The New Testament shows the church how to live by faith after the fulfillment of those promises by Jesus Christ and in hope of their ultimate consummation upon Christ's bodily return. (Heb 1:1-2; Gal 3:24-25).

"1 ¶ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." (Heb 1:1-2 ESV)

"24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian," (Ga 3:24-25 ESV)

7.4 What does it mean that the Holy Scriptures are "inspired"?

It means that the Bible is "God-breathed." The Holy Scriptures were given by the Holy Spirit through prophets and apostles and were preserved by the Spirit as the revelation of God and his acts in human history. They are not simply a collection of human opinion. Jesus gave his apostles authority to speak and teach for him, and a unique gifting from the Spirit to do so (Luke 9:2; Mark 3:14; Mark 16:20; Luke 22:35; Acts 16:10; Rom 1:1; 2Tim 3:16; 2Cor 10:8; 13:10; 1Thess 4:2)

"and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal." (Lu 9:2 ESV)

"And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach" (Mr 3:14 ESV)

"And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs." (Mr 16:20 ESV)

"And he said to them, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing.""" (Lu 22:35 ESV)

"And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them." (Ac 16:10 ESV)

"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God," (Ro 1:1 ESV)

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness," (2Ti 3:16 ESV)

"For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed." (2Co 10:8 ESV)

“For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down.” (2Co 13:10 ESV)

“For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.” (1Th 4:2 ESV)

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

Because the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit, 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. (1Thess 2:13)

“And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.” (1Th 2:13 ESV)

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

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. (John 1:1, 14)

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (Joh 1:1 ESV)

“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.” (Joh 1:14 ESV)

7.7 What is the relationship between the Holy Scriptures and the living Word of God?

By the Holy Spirit, the Holy Scriptures put us in touch with Jesus Christ, the living Word of God. By the Spirit, the living Word of God can speak personally to his people in and through the Bible. Through the authoritative and infallible written word of God, we come to know surely and definitively who Jesus Christ is in relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit. While the written word can be distinguished from the living Word, they can never be separated—they must always be treated together, for their ministries are inseparable in the Holy Spirit. (Heb 1:1-2; 10:15-17; 12:25-27; John 5:39)

“1 ¶ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” (Heb 1:1-2 ESV)

“15 And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, 16 “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” 17 then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”” (Heb 10:15-17 ESV)

“25 See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. 26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” 27 This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.” (Heb 12:25-27 ESV)

“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,” (Joh 5:39 ESV)

7.8 How should Christians interpret and teach the Holy Scriptures?

Just as the Holy Scriptures were not originally given through private understanding of the things they address, so they must not be understood (and translated, read, interpreted, preached, taught and obeyed) privately. Instead, the Bible is to be understood, conveyed and lived out in the community of the body of Christ, the Church. It is to be interpreted in its plain and canonical sense, respectful of the Church's historic and consensual reading of it. We do so taking seriously the providentially appointed form of human languages, times and circumstances in which the Bible was written. The Holy Scriptures are to be interpreted with Jesus Christ as their center, for he alone is the Living Word of God, the Son of the Father. (John 10:25; Luke 24:27; 2Peter 1:20-2; Eph 3:3; Gal 1:12)

“Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me,” (Joh 10:25 ESV)

“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Lu 24:27 ESV)

“knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation.” (2Pe 1:20 ESV)

“how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.” (Eph 3:3 ESV)

“For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” (Ga 1:12 ESV)

7.9 Isn't preaching also the word of God?

Yes. Preaching and other forms of Christian witness are also God's word when faithful to the living Word of God (Jesus Christ) and the witness of the written word of God (the Holy Scriptures). By the power of the Spirit, preaching gives to us what it proclaims—the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faith comes by hearing God's word in the form of faithful proclamation. (Mark 16:15; 2Cor 4:5; Rom 1:15-16; 10:17)

“And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.” (Mr 16:15 ESV)

“For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.” (2Co 4:5 ESV)

“15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 16 ¶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Ro 1:15-16 ESV)

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” (Ro 10:17 ESV)

7.10 How do Christians relate to the Holy Scriptures?

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. (Matt 4:4; 2Tim 3:16; Rom 10:17; Col 3:16; Luke 4:4)

“But he answered, “It is written, “ ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”” (Mt 4:4 ESV)

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,” (2Ti 3:16 ESV)

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” (Ro 10:17 ESV)

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” (Col 3:16 ESV)

“And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’”” (Lu 4:4 ESV)

7.11 Does the Holy Spirit ever speak apart from the Holy Scriptures?

Since the Holy Spirit is not given to the Church apart from the Bible, true messages from the Spirit depend on the written word of God. Since that word cannot be grasped without the Spirit, true interpretation of Scripture depends on prayer. However, just as the wind blows where it will, the Spirit may speak or otherwise work in people’s lives in unexpected or indirect ways, yet always according to the Holy Scriptures, never contradicting, diluting or dismissing them. However, such direction of the Spirit can never become normative for the Church in the way Holy Scripture is and always will be. (John 3:8; Acts 8:29-31; Eph 6:18; 2Pet 1:20-21; Num 22:28)

“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”” (Joh 3:8 ESV)

"29 And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." 30 So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him." (Ac 8:29-31 ESV)

"praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints," (Eph 6:18 ESV)

"20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2Pe 1:20-21 ESV)

"Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" (Nu 22:28 ESV)

7.12 Aren't some people, apart from the Bible, sometimes wiser than some people who know the Holy Scriptures?

In some ways, yes, especially comparing individuals and not taking into consideration the whole Church. But when this happens, it cannot be confidently known except in the light of the teaching of the Bible, especially when it comes to the knowledge of God. The important question for the Church is not so much where an insight comes from—the important question is the norm by which to test it. Our faithful discernment of what is true depends on God's Word as conveyed to us in the Holy Scriptures. There is no other normative and authoritative source of the knowledge of God and of his ways and purposes for human beings. However, in its light other relative truths may be confirmed. (Titus 1:9)

"He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it." (Tit 1:9 ESV)

7.13 Doesn't modern critical scholarship undermine the Christian belief that the Holy Scriptures are a form of God's Word?

No. The methods of modern biblical scholarship are a good servant but a bad master. They are neither to be accepted nor rejected uncritically. Properly used, they help us rightly and richly interpret the Bible. Improperly used, they can usurp the place of faith or establish an alternative faith. Though these methods provide a useful tool, the Holy Scriptures remain, for the Church, reliable and irreplaceable in all essential matters of faith and practice. Such methods are to be used to help us clearly hear and properly understand the written word of God as it bears witness to the living Word of God. Methods and approaches that obscure, contradict or relativize the normative and authoritative witness of the Holy Scriptures are to be dismissed. No valid method will place the Word of God under its judgment. (Prov 1:5-6; 10:14; 1Cor 1:20, 25)

"5 Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, 6 to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles." (Pr 1:5-6 ESV)

"The wise lay up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool brings ruin near." (Pr 10:14 ESV)

“Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” (1Co 1:20 ESV)

“For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” (1Co 1:25 ESV)

Teaching Notes: The Holy Scriptures

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The Holy Scriptures are by God’s grace sanctified to serve as his 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. As such, the Holy Scriptures are foundational to the Church and infallible in all matters of faith and salvation.

Here are GCI articles on the topic of The Holy Scriptures:

- Scripture: God’s Gift (six-part essay, starting at gci.org/bible/scripture1)
- Inspiration, Authority, and Reliability of Scripture (at gci.org/bible/inspiration)
- Comforted by the Word (at gci.org/bible/comforted)
- How We Got the Bible in English (at gci.org/bible/english)

Section 8: The Sacraments

8.1 What is a “sacrament”?

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

“9 ¶ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opening and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”” (Mr 1:9-11 ESV)

“22 And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” 23 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. 24 And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”” (Mr 14:22-25 ESV)

“So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.” (Joh 6:53 ESV)

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (1Co 10:16 ESV)

“In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”” (1Co 11:25 ESV)

“and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” (2Co 1:22 ESV)

8.2 Why do we participate in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper?

We baptize because Jesus Christ was baptized for us and commanded us to baptize. We share in his baptism by being baptized in his name. Our baptism bears witness to Jesus’ baptism for us, and expresses our faith in his baptism for us. Our partaking of the Lord’s Supper bears witness to the communion he has set out for us at his Table and expresses our faith that his self-offering has restored our communion with him and with the Father in the Spirit. In the Lord’s Supper we receive from him what he has to give us, namely himself. We receive from him his body broken for us, and his life-blood poured out for us. Through the two sacraments, we bear witness not so much to our faith, but to who Jesus Christ is and what he has done for us through his baptism and self-sacrifice.

8.3 What is the relationship between the word of promise and the sacramental sign?

Take away the word of promise, and the water of baptism is merely water, and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper are merely bread and wine. The elements have no natural power in themselves to convey the blessings of God. But consecrated by the Spirit and Word of promise, the elements become visible words of God that we receive in action. In this way the elements, by grace, convey to receptive faith what they promise—the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. The sacraments are thus visible words that uniquely assure and confirm that no matter how greatly we may have sinned, Christ died for us and comes to live in us and with us by his Spirit. They are specially appointed means that God has provided for us to receive the transforming, healing, reconciling grace of God. (Luke 24:30-31; 1Cor 10:16; Matt 28:20; Col 1:27)

“30 When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. 31 And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.” (Lu 24:30-31 ESV)

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (1Co 10:16 ESV)

“teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Mt 28:20 ESV)

“To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col 1:27 ESV)

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

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. (Acts 2:41; John 6:33, 51, 56; 1Cor 11:26)

“So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.” (Ac 2:41 ESV)

“For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” (Joh 6:33 ESV)

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” (Joh 6:51 ESV)

“Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.” (Joh 6:56 ESV)

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” (1Co 11:26 ESV)

8.5 What is the meaning of baptism?

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. (Rom 6:3-6; Gal 3:26-27; Rom 4:11; Col 2:12; Acts 2:38)

“3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.” (Ro 6:3-6 ESV)

“26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Ga 3:26-27 ESV)

“He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well,” (Ro 4:11 ESV)

“having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.” (Col 2:12 ESV)

“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.” (Ac 2:38 ESV)

8.6 Is it appropriate to baptize infants?

Yes. Baptism is a sign of God’s promise that an infant is embraced in the covenant community of the body of Christ, the Church. Those who in repentance and faith present infants to be baptized vow to raise them in the knowledge and fear of the Lord, with the expectation that the child will, one day, profess Christian faith as their own. That personal faith is then normally demonstrated at a service of Confirmation when, as discerned by the elders of the congregation, the child reaches a personal awareness, in which a testimony of their faith in Christ is shared. (Acts 2:39)

“For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” (Ac 2:39 ESV)

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

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. (Heb 10:25; 12:14; 1Pet 3:15; 1John 1:9; 2:1; Acts 1:8)

"not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Heb 10:25 ESV)

"Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." (Heb 12:14 ESV)

"but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you;" (1Pe 3:15 ESV)

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1Jo 1:9 ESV)

"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1Jo 2:1 ESV)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Ac 1:8 ESV)

8.8 What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper?

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. (1Cor 11:23-26; 10:16; Matt 26:26-28; 1Cor 1:9; 10:16-17; 2Tim 1:9)

"23 ¶ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (1Co 11:23-26 ESV)

"The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1Co 10:16 ESV)

“26 ¶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” 27 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Mt 26:26-28 ESV)

“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1Co 1:9 ESV)

“16 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” (1Co 10:16-17 ESV)

“who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,” (2Ti 1:9 ESV)

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

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. (1Cor 11:27-32)

“27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.” (1Co 11:27-32 ESV)

8.10 Who may receive the Lord's Supper?

All may receive it who receive Christ in faith, rejoicing in so great a gift, who confess their sins, and who, in faith, intend to lead the new life that Christ shares with them. This includes children who have expressed a desire to participate and have been instructed in the meaning of the sacrament in a way they can understand. Receiving the Lord’s Supper will normally have taken place after the person has been instructed and baptized, but for adults the Lord’s Supper can be received upon their first hearing the Word of God proclaimed and, in response, desire to receive Christ by partaking of it. Instruction and baptism would then normally follow. (Luke 13:29; 1Cor 11:2; Phil 4:4)

“And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God.” (Lu 13:29 ESV)

“Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you.” (1Co 11:2 ESV)

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.” (Php 4:4 ESV)

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

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. (1Cor 11:27-33)

“27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. 33 So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—” (1Co 11:27-33 ESV)

Teaching Notes: The Sacraments

From The GCI Statement of Beliefs:

The sacrament of baptism 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 selves have been crucified and renounced in Christ and we have been freed from the shackles of the past and given new being through his resurrection. Baptism proclaims the good news that Christ has made us his own, and that it is only in him that our new life of faith and obedience emerges. Grace Communion International baptizes by immersion.

In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we partake of bread and wine in remembrance of our Savior, proclaiming his death until he comes. 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 our Christian life we rely not on any obedience or righteousness of our own, but solely upon the grace of God incarnate in Jesus Christ.

What about infant baptism?

Along with older children and adults who express personal faith in Jesus Christ, GCI also baptizes infants—children who have not come to the age of personal awareness. Concerning infant baptism, see GCI's article *Infant Baptism* (at gci.org/gospel/infant).

What about re-baptism? See GCI's article *Should Believers be Baptized?* (at gci.org/gospel/believers)

Here are additional GCI articles on baptism:

- *Baptism Pictures the Gospel* (at gci.org/gospel/baptism)
- *Baptism: Commemorating Commitment* (at gci.org/gospel/christianity6)
- *A Lesson About Baptism (Mark 1:9-11)* (at gci.org/bible/mark1d)

In GCI, who is permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper?

GCI serves the Lord's Supper to all who come in repentance and faith. While such people normally will have been baptized, GCI does not make prior baptism a requirement for receiving Communion. Children (infants) who are younger than the age of personal awareness, even if baptized as infants, should delay partaking of the Lord's Supper until they are old enough to be aware of the meaning of what they are doing. An alternative for these infants is to come to the Table with an adult and there receive a blessing from the officiant rather than the Communion elements.

Here are GCI articles on the topic of the Lord's Supper:

- *Partaking of the Promises* (at gci.org/church/lordssup/promises)
- *The Three-Fold Meaning of the Lord's Supper* (at gci.org/church/lordssup/3fold)
- *Question & Answers About the Lord's Supper* (at gci.org/church/lordssup/qanda)

Section 9: The Church

9.1 What is the Church?

It is the whole community of faithful Christians in heaven and on earth who are incorporated into Jesus Christ by the personal and particular ministry of the Holy Spirit. On earth, the Church gathers in local congregations to worship God in Word and sacrament, and to witness to God by serving and obeying God in faith and according to the Holy Scriptures, thus fulfilling the mission Christ gave to it under the leadership of those God appoints in the Church for that purpose. (Acts 1:8; Eph 4:11-13; 1Pet 2:9)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Ac 1:8 ESV)

"11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," (Eph 4:11-13 ESV)

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1Pe 2:9 ESV)

9.2 What is the mission of the Church?

Before ascending, Jesus commanded his followers to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you.” This “Great Commission” is for the Church in all times. (Matt. 28:16-20)

“16 ¶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.””
(Mt 28:16-20 ESV)

9.3 How should Christians view the Church?

The New Testament teaches us to view the Church as God’s covenant people and family, as the body and bride of Christ, and as the temple where God in Christ dwells by his Spirit. (John 1:12; 1Pet 2:9-10; 1Cor 3:16-17; 2Cor 6:16-7:1; Rev 19:6-10; 21:9-10)

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,”
(Joh 1:12 ESV)

“9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (1Pe 2:9-10 ESV)

“16 ¶ Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? 17 If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.” (1Co 3:16-17 ESV)

“16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, 18 and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.” 7:1 ¶ Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.” (2Co 6:16-7:1 ESV)

“6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; 8 it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. 9 And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.” 10 Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Re 19:6-10 ESV)

“9 ¶ Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,” (Re 21:9-10 ESV)

9.4 Why is the Church called “the body of Christ”?

Because all who belong to the Church are united to Christ as their head and source of life and are thus united to one another in Christ for mutual love and service to him, all in response to the ministry of the Holy Spirit being carried out on the basis of Christ’s completed earthly ministry. (1Cor 12:12-27)

“12 ¶ For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. 14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, 25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. 27 ¶ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1Co 12:12-27 ESV)

9.5 What are the identifying characteristics of the Church?

The Creed lists four identifying “marks” of the Church: one, holy, all-encompassing and apostolic.

9.6 In what sense is the Church one?

The Church is called one because it is the company of all faithful people who have given their lives to Jesus Christ, as he has and continues to give himself to them by his Word and the Holy Spirit. The members of the Church are one because they form the one body of Christ, having “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.” The Church is called to express this unity in all relationships between believers. (Eph 4:5-6)

“5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Eph 4:5-6 ESV)

9.7 In what sense is the Church holy?

The Church is called holy because the Holy Spirit dwells in it and sanctifies its members, setting them apart to God in Christ, and calling them to moral and spiritual holiness of life. Since Christ cannot be separated from his people, the Church is holy because he is holy. Despite all its remaining imperfections here and now, the Church is called to become ever more holy, sharing

more fully in all that Christ has done for it, for that is what it already is in Christ. (Gal 2:20; 1Cor 1:2; Lev 11:44; 1Pet 1:15-16; Rev 5:9)

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Ga 2:20 ESV)

"To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:" (1Co 1:2 ESV)

"For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground." (Le 11:44 ESV)

"15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."" (1Pe 1:15-16 ESV)

"And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation," (Re 5:9 ESV)

9.8 In what sense is the Church all-encompassing?

The Church is called all-encompassing (catholic in some translations of the Creed, not in reference to a denomination, but, from the original Greek, meaning universal). The all-encompassing Church holds the whole faith once for all delivered to the saints and maintains continuity with the apostolic Church throughout time and space, thus uniting, in Jesus Christ, all local congregations and various associations of the one, universal Church.

9.9 In what sense is the Church apostolic?

The Church is called apostolic for two reasons: First, because its members hold the faith of Christ's first apostles—they are in continuity with them and their message. Second, because the Church, like the apostles ("apostle" meaning "sent") is sent to proclaim the gospel and to make disciples throughout the world. (Matt 28:18-20; Luke 9:1-6; Acts 1:8; John 15:26-27; Eph 3:8-10)

"18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."" (Mt 28:18-20 ESV)

"1 ¶ And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. 3 And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. 4 And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. 5 And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." 6 And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere." (Lu 9:1-6 ESV)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."" (Ac 1:8 ESV)

“26 ¶ “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.” (Joh 15:26-27 ESV)

“8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” (Eph 3:8-10 ESV)

9.10 How are we as members of the Church to view each other?

In union with Christ, we are united to each other within the body of Christ, the Church. As Jesus by his death removed our separation from God, so by his Spirit he removes all that divides us from each other. The ties that bind us together in Christ are deeper than any other human relationships and are more fundamental than what distinguishes us from one another. (Eph 2:19-20; 2:14; 4:4-5; 1Cor 12:4-7, 12-13, 27; Gal 3:28)

“19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,” (Eph 2:19-20 ESV)

“For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph 2:14 ESV)

“4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,” (Eph 4:4-5 ESV)

“4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (1Co 12:4-7 ESV)

“12 ¶ For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” (1Co 12:12-13 ESV)

“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1Co 12:27 ESV)

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Ga 3:28 ESV)

9.11 How are we to live out the oneness we have in Christ?

Through the Holy Spirit, we have communion with Christ, which means we share in the relationship that Jesus has with the Father and the Holy Spirit. As members of the body of Christ, we also have communion with each other through him. That fellowship is lived out by loving and serving one another, and by worshipping together, hearing the gospel preached, and together partaking of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. (John 17:20-21)

“20 ¶ “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (Joh 17:20-21 ESV)

9.12 How are we to serve within the Church?

The Holy Spirit gifts each member of the Church with certain gifts that are to be used to serve the Church, and through the Church to serve the world. Each of these gifts, which vary from member to member, are important and are not interchangeable. They are essential contributions to the unity of the one body of Christ. The equality of the members of the Church does not derive from the interchangeability of the parts, but in the fact that the gifts given the members are all of grace—gifts from God through Jesus by the Holy Spirit. The differences among the members are good and are to be used to bless each other in ways that individual members cannot bless themselves. The differences in the Church constitute a non-hierarchical ordering of the members where their gifts are utilized in and for love. (John 17:20-21; 1Cor 12:1-11)

“20 ¶ “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (Joh 17:20-21 ESV)

“1 ¶ Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit. 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.” (1Co 12:1-11 ESV)

9.13 How are the Church on earth and the Church in heaven joined?

The worship of the Church on earth is a participation in the eternal worship of the Church in heaven. One day we will be able to experience this unity. When we worship here on earth we are joining in with the eternal worship that is already and forever taking place. (Heb 12:22-24)

“22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.” (Heb 12:22-24 ESV)

9.14 How do Christians enter into communion with Christ and with one another?

By the ministry of the Holy Spirit working through Word and sacrament. Because the Spirit uses these means to bring about his saving purposes, the Word of God and the sacraments are called

"means of grace." We practice two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, because these were instituted for the Church by Jesus Christ. (1Cor 10:17; 12:13; Col 3:16)

"Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." (1Co 10:17 ESV)

"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit." (1Co 12:13 ESV)

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." (Col 3:16 ESV)

9.15 Why should Christians gather for worship?

As members of the body of Christ, we gather for worship to honor God with thanks and praise, to receive the sacraments, and to hear God's Word proclaimed so that the gospel may be in our hearts and put into practice in our lives. Through these encounters with God in worship, we are reminded of God's nature and character, and we grow in faith, hope and love for him. This prepares us to go out from worship to make God known in word and deed. We typically hold our primary worship gathering on the first day of the week in celebration of the fulfillment of God's promise to be our rest through our Lord's resurrection. (Rom 10:8; Acts 2:42, 46; Mark 16:2; Acts 20:7; 4:33)

"But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);" (Ro 10:8 ESV)

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Ac 2:42 ESV)

"And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts," (Ac 2:46 ESV)

"And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb." (Mr 16:2 ESV)

"On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight." (Ac 20:7 ESV)

"And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all." (Ac 4:33 ESV)

Teaching Notes: The Church

From The GCI Statement of Beliefs:

The Church, the body of Christ, consists of all who trust in Jesus Christ. The Church is commissioned to make disciples of Jesus by reaching out in love to all people, nurturing and baptizing those who believe, and teaching believers to obey all that Christ commanded. In fulfilling

this mission, the Church is directed by the Holy Scriptures, led by the indwelling Holy Spirit, and looks continually to Jesus Christ, its living Head.

Here are GCI articles on the topic of the Church:

- The Church and Its Ministry (essay at gci.org/lit/church-and-its-ministry)
- What is the Church? (at gci.org/disc/22-church)
- Six Functions of the Church (at gci.org/disc/23-functions)

Do Christians need to belong to a church and go to church services?

Here is GCI's answer in the We're Often Asked section of the GCI website:

God calls sinners into the fellowship of the saints, which is the body of Christ. Regardless of denomination or choice of Christian congregation, the spiritual nurture of fellow Christians is essential for a faithful life in Christ. It is from Christ that "the whole body [is] joined and held together by every supporting ligament . . . as each part does its work" (Eph. 4:16). Speaking of the importance of the church in the lives of Christians, Paul wrote: "It was [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-13).

Section 10: The Christian

10.1 What is a Christian?

A Christian is any person who, in response to hearing the Word of God, responds with faith in Jesus as God's eternal Son, trusting in the grace freely given to us through his life, death on the cross, and resurrection to everlasting life. Recognizing Jesus as being their Lord and Savior, they turn to him in repentance and faith to receive salvation, including the gifts of forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God. Submitting to the holy, loving Lordship of Christ, they no longer live for themselves, but for the praise and glory of God. They entrust their life to Jesus' transforming oversight, care and service. (Rom. 10:9-13)

"9 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. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. 11 For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." 12 ¶ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."" (Ro 10:9-13 ESV)

10.2 What happens when a person becomes a Christian?

They experience new birth through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, leading them to embrace their adoption as God's children. By the Holy Spirit, they share in the communion that the incarnate Son of God has with the Father, drawing them into right relationship with the triune God and fellow humans. (Rom 10:9-13; Gal 2:20; John 3:5-7; Titus 3:5; Mark 8:34; John 1:12-13; 3:16-17; Rom 5:1; 8:9, 14-15; John 13:35)

“9 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. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. 11 For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” 12 ¶ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 13 For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”” (Ro 10:9-13 ESV)

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Ga 2:20 ESV)

“5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” (Joh 3:5-7 ESV)

“he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,” (Tit 3:5 ESV)

“And he called to him the crowd with his disciples and said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Mr 8:34 ESV)

“12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (Joh 1:12-13 ESV)

“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. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” (Joh 3:16-17 ESV)

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ro 5:1 ESV)

“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.” (Ro 8:9 ESV)

“14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”” (Ro 8:14-15 ESV)

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”” (Joh 13:35 ESV)

10.3 Is Christianity the only true religion?

When used to promote self-justification, war-mongering or prejudice, religion is a form of sin. Religions, Christianity included, too often have been mis-used in that way. Nevertheless, by grace, despite the sins of its followers, Christianity offers the truth of the gospel. No other religion can or does affirm the name of Jesus Christ as the hope of the world. The exclusive claim of Jesus Christ is that in him alone can all be included in the kingdom of God. He alone is the eternal Son

of the Father who reveals the Father and sends the Holy Spirit. He alone makes us adopted children of the Father in the Spirit. (Matt 7:3; James 1:26, 27; Acts 4:12; John 14:6; Rom 1:16; 2Cor 4:7)

“Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?” (Mt 7:3 ESV)

“26 If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless. 27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” (Jas 1:26-27 ESV)

“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Ac 4:12 ESV)

“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (Joh 14:6 ESV)

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Ro 1:16 ESV)

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.” (2Co 4:7 ESV)

10.4 How will God deal with followers of other religions?

God has made salvation available to all human beings through Jesus Christ. How God will deal with those who do not know or do not follow Christ, but who follow another tradition, we cannot say. However, we can say that God is gracious and merciful, and that God will not deal with people in any other way than we see in Jesus Christ, who came as the Savior of the world. (Rev 7:9; Ps 103:8; John 3:19; Titus 2:11)

“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,” (Re 7:9 ESV)

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” (Ps 103:8 ESV)

“And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.” (Joh 3:19 ESV)

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,” (Tit 2:11 ESV)

10.5 How should a Christian treat non-Christians and people of other religions?

As much as possible, we should meet friendship with friendship, hostility with kindness, generosity with gratitude, persecution with forbearance, truth with agreement, and error with truth. We should express our faith with humility and devotion as the occasion requires, whether silently or

openly, boldly or meekly, by word or by deed. On the one hand, we should avoid compromising the truth, but on the other hand we should not refuse to listen to or engage with those who disagree with us. In short, we should always welcome and accept these others in a way that honors and reflects the Lord's welcome and acceptance of us as his followers. (Rom 15:7; Luke 6:37; Matt 5:44; Eph 4:25; Acts 13:47; Rom 12:21; Rom 13:10)

"Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." (Ro 15:7 ESV)

"Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;" (Lu 6:37 ESV)

"But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," (Mt 5:44 ESV)

"Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another." (Eph 4:25 ESV)

"For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." (Ac 13:47 ESV)

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Ro 12:21 ESV)

"Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." (Ro 13:10 ESV)

10.6 Why are Christians people of prayer?

Prayer means calling upon God, whose Spirit is always present with us, moving us to prayer. In prayer, we approach God with reverence, confidence and humility. Prayer involves both addressing God in praise, confession, thanksgiving and supplication, and listening for God's Word within our hearts and minds echoing his written word. Prayer brings us into communion with God. The more our lives are rooted in prayer, the more we sense how wonderful God is in grace, purity, majesty and love. Prayer means offering our lives completely to God, submitting ourselves to God's will, and waiting faithfully for God's grace. Through prayer, God frees us from anxiety, equips us for service, and deepens our faith. Through prayer, our minds and hearts are being conformed to God's will and heart. (Ps 48:1; 96:8-9; James 5:16; 1John 1:9; Ps 107:8; 75:1; 50:15; 145:18)

"«A SONG. A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH.» Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain," (Ps 48:1 ESV)

"8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts! 9 Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!" (Ps 96:8-9 ESV)

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." (Jas 5:16 ESV)

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1Jo 1:9 ESV)

“Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of men!” (Ps 107:8 ESV)

“«TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO DO NOT DESTROY. A PSALM OF ASAPH. A SONG.» We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks, for your name is near. We recount your wondrous deeds.” (Ps 75:1 ESV)

“and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.”” (Ps 50:15 ESV)

“The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.” (Ps 145:18 ESV)

10.7 Is prayer for the purpose of overcoming resistance from God or his neglect of us?

No. We do not pray to change God’s mind or to get God to do what he is reluctant to do. Rather, we pray to discern what God wills and wants. As we pray to the Father, the Spirit enables us to join with Jesus our High Priest in his prayers. Prayer is communion with our triune God. (Eph 6:18; Ps 62:8; 139:1; Phil 4:6; Matt 7:7-8)

“praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,” (Eph 6:18 ESV)

“Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. (Ps 62:8 ESV)

“«TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID.» O LORD, you have searched me and known me!” (Ps 139:1 ESV)

“do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” (Php 4:6 ESV)

“7 ¶ “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.” (Mt 7:7-8 ESV)

10.8 How does God respond to a Christian’s prayers?

God takes all our prayers into account, weighing them with divine wisdom, and responding to them by a perfect will. Although for the time being God’s answers may seem beyond our understanding, or even painful, we know nonetheless that they are always determined by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God answers our prayers, particularly for temporal blessings, only in ways that are compatible with the larger purposes of God’s glory and our salvation. Giving us communion with God is the heart of all the answers to all our prayers. (1John 5:14; James 1:17; Matt 6:33)

“And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.” (1Jo 5:14 ESV)

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” (Jas 1:17 ESV)

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Mt 6:33 ESV)

10.9 What encourages a Christian to pray each day?

The God who has adopted us as his children is the heavenly Father who encourages and commands us to pray. When we do, we are responding with love to that greater love which meets us from above. Before we enter into prayer, God is ready to grant all that we truly need. We may turn to God with confidence each day, not because we are worthy, but simply because of God's grace. By praying, we acknowledge that we depend on grace for all that is good, beautiful, life-giving and true. Prayer is an essential aspect of our relationship with our triune God as one of the fundamental disciplines of our life in Christ. (Is 65:24; Luke 11:12-13; Phil 4:8; Eph 3:20-21)

“Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear.” (Isa 65:24 ESV)

“12 or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Lu 11:12-13 ESV)

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (Php 4:8 ESV)

“20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Eph 3:20-21 ESV)

10.10 What prayer serves as the Christian's pattern for prayer?

In Matthew 6, Jesus gives us a pattern for prayer in what is commonly called The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. (Matt. 6:9-13, NKJV)

10.11 Why do we address God as “Father”?

In teaching us to pray this way, Jesus gave us permission to address God as Father as he does. We call God Father because he first is the eternal Father of the eternal Son. Then, through and with the Son, we too, as children adopted by grace, call God our Father. By addressing God as "our Father," as does the Son, we draw near with childlike reverence, and place ourselves securely in God's hands. We do not view God the Father in the way we view our human fathers, for God

the Father, as revealed to us in relationship to the Son, sets a standard that all human fathers fall short of.

10.12 What is meant by addressing God as "Our Father in heaven"?

Although God is everywhere, God is said to exist and dwell "in heaven." While God is free to enter into the closest relationship with the creature, God does not belong to the order of created beings. "Heaven" is the seat of divine authority in creation, the created place from which God reigns in glory and brings salvation to earth. Our opening address in The Lord's Prayer expresses our confidence that we rest securely in God's sovereign yet intimate care, and that nothing on earth lies beyond the reach of God's grace. (Rom 8:15; Jer 23:23-24; Acts 17:24-25)

"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" (Ro 8:15 ESV)

"23 'Am I a God at hand, declares the LORD, and not a God afar off? 24 Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD.'" (Jer 23:23-24 ESV)

"24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything." (Ac 17:24-25 ESV)

10.13 What is meant by the first petition, "Hallowed be your name"?

It is placed first because it comprehends the goal and purpose of the whole prayer. The glory of God's name is the highest concern in all that we pray and do. God's "name" stands for God's being as well as God's attributes, works and reputation. When we pray for his name to be "hallowed," we are asking that we and all others will know and glorify God as God really is, and that all things will be ordered in a way that demonstrates God's faithfulness, goodness and glory. (Jer 9:23-24; Rom 11:36; Ps 115:1)

"23 ¶ Thus says the LORD: 'Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.'" (Jer 9:23-24 ESV)

"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen." (Ro 11:36 ESV)

"Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!" (Ps 115:1 ESV)

10.14 What is meant by the second petition, "Your kingdom come"?

We are asking God to come and rule among us, helping us share in his ways through faith, love and justice. We pray for both the Church and the world that God will rule in our hearts through faith, in our personal relationships through love, and in our institutional affairs through justice.

We ask especially that the gospel will not be withheld from us, but rightly preached and received. We pray that the Church will be upheld and increase, particularly when in distress; and that all the world will more and more hear of and submit to God's reign, until the day that Christ establishes the fullness of the kingdom of God, and we live forever with God in perfect peace. (Ps 68:1; 2Thess 3:1; Rev 22:20; Rom 8:22-24; 1Cor 15:20, 28)

“«TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID. A SONG.» God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered; and those who hate him shall flee before him!” (Ps 68:1 ESV)

“Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you,” (2Th 3:1 ESV)

“He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Re 22:20 ESV)

“22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?” (Ro 8:22-24 ESV)

“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1Co 15:20 ESV)

“When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.” (1Co 15:28 ESV)

10.15 What is meant by the third petition, "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"?

All that God wills is consistent with the nature and character of the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ. Whatever God wills, he eventually brings to pass, whether we desire it or not. The phrase "on earth as it is in heaven" means that we are asking for the grace to do God's will on earth in the way that it is being done in heaven—gladly and from the heart. We thus ask that all opposition to God's will might be removed from the earth, and especially from our own hearts. We ask for the freedom to conform our desires and deeds more fully to God's, so that we might be completely delivered from our sin. We yield ourselves, in life and in death, to God's will. And we expectantly look forward to the day when heaven and earth will be reunited in the new heaven and earth. (Ps 119:34-36; 103:20, 22; Luke 22:42; Rom 12:2)

“34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. 35 ¶ Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. 36 Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!” (Ps 119:34-36 ESV)

“Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!” (Ps 103:20 ESV)

“Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!” (Ps 103:22 ESV)

"saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."" (Lu 22:42 ESV)

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Ro 12:2 ESV)

10.16 What is meant by the fourth petition, "Give us this day our daily bread"?

We ask God to provide for all our needs, for we know that God, who cares for us in every area of our life, has promised us temporal as well as spiritual blessings. God commands us to pray each day for all that we need and no more, so that we will learn to rely completely on God. We pray that we will use what we are given wisely, remembering especially the poor and needy. Along with every living creature, we look to God, the source of all generosity, to bless us and nourish us, according to the divine good pleasure. (Prov 30:8; Ps 90:17; 55:22; 72:4; 104:27-28)

"Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me," (Pr 30:8 ESV)

"Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!" (Ps 90:17 ESV)

"Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved." (Ps 55:22 ESV)

"May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor!" (Ps 72:4 ESV)

"27 These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. 28 When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things." (Ps 104:27-28 ESV)

10.17 What is meant by the fifth petition, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"?

We pray that a new and right spirit will be put within us. We ask for the grace to treat others, especially those who harm us, with the same mercy we have received from God. We remember our need to turn humbly to God daily for our own forgiveness. We know that our reception of that forgiveness can be blocked by our unwillingness to forgive others. We ask that we will not delight in doing evil, or in avenging any wrong, but that we will survive all cruelty without bitterness, and overcome evil with good, so that our hearts will be knit together with the mercy and forgiveness of God. (Matt 18:33; 6:14-15; Ps 51:10; 1John 2:1-2)

"And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" (Mt 18:33 ESV)

"14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Mt 6:14-15 ESV)

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” (Ps 51:10 ESV)

“1 ¶ My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1Jo 2:1-2 ESV)

10.18 What is meant by the sixth petition, “Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”?

We ask God to protect us from our worst impulses and from all external powers of destruction in the world that are attributable, ultimately to Satan, the evil one. We ask that we might not yield to despair in the face of seemingly hopeless circumstances. We pray for the grace to remember and believe, despite our unbelief, that no matter how bleak the world may sometimes seem, there is nonetheless a depth of love and hope that is deeper than our despair, and that this love — which delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt and raised our Lord Jesus from the dead — will finally swallow up forever all that would now seem to defeat it. We pray this because we know and trust that this is God’s will. (2Cor 4:8; Eph 3:19; Matt 26:41)

“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;” (2Co 4:8 ESV)

“and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Eph 3:19 ESV)

“Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Mt 26:41 ESV)

10.19 What is meant by the traditional closing doxology, “For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen”?

We give God thanks and praise for God’s present and coming kingdom that is more powerful than all enemies, for the power perfected in the weakness of love, and for the glory that includes our well-being and that of the whole creation, both now and to all eternity. We give thanks and praise to God who is made known to us through Christ our Lord and King who will reign over all forever, never to be defeated. (Rev 5:12; 4:11; 1Chron 29:11, 13)

“saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Re 5:12 ESV)

““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.” (Re 4:11 ESV)

“Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.” (1Ch 29:11 ESV)

“And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.” (1Ch 29:13 ESV)

Teaching Notes: The Christian

From The GCI Statement of Beliefs:

The Christian is any person who trusts in Jesus Christ. Christians experience new birth through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, embrace their adoption as children of God and enter a right relationship with God and fellow humans by God's grace as they are empowered and led by the Holy Spirit. The Christian's life is characterized by the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Here are GCI articles that address issues related to this section of We Believe:

- Do All Religions Lead to God? (at gci.org/gospel/pluralism)
- Is Jesus the Only Way of Salvation? (at gci.org/disc/18-onlyway)
- Prayer: When You Don't Know What to Say... (at gci.org/prayer/what2say)
- Yes, God Hears! (at gci.org/gospel/christianity5)

Section 11: The Gospel

11.1 What is the gospel?

The gospel is the good news of the kingdom of God and salvation by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. To preach the gospel is to proclaim the fulfillment of God's purposes through the sending of the eternal Son of God in the power of the Holy Spirit to break into our fallen world, overthrow its evil, and transform and redeem all who were captive to sin and evil's power and eternal consequences.

11.2 What are the central events of the gospel?

The central events of the gospel are about Jesus: his birth, life, ministry, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and ascension. Through these events in the life of Jesus, God's kingdom has broken into our time and space to bring about our salvation. (1Cor 15:1-4; Romans 5:15; John 1:12; 1John 5:11-12)

"1 ¶ Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures," (1Co 15:1-4 ESV)

"But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many." (Ro 5:15 ESV)

"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God," (Joh 1:12 ESV)

"11 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1Jo 5:11-12 ESV)

11.3 Is the forgiveness declared in the gospel extended only after repentance?

No. The gospel is the astonishing good news that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God's forgiveness of us is unconditional, and it is given before our confession of sin and repentance. Freed by the Holy Spirit in response to the Word of God, repentance is how we receive the forgiveness that has already been freely given to us on the basis of Christ's atoning work on the cross. To refuse to repent is thus to refuse God's gift of forgiveness. (Col 3:13; Mark 11:25; Col 2:13; Matt 18:21-22; Heb 12:14)

"bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." (Col 3:13 ESV)

"And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." (Mr 11:25 ESV)

"And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses," (Col 2:13 ESV)

"21 ¶ Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven." (Mt 18:21-22 ESV)

"Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." (Heb 12:14 ESV)

11.4 How should we respond to the gospel?

With repentance and faith. The Son of God was sent by the Father to assume our human nature to himself and to rescue and transform it in himself. This was done to reconcile us to God so that we might become his beloved adopted children. Jesus Christ came, lived and died for our sins and has made us his own before and apart from our believing in him. He has bound us to himself by his love in such a way that he will never let us go. Therefore, the Lord calls on all humans to repent and believe in him as Lord and Savior. (Rom 10:9-10; Acts 16:31)

"9 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. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." (Ro 10:9-10 ESV)

"And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Ac 16:31 ESV)

11.5 If sin is so evil, how can God forgive it?

God forgives our sins because he has the grace and power to overcome them and set things right. In forgiving our sins, God is not overlooking or ignoring evil. God is opposed to sin and evil and always will be. God judges what is sinful and evil and condemns it. By forgiving us, God rescues us from the dominion and eternal consequences of sin, making all things new, including our human nature.

11.6 How does God make human nature new?

Our problem as humans is not merely that we sin, but that, by nature, we are sinners. We have a corrupt, fallen nature that is inclined toward sin, often not able to resist temptation to sin. That

is the bad news. But the good news is that God has remade human nature in and through the eternal Son of God who, in becoming human, took upon himself our corrupt human nature and healed it on our behalf. (2Cor 8:9; Heb 2:17)

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." (2Co 8:9 ESV)

"Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." (Heb 2:17 ESV)

11.7 What part does the Holy Spirit have in this renewal?

Because Jesus renewed human nature, the Holy Spirit is able to minister to us as individuals on the basis of Christ's finished work, uniting us to Jesus with his perfected human nature in a spiritual union. Through this union, the Holy Spirit imparts to us a continuous sharing in Jesus' love and life so that we are transformed, little by little, into the image of God found in Jesus. (2Cor 3:18)

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." (2Co 3:18 ESV)

11.8 How can anyone resist the Holy Spirit's bringing about this transformation?

No one can entirely resist the Holy Spirit. In the end the Holy Spirit will make clear and evident to all the truth and reality that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior of all. In the end, all will either willingly or unwillingly admit the truth that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. However, Scripture warns of the real danger of willfully rejecting, and thus blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Apparently, some will do this, even after being convicted of the Holy Spirit's undeniable witness that Jesus is Lord and Savior and there is no other. Exactly how this rejection is possible we are not told. We are simply warned of its possibility, which we are to take seriously lest we resist the Holy Spirit, presume upon God's grace and minimize the many directives in Scripture to accept, receive and respond positively in repentance and faith to the proclamation of the grace of God in Jesus Christ that comes to us by his Word and Spirit. (Mark 3:29; Rom 14:11)

"but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"—" (Mr 3:29 ESV)

"for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." (Ro 14:11 ESV)

Teaching Notes: The Gospel

From The GCI Statement of Beliefs:

The gospel is the good news of the kingdom of God and salvation by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. It is the message that Christ died for our sins and has made us his own before and apart from our believing in him and has bound us to himself by his love in such a way that he will never let us go. Therefore, he calls on all humans to repent and believe in him as Lord and Savior.

*There are multiple ways to summarize the essential message and meaning of the gospel. The one in We Believe is based on The GCI Statement of Beliefs quoted above. **Here is another similar statement:***

The gospel is the message concerning the rule and reign of God's incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, to bring clear judgement upon all evil, condemning it forever and atoning for the sins of all humanity through his life of faithful obedience culminating in his death on the cross. The gospel is the declaration of the victory of God in Jesus Christ to undo all sinful alienation between God and humanity and to reconcile the world to himself.

Key to understanding the gospel is understanding the Person and work of the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, and the nature of the kingdom of God that he inaugurated and will bring to fullness— so refer back to those sections for the details.

Here are GCI articles on the topic of the gospel:

- Believing the Gospel (at gci.org/gospel/believing)
- Here's Good News for Everyone (at gci.org/gospel-tract)
- The Gospel Really is Good News (at gci.org/gospel/reallyis)
- Good News for Ordinary People (at gci.org/gospel/badpeople)
- The Gospel: It's Not Fair! (at gci.org/gospel/notfair)
- The Kingdom of God (at gci.org/god/kingdom)

Section 12: God's Grace

12.1 What is God's grace?

All that the triune God does toward his creation is good and right, and it is all done freely. That is grace. God's grace, which is free and unmerited, arises out of God's eternal nature and character. God's grace is expressed in everything God does. The deepest and most costly expression of grace is the Father's redemption of sinful and rebellious humanity and the entire cosmos from the power of sin and its ultimate consequence, death. This redemption was accomplished through the incarnation and atoning death of Jesus Christ. By grace, the Holy Spirit now frees and empowers humans to repent of unbelief and to know, have faith in, love and worship the Father and Jesus Christ and thereby experience the joy of eternal salvation in the

kingdom of God. (Eph 2:8-9; 1 John 2:1-2; Col 1:20; Rom 11:32; 8:19-21; 3:24; 5:2, 15-17, 21; John 1:12; Titus 3:7)

“8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Eph 2:8-9 ESV)

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1 ESV)

“1 ¶ On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.” (Joh 2:1-2 ESV)

“and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” (Col 1:20 ESV)

“For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.” (Ro 11:32 ESV)

“19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” (Ro 8:19-21 ESV)

“and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” (Ro 3:24 ESV)

“Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Ro 5:2 ESV)

“15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. 16 And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. 17 If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.” (Ro 5:15-17 ESV)

“so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Ro 5:21 ESV)

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,” (Joh 1:12 ESV)

“so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Tit 3:7 ESV)

12.2 Why do all people need God’s grace?

Because all humans are sinners and cannot set themselves free from the power of sin or sin’s ultimate consequences, which are alienation from God and death. All people need the good news that God loves us unconditionally, has forgiven our sins, and has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ. That good news (the gospel) includes the invitation to receive, by faith in Christ, all

the benefits of living under God's grace by the Holy Spirit. While we should not cease to pray to God for mercy, we can, in faith, be confident that God has forgiven us and that he is at work freeing us from all our sins. By grace we can confess our sins, repent of them, and grow in love and knowledge day by day. By confession and repentance we receive, as often as needed, the grace of God freely given to us. (Mark 7:21-23; 1John 3:8; Eph 2:2; Gal 5:19-21; Rom 6:23; 3:23-24; Eph 2:12-13; Ps 14:3; Eph 2:8; Ps 130:3-4; Col 1:13-14; 1John 1:8)

"21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person." (Mr 7:21-23 ESV)

"Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil." (1Jo 3:8 ESV)

"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—" (Eph 2:2 ESV)

"19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Ga 5:19-21 ESV)

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ro 6:23 ESV)

"23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," (Ro 3:23-24 ESV)

"12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." (Eph 2:12-13 ESV)

"They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one." (Ps 14:3 ESV)

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God," (Eph 2:8 ESV)

"3 If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? 4 But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared." (Ps 130:3-4 ESV)

"13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Col 1:13-14 ESV)

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1Jo 1:8 ESV)

12.3 What is forgiveness of sin?

Through the incarnation and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, God has taken responsibility to overcome evil and put all things right. Because of Christ, God no longer holds our sins against us. Christ alone is our righteousness and our life; he is our only hope. Grace alone, not any merits of our own, is the basis on which God has forgiven us in Christ. Faith alone, not our works, is the means by which we receive Christ into our hearts, and with him the forgiveness that makes us whole. Christ alone, grace alone, and faith alone bring the forgiveness from God that is attested to in the gospel. (1Cor 1:30; 1Tim 1:1; Rom 11:6; Eph 1:10; 2:8; Rom 5:15; 4:16; 3:28)

“He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” (1Co 1:30 ESV)

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,” (1Ti 1:1 ESV)

“But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.” (Ro 11:6 ESV)

“as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” (Eph 1:10 ESV)

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,” (Eph 2:8 ESV)

“But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.” (Ro 5:15 ESV)

“That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,” (Ro 4:16 ESV)

“For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.” (Ro 3:28 ESV)

12.4 Does forgiveness mean that God condones sin?

No. God never approves of sin. Although God is merciful, God does not condone what God forgives. In the death and resurrection of Christ, God judges what God abhors—everything hostile to holy love—by abolishing it at its roots. Because God is for his creatures, he must be against all that is against them. Evil thus has no future. In this judgment the unexpected occurs: good is forcibly (not naturally) brought out of evil circumstances, hope out of hopelessness, and life out of death. God spares sinners who welcome God’s judgment and his condemnation of all sin and evil, including their own, which was accomplished in Jesus Christ. God turns them from enemies into friends. The uncompromising judgment of God to do away with all evil and its consequences is revealed in the suffering love of the cross. (Hab 1:13; Is 59:15; Heb 9:22; Rom 5:8-10; 1Chron 16:33)

"You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and are silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?" (Hab 1:13 ESV)

"Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice." (Isa 59:15 ESV)

"Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." (Heb 9:22 ESV)

"8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." (Ro 5:8-10 ESV)

"Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth." (1Ch 16:33 ESV)

12.5 Does our forgiveness of those who have harmed us depend on their repentance?

No. We are to forgive as we have been forgiven. The gospel is the astonishing good news that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Just as God's forgiveness of us is unconditional, and precedes our confession of sin and our repentance, so our forgiveness of those who have harmed us does not depend on them confessing and repenting of their sin. However, when we forgive the person who has done us harm, giving up any resentment or desire to retaliate, we do not condone the harm that was done, nor do we excuse the evil of the sin. Rather, we trust in God's judgement upon the evil, the power of his redemption, and in the hopeful rescue and transformation of all who have done evil. (Col 3:13; Mark 11:25; Col 2:13; Matt 18:21-22; Heb 12:14)

"bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." (Col 3:13 ESV)

"And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." (Mr 11:25 ESV)

"And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses," (Col 2:13 ESV)

"21 ¶ Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven." (Mt 18:21-22 ESV)

"Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." (Heb 12:14 ESV)

12.6 How can people forgive those who have hurt them badly?

Without the grace that comes from above, we cannot love our enemies, we cannot pray for those who persecute us, we cannot even be ready to forgive those who have hurt us badly. We cannot be conformed to the image of God's Son apart from the power of God's Word and Spirit. Yet we are promised that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. We never forgive others in our own names, but only in the name of Jesus. In our forgiveness, we trust that God has not allowed us to experience anything that in the end cannot be put right and redeemed. In our forgiveness, we hand over those who have sinned against us to God's own gracious judgment in the hope that they will one day submit to God's judgment, repent of their evil, die to themselves and be transformed by God's grace, just as we have. (Luke 6:27-28; James 1:17; Rom 8:29; Phil 4:13)

"27 ¶ "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." (Lu 6:27-28 ESV)

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." (Jas 1:17 ESV)

"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." (Ro 8:29 ESV)

"I can do all things through him who strengthens me." (Php 4:13 ESV)

Teaching Notes: God's Grace

From The GCI Statement of Beliefs:

God's grace is free and unmerited and is expressed in everything he does. By grace, the Father redeemed humanity and the entire cosmos from sin and death through Jesus Christ, and by grace, the Holy Spirit empowers humans to know and love the Father and Jesus Christ and thereby experience the joy of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God.

Here are GCI articles on the topic of grace:

- Too Much Grace? (at gci.org/gospel/toomuch)
- Grace and Obedience (at gci.org/gospel/obedience)

Section 13: Sin

13.1 What is sin?

Sin is the state of alienation from God of all humanity and consists of anything that is contrary to God's will, including acts of wrongdoing, neglect to do good, and unbelief in the God of grace and love as made known in Jesus Christ. At its root, sin is distrust or unbelief in the goodness and faithfulness of God and his Word. It indicates a broken relationship with God and issues in lives that misrepresent God and his good purposes for human beings. Sin is refusal, in whole or in part, to live in dependence upon God for our meaning, significance, identity, purpose and destiny. It is a refusal to worship God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to be his faithful

representative or witness in all we do, think and say towards all. In sin we put our ultimate trust in idols—in that which is not God. (1John 3:4; James 4:17; Rom 14:23; 5:12, 17-19; 7:24-25)

“Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.” (1Jo 3:4 ESV)

“So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” (Jas 4:17 ESV)

“But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.” (Ro 14:23 ESV)

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—” (Ro 5:12 ESV)

“17 If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. 18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. 19 For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” (Ro 5:17-19 ESV)

“24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.” (Ro 7:24-25 ESV)

13.2 Why is sin so bad?

The Bible associates sin with the devil, whose work Jesus came to destroy. Sin results in damaged relationships, suffering and death. Sin in act, word or thought bears false witness to the character of God and is rebellion against the good and right purposes for which God created human beings and their relationships with one another and his good creation. Out of distrust and unbelief in God and his Word, we sin in our attempt to live as if we could justify ourselves, having no need for God’s goodness, grace and mercy. Acting out of unbelief, sin amounts to living the lie that we can have life and being apart from God, as if we could be gods to and for ourselves—as if we could gain life from sources other than the living God. Sin slanders God’s holy character, trustworthiness and good purposes for human beings. (Mark 7:21-23; 1John 3:8; Eph 2:2)

“21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”” (Mr 7:21-23 ESV)

“Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.” (1Jo 3:8 ESV)

“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—” (Eph 2:2 ESV)

13.3 If Jesus Christ has already conquered the devil and sin, why is there still so much evil in the world?

No one can say why, for evil is a terrible abyss beyond rational explanation. Its ultimate origin is obscure and its enormity perplexes us. It is, most simply, what ought not to be. Nevertheless, we boldly affirm that God's triumph over evil is certain. In Jesus Christ, God suffers with us, knowing all our sorrows. In raising him from the dead, God gives new hope to the world. Our Lord Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is himself God's promise that suffering will come to an end, that death shall be no more, that evil has no future, and that all things will be made new. (Ps 23:4; 1Pet 1:3; 2Pet 3:13; Rom 8:21; Job 19:25)

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." (Ps 23:4 ESV)

"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," (1Pe 1:3 ESV)

"But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." (2Pe 3:13 ESV)

"that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." (Ro 8:21 ESV)

"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth." (Job 19:25 ESV)

Teaching Notes: Sin

From The GCI Statement of Beliefs:

Sin is the state of alienation from God of all humanity and consists of anything that is contrary to God's will, including acts of wrongdoing, neglect to do good and unbelief in the God of grace and love as made known in Jesus Christ. The Bible associates sin with the devil, whose work Jesus came to destroy. Sin results in damaged relationships, suffering and death. Because all humans are sinners, all humans need the good news that God loves them unconditionally and has forgiven their sins and reconciled them to himself through Jesus Christ.

Here are GCI articles on the topic of sin:

- Trusting God with the Problem of Sin (at gci.org/gospel/trustgod)
- Does God Want to Punish Sinners, or to Rescue Them? (at gci.org/bible/rom1b)

Section 14: Faith, Salvation & Repentance

Faith

14.1 What is faith in God?

Faith in God is a gift of God, rooted in Jesus and enlightened by the witness of the Spirit in the Holy Scriptures. Through faith, God prepares and enables our minds to share in Christ's knowledge and trust in God the Father by the Spirit. Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith. To have faith is to respond with trust and love to who Jesus is revealed to be according to the gospel. (Eph 2:8; Rom 12:3; 10:17; Heb 11:1; Rom 5:1-2; 1:17; 3:21-28; 11:6; Eph 3:12; 1Cor 2:5; Heb 12:2)

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God," (Eph 2:8 ESV)

“For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.” (Ro 12:3 ESV)

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” (Ro 10:17 ESV)

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Heb 11:1 ESV)

“1 ¶ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Ro 5:1-2 ESV)

“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”” (Ro 1:17 ESV)

“21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. 27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.” (Ro 3:21-28 ESV)

“But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.” (Ro 11:6 ESV)

“in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.” (Eph 3:12 ESV)

“that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” (1Co 2:5 ESV)

“looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb 12:2 ESV)

14.2 Is Christian faith irrational?

No. Faith is the kind of knowledge that results from the open and personal consideration of the revelation of God given through the Person of Jesus and the testimony to that revelation in the Holy Scriptures. Faith has an object that can be known and understood, namely the objective revelation that culminates in the Person and teaching of Jesus Christ. Faith is the personal knowledge of God based on God’s own achievement of self-revelation. As such it is public knowledge.

14.3 Is Christian faith purely subjective?

No. Christian faith is not the result of an act of will or the decision of an individual to affirm or assume something. Faith is a response to the object of revelation, conveyed primarily through hearing, not seeing. Faith has a subjective aspect that is required for all knowledge. Faith involves the humility and at least a mustard seed of trust that corresponds to hearing the truth of what is revealed in God's Word, both living and written. That mustard seed of trust and humility is a gift of the Holy Spirit who works in our subjectivity, but is not our subjectivity or subjective states.

14.4 Is there any mystery to Christian faith?

Yes. In the New Testament, a "mystery" refers to what human beings can come to know only by God's gracious act of revelation. In that sense, mystery does not mean what cannot be known but what must be revealed by God. Though there are things God has not revealed, God is faithful and wants to be known. What he reveals to us is not in any way misleading. As we contemplate God's revelation, we do so knowing there is more depth to it than we are able to grasp. Though we can apprehend God's revelation, we cannot fully comprehend it. (John 1:18; Col 1:27; Eph 3:3-5; 1Cor 2:9-11; Deut 29:29)

"No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." (Joh 1:18 ESV)

"To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col 1:27 ESV)

"3 how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. 4 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." (Eph 3:3-5 ESV)

"9 But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"— 10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God." (1Co 2:9-11 ESV)

""The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." (De 29:29 ESV)

Salvation

14.5 What is salvation?

It is the restoration of human communion with God and the deliverance of the entire creation from the bondage of sin and death. In saving us, God grants us reconciliation with him, forgiveness of sins, adoption into his family, citizenship in his kingdom, union with him in Christ, new life in the Spirit and the promise of eternal life. (2Cor 5:17-19; Col 1:13-14; Gal 4:4-7; Eph 2:19-21; Rom 6:3-5; Titus 3:4-5; John 3:16)

"17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (2Co 5:17-19 ESV)

"13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Col 1:13-14 ESV)

"4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God." (Ga 4:4-7 ESV)

"19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord." (Eph 2:19-21 ESV)

"3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." (Ro 6:3-5 ESV)

"4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit," (Tit 3:4-5 ESV)

""For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (Joh 3:16 ESV)

14.6 Why is salvation needed?

Ever since the first human beings, the human race has rebelled and distrusted the perfect goodness and holy love of the triune God and therefore alienated themselves from their Creator and rejected the fellowship they were created to have with him as their God. As a result, the human race has:

- Cut itself off from the source of its life and existence, resulting in physical death and subjecting itself to eternal spiritual death.
- Promoted a lie about the nature and character of the triune God their maker, bearing false witness to God's name and reputation by rejecting his faithfulness, goodness, grace and holiness.
- Undermined and at times even attempted to destroy the faith, hope and love for God and so stop the good, right and life-giving worship of the triune God by others, thereby incurring spiritual guilt and shame before God, which only God himself can remedy and has done so in the atoning work of Christ.
- Exposed itself to being manipulated by and enslaved to the power of sin from which it cannot free itself, leading to the corruption, warping and twisting of human nature itself, which it cannot undo.
- Experienced disharmony between the human soul, mind and body, leading to broken and even destructive and evil relationships between parents and children, between men and women, between nations and ethnic groups, and between human beings and the natural environment.

14.7 How are people saved?

Salvation is accomplished for us through the life and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Salvation is freely given to us by the grace of our triune God. It is personally received and experienced through faith in Jesus enabled by the ministry of the Spirit. It is not earned by good works or through personal merit. (Rom 8:21-23; 6:18, 22-23; 1Cor 1:9; 1Tim 2:3-6; Matt 3:17; Col 3:1; Eph 2:4-10)

"21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." (Ro 8:21-23 ESV)

"and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness." (Ro 6:18 ESV)

"22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ro 6:22-23 ESV)

"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1Co 1:9 ESV)

"3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time." (1Ti 2:3-6 ESV)

"and behold, a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'"" (Mt 3:17 ESV)

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." (Col 3:1 ESV)

"4 ¶ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Eph 2:4-10 ESV)

14.8 Is there any way of salvation other than through Jesus Christ?

No. The apostle Peter said of Jesus that "salvation is found in no one else" (Acts 4:12). Jesus is the only one who can save us from our damaged and twisted nature and reconcile us to God so that we can live according to God's ultimate purposes for human beings. He is the only one who can enable us to share in God's eternal life, free from the power of evil and its consequence, which is death. (1Tim. 2:5)

"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," (1Ti 2:5 ESV)

14.9 Will all people be saved?

All who call upon the Lord will be saved. No one who seeks after God will be turned away. God's work of atonement was accomplished for the benefit of all. Jesus is Lord and Savior over all persons, though Scripture does not say that all people will necessarily receive the salvation that is theirs in Christ, or that none will irreversibly reject the ministry of the Holy Spirit to unite them to Christ. Salvation is the fruit of a relationship with the triune God—a gift that is complete in Jesus and that must, through the work of the Spirit, be personally received in order for its benefits, especially eternal life in eternal communion with God, to be fully enjoyed. (Heb 10:31; Rom 11:32; Matt 18:12-14; Eph 2:8; 1Tim 2:3-4; John 3:17-18; Ezek 18:32; 2Cor 5:14-15)

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb 10:31 ESV)

"For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all." (Ro 11:32 ESV)

"12 What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? 13 And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. 14 So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." (Mt 18:12-14 ESV)

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God," (Eph 2:8 ESV)

"3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1Ti 2:3-4 ESV)

"17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." (Joh 3:17-18 ESV)

"For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live." (Eze 18:32 ESV)

"14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." (2Co 5:14-15 ESV)

14.10 Through salvation, do humans eventually become God? No. Though ultimate salvation does not make us God (or parts of God), it does give us a full sharing in the sanctified and glorified humanity of Jesus Christ. We remain human, becoming fully and truly human as Jesus was and still is. Through the incarnate Son of God, we enjoy union and communion with the whole of God, while remaining fully human.

Repentance

14.11 What is repentance toward God?

It is a change of mind and attitude in response to the grace of God prompted by the Holy Spirit and grounded in the Word of God. Repentance includes awareness of personal sinfulness as well as trust in and allegiance to Jesus Christ, through whom all humanity has been reconciled to God.

Repentance accompanies the new life sanctified by the Spirit through faith in Jesus. In repentance, we reject all attempts to justify ourselves, turning instead to God to receive our lives and righteousness from him as free gifts of his grace. We turn away from all evil and call upon God to open our eyes to deception and give us strength to resist all temptation. (Acts 2:38; 2Cor 5:15, 18-19; Rom 2:4; 10:17; Col 1:19-20; Rom 12:2)

"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.' (Ac 2:38 ESV)

"and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." (2Co 5:15 ESV)

"18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (2Co 5:18-19 ESV)

"Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" (Ro 2:4 ESV)

"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." (Ro 10:17 ESV)

"19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." (Col 1:19-20 ESV)

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Ro 12:2 ESV)

14.12 How may a person repent and place their faith in Jesus Christ?

Anyone may do so at any time. One way is by sincerely saying a prayer similar to this: (John 15:16; Acts 16:31-34; Rom 10:9; Heb 12:12)

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you." (Joh 15:16 ESV)

"31 And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' 32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. 34 Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God." (Ac 16:31-34 ESV)

"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." (Ro 10:9 ESV)

"Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees," (Heb 12:12 ESV)

Father, I confess my faults, shortcomings, sins, and rebellious acts, and ask you to forgive me. I embrace you, Lord Jesus, as my Savior and Lord. Thank you for your atoning death on the cross in obedience to your Father's will to put away my sins. I enthrone you, Lord Jesus, to be in charge of every part of my life, and I ask you to indwell and empower me with your Holy Spirit, so that I may live as your faithful follower from now on.

In Jesus name, amen.

Teaching Notes: Faith, Salvation & Repentance

Concerning repentance:

Through repentance, we stop attempting to contract with God, or to make deals with God to get him to bless us. We stop attempting to get our identity, security, significance and destiny from anything or anyone else, much less from ourselves. We no longer live for ourselves.

Why do we need to be saved?

Without the ministry of the Holy Spirit, humans do not trust wholeheartedly in God as Lord who alone is worthy of worship. By nature, we do not welcome being God's creatures, nor do we embrace God's design for human life and the wisdom of following his ways. We do not implicitly trust in God's goodness and judgments about what is evil. We do not freely receive God's grace, as our dependence upon him offends our pride of self-sufficiency. We do not gratefully receive all of his blessings, including daily lifelong communion with God and a share of God's own goodness and rightness, justice and mercy to pass on to others. God must work individually in our lives through his Son and by his Spirit to give us renewed hearts, minds and wills set free from bondage to our self-will, our prideful commitment to autonomy, and our distrust and unbelief in God our creator and redeemer.

Will all be saved?

The Holy Spirit's ministry is to set all free with the freedom won for them in Jesus Christ. But the biblical warnings require us to take seriously the almost impossible possibility that some people might somehow refuse the freedom the Spirit brings to them to surrender to the grace of God in Jesus Christ and receive all the benefits of living in a good and right worship relationship with God in which we receive his forgiveness by faith and accept his free gift of salvation daily and so live under his lordship. The limits to salvation, whatever they may be, are known only to God. Three truths above all are certain: 1) God is a holy God who is not to be trifled with, 2) no one will be saved except by grace alone, and 3) no judge could possibly be more gracious than our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. If some do manage to resist the Holy Spirit and reject God's forgiveness and grace stored up for them in Jesus Christ, it will not be due to any lack or limits to God's gracious provision made for all.

Here are GCI articles that address the topics in this section:

- Another Look at Faith (at gci.org/spiritual/faith2)
- What is Salvation? (at gci.org/disc/16-salvation)

- Getting a Grip on Repentance (at gci.org/gospel/repentance)

From The GCI Statement of Beliefs:

Faith in God is a gift of God, rooted in Jesus Christ and enlightened by the witness of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. Through faith, God prepares and enables our minds to participate in Jesus Christ's communion with the Father by the Spirit. Jesus Christ is the Author and Perfecter of our faith.

Salvation is the restoration of human fellowship with God and the deliverance of the entire creation from the bondage of sin and death. Salvation is given by the grace of God and experienced through faith in Jesus Christ, not earned by personal merit or good works. God calls on every person to enter that divine fellowship, which has been secured for humanity in Jesus Christ and is embodied by him as the beloved of the Father at the Father's right hand.

Repentance toward God is a change of mind and attitude in response to the grace of God prompted by the Holy Spirit and grounded in the Word of God. It includes awareness of personal sinfulness and trust in and allegiance to Jesus Christ through whom all humanity has been reconciled to God and accompanies a new life sanctified by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ. Savior, Jesus Christ. If some do manage to resist the Holy Spirit and reject God's forgiveness and grace stored up for them in Jesus Christ, it will not be due to any lack or limits to God's gracious provision made for all.

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Section 15: The Christian Life

15.1 What should a person do once they have turned to God for salvation in repentance and faith? If they have not already been baptized, they should, following proper instruction, be baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus, and thus into membership in his body, the Church. (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 12:13)

"19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Mt 28:19-20 ESV)

"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit." (1Co 12:13 ESV)

15.2 What does God desire to accomplish in a Christian's life?

God first draws us into a deepening and personal worship relationship with him. His desire in doing so is that, through the relationship, we will be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, under the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, which are the infallible and final authority in all matters of faith and practice (Christian living). (2Cor 3:18)

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." (2Co 3:18 ESV)

15.3 How are Christians to conduct their lives?

The life of a Christian is characterized by trust in and loving allegiance to Jesus, who loved us and gave himself for us. Trust in Jesus is expressed by belief in the gospel, by baptism, and through participation in our Lord's works of love. Through the Spirit, Jesus transforms the hearts of believers, producing in them his love, joy, peace, faithfulness, meekness, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control, righteousness and truth. (1John 3:16, 23-24; 4:20-21; 2Cor 5:15; Eph 2:10; Gal 5:6, 22-23; Eph 5:9; John 14:23-26; Col 1:9-12; Eph 5:1-2; Rom 12:9-21)

"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers." (1Jo 3:16 ESV)

"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. 24 Whoever keeps his commandments abides in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us." (1Jo 3:23-24 ESV)

"20 If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother." (1Jo 4:20-21 ESV)

"and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." (2Co 5:15 ESV)

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Eph 2:10 ESV)

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love." (Ga 5:6 ESV)

"22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." (Ga 5:22-23 ESV)

"(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true)," (Eph 5:9 ESV)

"23 Jesus answered him, 'If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. 25 ¶ 'These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.' (Joh 14:23-26 ESV)

"9 ¶ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. 11 May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, 12 ¶ giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col 1:9-12 ESV)

"1 ¶ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." (Eph 5:1-2 ESV)

"9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited. 17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' 20 To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Ro 12:9-21 ESV)

15.4 How does God accomplish this transformation in a Christian's life?

God transforms us over time through corporate worship (including Word and sacrament), private worship (including prayer, Bible reading and study), fellowship with God's people, pursuit of holiness of life, witness toward those who do not know Christ, and acts of love toward all. All these take effect in us only by the ministry of the Holy Spirit who frees and enables us to share in the regenerated and renewed humanity of Jesus Christ. (Acts 2:42; Heb 10:23-25)

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Ac 2:42 ESV)

"23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Heb 10:23-25 ESV)

15.5 What are the dynamics of the Christian life?

They can be summed up in the biblical terms of justification, sanctification and glorification. Together these three describe the complete Christian life. All three are already complete for us in Jesus' glorified human nature—thus joined together in Jesus and received from him through our trusting him to provide us our complete salvation: justification, sanctification and ultimate glorification. (1Cor 1:30 ESV)

"He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption." (1Co 1:30 ESV)

15.6 What is justification?

Justification marks the fact of our being both forgiven by and reconciled to God—sharing in Jesus' right relationship with the triune God. As we come to first recognize this truth and reality, we begin to affirm and trust in the free gift of our justification. We live in confidence that God has indeed reconciled us to himself, holding nothing against us. We draw near to God because he has reconciled us to himself by his grace. (Rom 3:25; 4:25; 5:16-18; 8:30; 1Cor 1:30; 2Cor 5:21; Is 53:5)

"whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins." (Ro 3:25 ESV)

"who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." (Ro 4:25 ESV)

"16 And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. 17 If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. 18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men." (Ro 5:16-18 ESV)

"And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." (Ro 8:30 ESV)

"He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption." (1Co 1:30 ESV)

"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2Co 5:21 ESV)

"But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed." (Isa 53:5 ESV)

15.7 What is sanctification?

Sanctification is the dynamic relationship with God that begins to take place as we receive the good news of our justification. By the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, we begin to share more in the life of Christ—growing deeper in relationship with him, trusting more and more in him in every situation in life, and so becoming more and more conformed to him. (Heb 2:11; 10:10, 14; 12:10, 14; Eph 4:24; 1Cor 1:30; 2Cor 7:1)

"For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers," (Heb 2:11 ESV)

"And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Heb 10:10 ESV)

"For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified." (Heb 10:14 ESV)

"For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness." (Heb 12:10 ESV)

"Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." (Heb 12:14 ESV)

"and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." (Eph 4:24 ESV)

"He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption." (1Co 1:30 ESV)

"Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God." (2Co 7:1 ESV)

15.8 What is glorification?

Sanctification anticipates receiving from Christ our glorification, which completes our sanctification. While our sanctification points to or leads to our glorification, it will not be fully experienced until we pass through death and Christ returns. Only then, in the new heaven and new earth in the age to come, will we benefit fully in Christ and so share fully in his glorified human nature for all eternity. (Rom 8:30; 1Cor 15:42, 49; Rev 20:5-6; Phil 3:10-11)

"And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." (Ro 8:30 ESV)

"So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable." (1Co 15:42 ESV)

"Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven." (1Co 15:49 ESV)

"5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years." (Re 20:5-6 ESV)

"that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death," (Php 3:10 ESV)

15.9 What is the Christian life like for us now?

In the time period between Jesus' first and second advents, the Christian life is one of growth, of transformation from one degree of glory to another. We are like clay vessels with the glory of Christ shining through. This means that, to some degree, we will experience dying with Christ and suffering with him. It will also involve being renewed and restored in faith, hope and love. We will not live ideal lives. We will experience grief and sorrow. We will experience some opposition, challenges and possibly even persecution. We will need to repent. We will never reach a plateau of coasting along. It will always involve being deliberate, striving and being renewed. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are in a transitional time of growing up ("becoming") in Christ, and being continually renewed in Christ. (Rom 8:29; 12:2; 2Cor 3:18; Eph 1:18; 3:19; 4:13; Col 2:10; 3:10)

"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." (Ro 8:29 ESV)

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Ro 12:2 ESV)

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." (2Co 3:18 ESV)

"having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints," (Eph 1:18 ESV)

"and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Eph 3:19 ESV)

"until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," (Eph 4:13 ESV)

"and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority." (Col 2:10 ESV)

"and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." (Col 3:10 ESV)

15.10 Can we measure or exactly mark our progress in the Christian life?

No. Nor is there a need to do so. The Christian life involves a turning away from all that blocks or leads us away from receiving daily God's transforming and healing grace—turning towards him in renewed faith, hope and love. This is true for all no matter how far along a person is in their journey with Jesus. It's always a matter of turning and facing in the right direction—towards Christ and his high calling to walk towards him and with him. (1Thess 1:3; 5:8; Phil 2:12)

"remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." (1Th 1:3 ESV)

"But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation." (1Th 5:8 ESV)

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," (Php 2:12 ESV)

15.11 Why do we not necessarily make consistent and inevitable progress in the Christian life?

Because we live between Christ's first and second advents, we are in a time of transition and so our human natures are still prone to temptation by sin. The power of sin, still at work in the world, seeks to pull us away from God toward evil. We now have only the "down payment" or "first fruits" of the Holy Spirit and do not yet share fully in the glorified humanity of Jesus. The fullness of our sharing in Jesus Christ's fully-sanctified human nature will occur only after our death or upon his personal return, when he will fully manifest his kingdom in a new heaven and earth. (Eph 6:12)

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (Eph 6:12 ESV)

15.12 How do we resist temptations to pull away from God?

Scripture exhorts us to rely on our union with Christ and find our identity in belonging to Christ, body and soul. Secure in Christ, we place ourselves in trusting submission to God's Word and Spirit. We then expend effort, seeking support, encouragement and resources to "side" with the Holy Spirit's promptings, guidance and assurance so that we may participate in the renewed human natures that we have complete in Jesus. (Phil 1:6)

"And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." (Php 1:6 ESV)

15.13 Why should Christians obey God?

Not to win God's love, for God already loves us. Not to earn salvation, for Jesus Christ has already earned it for us. Not to avoid punishment, for then we would obey out of fear. Rather, with gladness of heart, we obey God out of gratitude for his freely given grace and mercy. We obey by faith in him and in all he has done, is doing and will yet do for us to the glory of God. (Ps 118:1; Col 3:17)

"Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!" (Ps 118:1 ESV)

"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Col 3:17 ESV)

15.14 Why should Christians be loyal to God above all others?

For a Christian, no loyalty should come before loyalty to the triune God. We should worship and serve only God, expect all good from God alone, and love, fear and honor God with all our heart, mind and strength. To treat or trust anything other than the triune God as though it were God, is to practice idolatry. To assume that one's own interests are more important than anything else, is to make them into idols, in effect making an idol of oneself. (Deut 6:5, 14; 1John 5:21; Ex 34:14; Rom 1:22-23; Phil 2:4; Matt 6:24; 10:37; Prov 9:10)

"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." (De 6:5 ESV)

"You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you," (De 6:14 ESV)

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols." (1Jo 5:21 ESV)

"(for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God)," (Ex 34:14 ESV)

"22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles." (Ro 1:22-23 ESV)

"Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Php 2:4 ESV)

"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." (Mt 6:24 ESV)

"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." (Mt 10:37 ESV)

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight." (Pr 9:10 ESV)

15.15 Why should Christians submit to and respect those in authority?

Though we owe reverence and worship to God alone, we respect those in positions of authority, including our parents. There are limits to obeying those in authority, including parents. No mere human being is God. Blind obedience is not required of us, for everything should be tested by loyalty and obedience to God, according to God's Word. When it seems as though we should not obey, we should always be alert to possible self-deception, and pray that we may walk in the truth of God's will. (Eph 5:21; Rom 12:10; Eph 6:2; Prov 1:8; Lev 19:32; Luke 2:51; 1Pet 2:17; Acts 5:29)

"submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Eph 5:21 ESV)

"Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor." (Ro 12:10 ESV)

""Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise)," (Eph 6:2 ESV)

"Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching," (Pr 1:8 ESV)

""You shall stand up before the gray head and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD." (Le 19:32 ESV)

"And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart." (Lu 2:51 ESV)

"Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor." (1Pe 2:17 ESV)

"But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men." (Ac 5:29 ESV)

15.16 Why should Christians not commit murder?

The life of another belongs to their Maker and Redeemer, not to another human being. Unlawfully taking another's life usurps God's rightful authority. God forbids anything that harms our neighbors unfairly. Murder or injury can be done not only by direct violence, but also by an angry word or a clever plan, and not only by an individual, but also by unjust social institutions. We should honor every human being, including our enemies, as persons made according to God's image. (1John 3:15; Prov 24:17; Rom 12:19-20; Col 3:12-13; Matt 5:21-22; 26:52)

"Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." (1Jo 3:15 ESV)

"Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles," (Pr 24:17 ESV)

"19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."" (Ro 12:19-20 ESV)

"12 ¶ Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." (Col 3:12-13 ESV)

"21 ¶ "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire." (Mt 5:21-22 ESV)

"Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Mt 26:52 ESV)

15.17 Why should Christians not steal?

God forbids all theft and robbery, including schemes, tricks or systems that unjustly take what belongs to someone else. God requires us not to be driven by greed, not to misuse or waste the

gifts we have been given, and not to distrust the promise that God will supply our needs. Stealing dishonors God and destroys trust between human beings. (Job 20:19-20; Jer 22:13; Prov 18:9; 1Tim 6:9-10; 1John 3:17; Luke 12:15; Phil 4:19)

"19 For he has crushed and abandoned the poor; he has seized a house that he did not build. 20 "Because he knew no contentment in his belly, he will not let anything in which he delights escape him." (Job 20:19-20 ESV)

"Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice, who makes his neighbor serve him for nothing and does not give him his wages," (Jer 22:13 ESV)

"Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys." (Pr 18:9 ESV)

"9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs." (1Ti 6:9-10 ESV)

"But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" (1Jo 3:17 ESV)

"And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."" (Lu 12:15 ESV)

"And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Php 4:19 ESV)

15.18 Why should Christians not lie?

God forbids us to damage the honor or reputation of our neighbors. We should not say false things against anyone for the sake of money, favor or friendship, for the sake of revenge, or for any other reason. God requires that we speak the truth, to speak well of our neighbors when we can, and to view the faults of our neighbors with tolerance when we cannot, and to be true to our word. Lying dishonors God and destroys trust between human beings. (Zech 8:16-17; 1Pet 3:16; Prov 14:5; James 4:11; 1Pet 4:8; Rom 3:13, 15; Prov 31:8-9; Matt 7:1-2)

"16 These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; 17 do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the LORD."" (Zec 8:16-17 ESV)

"yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame." (1Pe 3:16 ESV)

"A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness breathes out lies." (Pr 14:5 ESV)

"Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge." (Jas 4:11 ESV)

"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins." (1Pe 4:8 ESV)

"Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." (Ro 3:13 ESV)

"Their feet are swift to shed blood;" (Ro 3:15 ESV)

"8 Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. 9 Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy." (Pr 31:8-9 ESV)

"1 ¶ "Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you." (Mt 7:1-2 ESV)

15.19 What is the Christian view of marriage?

As revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and as stated by Jesus, God established marriage as an exclusive, sacred union between one man and one woman. That union is a unique, living witness that reflects and honors God's covenant relationship with his people in Jesus Christ. It is a union that involves a unity—a difference and a harmonious coordination of being and action in holy loving. That unity, which normally has the potential to be fruitful by generating new-born life, bears witness to the life-giving nature of the triune God through the union and communion of the Father and Son in the Spirit. Christian marriage, lived as a witness to God's faithfulness, honors God and builds trust between human beings, especially between men and women. (Gen 2:18-22; Matt 19:4; Eph 5:22-23; 1Cor 7:1-5; Rom 1:24-27)

"18 ¶ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." 19 So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 ¶ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man." (Ge 2:18-22 ESV)

"He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female," (Mt 19:4 ESV)

"22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior." (Eph 5:22-23 ESV)

"1 ¶ Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." 2 But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. 3 The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." (1Co 7:1-5 ESV)

"24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served

the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.” (Ro 1:24-27 ESV)

15.20 Why should Christians not commit adultery?

We should not commit adultery because it is contrary to the bond of marriage created by God. That bond is deeply damaged if not irreparably broken by the sin of adultery. But more damaging, such unfaithfulness bears false witness to a God who is absolutely faithful to his people. It thereby harms our souls, undermines our faith, hinders our hope in God and diminishes our love for God and for others. It sows the seeds of unbelief in our hearts and minds and sets up barriers to trusting in God’s faithfulness who will never betray us. Adultery dishonors God and destroys trust between human beings. (Rom 2:22; Matt 15:19)

“You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?” (Ro 2:22 ESV)

“For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.” (Mt 15:19 ESV)

15.21 Why should Christians avoid sexual immorality of all kinds?

Since love is God's great gift, God expects us to not corrupt it, or confuse it with momentary desire to fulfill our own selfish pleasures. God forbids all sexual immorality, whether in married life (adultery) or single life (fornication). Faithfulness is essential to experience the blessings of marriage. The faithfulness of celibacy is essential to experience the blessings of being unmarried. All sexual relations outside the safe boundaries of covenant marriage are forms of sexual abuse and harm our capacity to form healthy relationships of non-sexual love between members of the body of Christ and sexual relationships of married couples. Sexual relations are safe and healthy and honor God only when experienced within a lifelong commitment to marriage between one man and one woman. All else falls far short of the glory of God and his good purposes for humanity. All sexual immorality including sexual abuse and fornication dishonors God and destroys trust between human beings. (Eph 5:3; Matt 5:27-29; Heb 13:4; 1Thess 4:3-4)

“But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.” (Eph 5:3 ESV)

“27 ¶ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.” (Mt 5:27-29 ESV)

“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.” (Heb 13:4 ESV)

“3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor,” (1Th 4:3-4 ESV)

15.22 Why should Christians not covet what belongs to others?

Our whole heart should belong to God alone, not to money or to other things of this world. To covet is to desire something wrongfully. We should not resent the good fortune or success of our neighbors or allow envy to corrupt our hearts. These sins damage the soul, and corrupt relationships and undermine joyful and free generosity and compassionate service. Coveting dishonors God and destroys trust between human beings. (Heb 13:5; Gal 5:26)

"Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Heb 13:5 ESV)

"Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another." (Ga 5:26 ESV)

15.23 Why should Christians not abuse the natural environment?

God commands that we care for the earth in ways that reflect his loving care for all of his creation. We are responsible for ensuring that the earth's gifts are used fairly and wisely, that no creature suffers from the abuse of what we are given, and that future generations may continue to enjoy the abundance and goodness of the earth in praise to God. Failure to be good stewards of the natural environment dishonors God and disrupts the fruitful harmony of human beings with their environment. (Ps 24:1; 89:11; Gen 1:26; 2:15; Is 24:5; Rom 12:2)

"«A PSALM OF DAVID.» The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein," (Ps 24:1 ESV)

"The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it, you have founded them." (Ps 89:11 ESV)

"Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Ge 1:26 ESV)

"The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." (Ge 2:15 ESV)

"The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant." (Isa 24:5 ESV)

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Ro 12:2 ESV)

Teaching Notes: The Christian Life

Concerning temptation:

Using the resources God gives us, we are to resist and reject temptation as best we can. When we succumb, we turn back to Jesus Christ and his word, allowing our Lord to restore and renew us, trusting him that one day such temptations will not overtake us, since our whole salvation is complete in him and his Spirit can restore, heal and strengthen us. We do not give up hope for the completion of his work in us by his Word and Spirit because he has promised to be faithful and complete the work he has begun in us.

Concerning divorce and remarriage:

Here is what GCI says in the We're Often Asked section of the GCI website:

GCI upholds the sanctity of marriage and discourages divorce, but realizing that we live in a broken world, we also recognize the legal remarriages of divorced persons.

For a GCI article about divorce and remarriage, go to gci.org/ethics/divorce2.

Concerning homosexuality:

Here is what GCI says in the We're Often Asked section of the GCI website:

The Bible teaches that the practice of homosexual behavior is a sin, as indicated by biblical prohibitions such as Rom 1:26-27 and 1Cor 6:9 (*"26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error."* (Ro 1:26-27 ESV) *"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,"* (1Co 6:9 ESV). However, homosexual behavior is no more, or less, sinful than any other sin. All sinners are called to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Any sinner who comes to Christ finds repentance and forgiveness and is cleansed by the Holy Spirit of all his or her sins. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the converted homosexual moves away from the gay lifestyle and enters into the new life in Christ. This does not necessarily mean that the homosexual becomes heterosexual. Rather, it means that, by the grace and power of God, he or she no longer engages in homosexual acts. Christians should accept redeemed homosexuals into fellowship just as they accept any forgiven sinner — thankful that God has extended his mercy and grace to all humanity. For a letter from GCI concerning LGBT issues go to update.gci.org/2015/01/lgbt-issues/.

From The GCI Statement of Beliefs:

Concerning Christian conduct:

Christian conduct is characterized by trust in and loving allegiance to Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us. Trust in Jesus Christ is expressed by belief in the gospel and by participation in Jesus Christ's works of love. Through the Holy Spirit, Christ transforms the hearts of believers, producing in them love, joy, peace, faithfulness, meekness, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control, righteousness, and truth.

Concerning marriage:

God loves us with a perfect, freely given and eternally faithful love, establishing marriage as an exclusive and sacred union between one man and one woman to be a unique living witness that reflects and honors God's covenant relationship with his people in Jesus Christ.

Here are GCI articles on Christian living:

- The Christian Life and Our Participation in Christ's Continuing Ministry (essay at gci.org/christian-life)
- Wholehearted: Finding Personal Wholeness in Jesus (essay at <https://www.gci.org/articles/wholehearted-finding-personal-wholeness-in-jesus/>)
- Life in Christ: Living Like a Christian (at gci.org/disc/living)
- Christian Life (at gci.org/disc/19-life)
- The Goal of the Christian Life (at gci.org/disc/20-goal)
- Stewardship Involves All of Life (at gci.org/spiritual/stewardship)
- Christian Life and Marriage – Ephesians 5 (at gci.org/bible/eph5)

SECTION 16: LAST THINGS

16.1 What is meant by Jesus' "second coming"?

The Holy Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ, who came to earth first (his "first coming") through his virgin birth, will come again in what is often called his "second coming." The glorified human Person Jesus will return bodily to earth in power and glory to judge the dead and reign over all nations in the fullness of the kingdom of God. This return will inaugurate the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment, which will bring to an end all evil and usher in the reward of a new heaven and new earth to be enjoyed by all who place their trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior and humbly receive his welcome into his eternal rule and reign. (John 14:3; Rev 1:7; Matt 24:30; 1Thess 4:15-17; Rev 12:10-12; 22:12)

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." (Joh 14:3 ESV)

"Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen." (Re 1:7 ESV)

"Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Mt 24:30 ESV)

"15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord." (1Th 4:15-17 ESV)

"10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, 'Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been

thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. 11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. 12 ¶ Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"" (Re 12:10-12 ESV)

""Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done." (Re 22:12 ESV)

16.2 What is "the resurrection of the dead"?

When Jesus returns, he will resurrect back to a new kind of bodily life all who have died throughout human history. This is commonly referred to as the "general resurrection." (John 5:25-29; 1Thess 4:13-17)

"25 "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. 27 And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. 28 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment." (Joh 5:25-29 ESV)

"13 ¶ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord." (1Th 4:13-17 ESV)

16.3 What happens to people between death and the general resurrection?

When we die, our bodies of flesh and bones decay, but by the will of God, our spirit, which returns to God, lives on awaiting the general resurrection at Jesus' return when we will be given glorified bodies. (1Cor 15:42-44; 2Cor 5:1-4; 2Pet 1:4)

"42 So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body." (1Co 15:42-44 ESV)

"1 ¶ For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, 3 if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. 4 For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." (2Co 5:1-4 ESV)

"by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire." (2Pe 1:4 ESV)

16.4 What is "the final judgment"?

Having been raised to a new kind of bodily life in the general resurrection, all humans will be judged in what Scripture calls "the final judgment." The Judge will be Jesus, who will judge all people as those belonging to God through him. This means that all humans, in spite of themselves, are loved, forgiven, and are intended by God through Jesus Christ to enter into his eternal kingdom. All who call upon the name of the Lord, acknowledging Jesus Christ as their only Lord and Savior, and who willingly submit to his lordship and desire to live in and under his eternal rule and reign will enter into his kingdom. God's judgment in Jesus Christ will bring about the ultimate end of evil and the renewal of the earth and all creation. Evil will have no place in the fullness of the kingdom of God. (2Cor 5:10; 2Pet 2:9; Heb 9:27)

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." (2Co 5:10 ESV)

"then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment," (2Pe 2:9 ESV)

"And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment," (Heb 9:27 ESV)

16.5 What happens to unbelievers in the final judgment?

God's love will never cease or diminish even for those who, at the final judgment, refuse his love and the truth of who they are because of Jesus. However, by their repudiation of grace and refusal to repent and receive forgiveness, they consign themselves to a condition of self-imposed torment that sometimes is called hell. In that condition, rather than enjoying the fruit of God's salvation, hating God's goodness and holy love, they will experience God's love as wrath. Remaining in themselves rebellious and unrepentant, demanding their own will and way, they will refuse to enter the kingdom of God. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit, they will cut themselves off from the truth and reality of who God is and what he has done for them in Jesus, and so experience the unavoidable consequences, which Scripture refers to as hell or Gehenna. However, their rejection does not change God's purpose, mind and love enacted towards them in Jesus Christ who is their Judge and Redeemer. Jesus remains, in truth and reality, their Lord and Savior though they deny it. (Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29; 3:17; Rom 5:6; Col 1:20; 1Tim 2:3-6; 2Pet 3:9; Rom 5:15-18; Acts 10:43; John 12:32; 1Cor 15:22-28; Heb 12:6; Eph 1:10; Rev 3:19-20; 21:7-8, 22-27; 22:14-15)

"having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust." (Ac 24:15 ESV)

"28 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment." (Joh 5:28-29 ESV)

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (Joh 3:17 ESV)

"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." (Ro 5:6 ESV)

"and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." (Col 1:20 ESV)

"3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time." (1Ti 2:3-6 ESV)

"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." (2Pe 3:9 ESV)

"15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. 16 And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. 17 If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. 18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men." (Ro 5:15-18 ESV)

"To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." (Ac 10:43 ESV)

"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." (Joh 12:32 ESV)

"22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. 28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all." (1Co 15:22-28 ESV)

"For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." (Heb 12:6 ESV)

"as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." (Eph 1:10 ESV)

"19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." (Re 3:19-20 ESV)

"7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." (Re 21:7-8 ESV)

"22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Re 21:22-27 ESV)

"14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. 15 Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood." (Re 22:14-15 ESV)

16.6 What happens to believers in the final judgment?

Those who in the final judgment bow in reverence to Jesus as Lord will receive a never-ending life of joyful communion with our triune God and with other resurrected believers, as they praise and serve God together in the new heaven and the new earth—a world of unending life and love. In this life together with the triune God and one another, they will experience “face to face” what they now glimpse only partially—their deepest, truest delights in this life being only a dim foreshadowing of the delights that await them in the fullness of the kingdom of God. By the grace of the triune God they will freely, willingly and gladly enter God’s kingdom extended to them in Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit. There they will enjoy forever all its benefits stored up for them in Jesus Christ who is Lord and Savior of all. (Ps 16:11; John 14:2-3; Matt 6:20; 8:11; Col 1:5; 1Cor 13:12; Rev 21:1-4)

"You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." (Ps 16:11 ESV)

"2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." (Joh 14:2-3 ESV)

"but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal." (Mt 6:20 ESV)

"I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven," (Mt 8:11 ESV)

"because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel," (Col 1:5 ESV)

"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known." (1Co 13:12 ESV)

"1 ¶ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Re 21:1-4 ESV)

Teaching Notes: Last Things

What about the Millennium?

The Millennium is a term that is often used to refer to the 1,000-year-long reign of Jesus. Though of interest to many people (and the topic of much speculation), this topic is peripheral to the main issues addressed in this section concerning last things and is subject to various interpretations. Here is what GCI says about the Millennium in the We're Often Asked section of the GCI website:

The Millennium is the time span described in the book of Revelation during which Christian martyrs reign with Jesus Christ. After the Millennium, when all enemies have been put under his feet, and all things made subject to him, Christ will deliver the kingdom to God the Father, and heaven and earth will be made new. Some Christian traditions interpret the Millennium as a literal 1000 years to precede (pre-millennialism) or follow (postmillennialism) the return of Jesus, while most Christians believe that the scriptural evidence points to a figurative interpretation (amillennialism): an indeterminate time span that began with Jesus' resurrection and will conclude with his return. (Rev 20:1-15; 21:1, 5; Acts 3:19-21; Rev 11:15; 1Cor 15:24-25).

"1 ¶ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. 2 And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. 4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. 6

Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. 7 And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. 9 And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, 10 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. 11 ¶ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. 13 And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. 14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Re 20:1-15 ESV)

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more." (Re 21:1 ESV)

"And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." (Re 21:5 ESV)

"19 Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 21 whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago." (Ac 3:19-21 ESV)

"Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." (Re 11:15 ESV)

"24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet." (1Co 15:24-25 ESV)

For a related GCI article, see The Millennium of Revelation 20 (at <https://www.gci.org/articles/the-millennium-of-revelation-20/>).

What does GCI teach concerning hell?

Here is what GCI says in the We're Often Asked section of the GCI website:

Hell is the spiritual alienation from God chosen by incorrigible sinners. In the New Testament, hell is referred to by the terms "lake of fire," "darkness," and Gehenna (a gorge outside Jerusalem where garbage was burned). Hell is characterized by punishment, torment, anguish, weeping and gnashing of teeth, and eternal destruction. The biblical terms Sheol and Hades, often translated

"hell" or "the grave," refer to the realm of the dead (2Thess 1:8-9; Matt 10:28; 25:41, 46; Rev 20:14-15; 21:8; Matt 13:42; Ps 49:14-15).

"8 in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might," (2Th 1:8-9 ESV)

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Mt 10:28 ESV)

""Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" (Mt 25:41 ESV)

"And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."" (Mt 25:46 ESV)

"14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Re 20:14-15 ESV)

"But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."" (Re 21:8 ESV)

"and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Mt 13:42 ESV)

"14 Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd, and the upright shall rule over them in the morning. Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell. 15 ¶ But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me. |@Selah|@" (Ps 49:14-15 ESV)

For a related GCI article, see The Battle Over Hell (at <https://www.gci.org/articles/the-battle-over-hell/>).

From The GCI Statement of Beliefs:

The second coming:

Jesus Christ, as he promised, will come again to judge and reign over all nations in the kingdom of God. His second coming will be visible, and in power and glory and will bring the final end to evil. This event inaugurates the resurrection of the dead and the reward of the saints.

The judgment:

God judges all humans through Jesus Christ as those who belong to God through him. Therefore, all humans are, in spite of themselves, loved, forgiven, and included in Jesus Christ, who is their Lord and Savior. God's love will never cease or diminish even for those who, denying the reality of who they are in him, refuse his love and consign themselves to hell; they will not enjoy the fruit of his salvation but rather will experience his love as wrath. God disciplines those he loves so that they will return to him and live; he stands at the door and knocks, urging them to open the door to his everlasting love. God's judgment in Christ means the ultimate end of evil and the renewal of the earth and all creation.

Are the dead conscious or unconscious prior to the return of Christ and the resurrection of the body?

Here is what GCI says in the We're Often Asked section of the GCI website:

Christians vary in their interpretation of the relevant biblical passages, and our members are no exception. Some passages seem to suggest an unconscious state (see Ps 6:5; 13:3; 146:3-4; Eccl 3:19-21; John 11:11-14; Acts 13:36 – (see A below) but the Scriptural evidence for some form of a conscious state is strong (see Phil. 1:21-24; 1 Thess. 4:13-14, Rev. 6:9-11 (see B below). Certainly, the body dies and decays, but these passages indicate that the spirit, or soul, of believers is consciously present with God. Whichever view is correct, the one thing we can know for certain is that the dead are safe in God's hands, awaiting the resurrection.

A:

"For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you praise?" (Ps 6:5 ESV)

"Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death," (Ps 13:3 ESV)

"3 Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. 4 When his breath departs he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish." (Ps 146:3-4 ESV)

"19 For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. 20 All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. 21 Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth?" (Ec 3:19-21 ESV)

"11 After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." 12 The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." 13 Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. 14 Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died," (Joh 11:11-14 ESV)

"For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption," (Ac 13:36 ESV)

B:

"21 ¶ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. 24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account." (Php 1:21-24 ESV)

"13 ¶ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep." (1Th 4:13-14 ESV)

"9 ¶ When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. 10 They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord,

holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"
11 Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been." (Re 6:9-11 ESV)

For a related GCI article, see *What About the Intermediate State?* (at gci.org/prophecy/intermed).

Appendix: The GCI Statement of Beliefs

Here is the text of The GCI Statement of Beliefs, which sets forth GCI's official doctrine. We Believe affirms, conforms to and builds upon these beliefs.

Summary of Our Christian Faith

- There is one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- God the Father made all things through the Son, sent the Son for our salvation, and gives us the Holy Spirit.
- The Son of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, was born of the virgin Mary, fully God and fully human, and is the perfect revelation of the Father and the perfect representative of humanity. He suffered and died on the cross for all human sin, was raised bodily on the third day, and ascended to heaven. Standing in for all humanity before the Father, Jesus Christ provides the perfect human response to God. Since he died for all, all died in him, and all will be made alive in him.
- The Holy Spirit brings sinners to repentance and faith, assures believers of their forgiveness and acceptance as God's dearly loved children, and works in them to conform them to the image of Jesus Christ.
- The Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God that testifies to Jesus Christ. The Bible is fully authoritative for all matters of faith and salvation.
- Salvation comes only by God's grace and not by works, and it is experienced through faith in Jesus Christ. Christians respond to the joy of salvation when they gather in regular fellowship and live godly lives in Jesus Christ.
- We look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come.