

WELCOME TO FIRST STEPS!

Discovering Central

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Scripture References

John 17:22-23

I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Psalms 102:21-22

"And so the Lord's fame will be celebrated in Zion, his praises in Jerusalem when multitudes gather together and kingdoms come to worship the Lord."

Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Mark 12:30-31

³⁰Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

Ephesians 4:11-16

¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ 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.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

ESSENTIALS

THE BIBLE

The Bible is God's Word to us (Psalms 119:105, John 1:1). It was written by human authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21). It is the source of truth for belief and living (John 17:17, Matthew 4:4). God inspired it so it is truth and without error (2 Timothy 3:16, John 10:35). The Bible is our guide for faith and practice (1 Peter 1:23-25, Hebrews 4:12). We go to the Bible for authority in church government (Ephesians 1:22, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Ephesians 4:12) as well as the plan for salvation (*see Salvation*). "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong and teaches us to do what is right" (2 Timothy 3:16). Where the Bible is silent, there is freedom of opinion.

GOD

We believe that there is only one living and true God; (Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 45:5-7), Eternal, Creator,(Genesis 1:1-31, Ephesians 3:9), Redeemer, (John 3:16), all knowing, all powerful, ever present, Ruler of all.(Psalms 103:19). He eternally exists in three personalities: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-19, 2 Corinthians 13:14). God the father spoke all creation into existence and spiritually adopts all believers who freely come to Him through the shed blood of his only begotten son Jesus Christ. (John 1:12, Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:5). God is love, (1 John 4:7-8,16), our firm foundation, holy and righteous, and fatherly in attitude toward His adopted children (Psalms 86:15, 136:26, Romans 5:8, Galatians 2:20, 1 John 3:1, 4:7, 4:19) .

JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God (Hebrews 1). Jesus, as the incarnation of God was born of a virgin through the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18-23). He revealed that He was the Son of God by fulfilling prophecy, teaching, preaching, and performing many miracles (John 1, John 20:30).

Jesus was perfectly obedient; tempted in every way yet sinless, being fully human and fully God (Hebrews 4:14-16, Colossians 2:9). As Christ, Jesus offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world by his shed blood and death on the cross (Romans 8:1-3). He was raised from the dead after three days redeeming our sin and defeating death (1 Corinthians 15:1-8). He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God where He is our mediator and is head of the Church (Colossians 1:13-22, Hebrews 7:23-28). He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to fulfill His redemptive mission (Matthew 25:31-46). "Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the eternal Spirit of God (Hebrews 9:14). His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). He glorifies, testifies and exalts the Lord Jesus Christ and transforms believers into the image of Christ (John 16:12-15). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers believers for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Acts 2:38). The fruit of the Spirit in a believer's life is, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit provides spiritual gifts to the Church, those gifts include serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leadership, mercy, faith, discernment, helping, and administration (Romans 12:6-8, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Corinthians 12:8-11). Tongues and sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth and were never intended to be characteristic of the everyday lives of believers (1 Corinthians 13:8-12).

HUMANITY

God created mankind in His own image; male and female He created them (Genesis 1:26-27, Genesis 2:7, Genesis 2:18-22). Humans were created with the intent of abundant living (Genesis 1:28-29, Psalms 8:3-6). But because of mankind's disobedience, sin entered in the world causing separation with God (Genesis 3, Isaiah 59:1-2). All people are sinners and fall short of God's standards (Romans 3:23).

God has a purpose for people and He fulfills that purpose in Christ Jesus (Psalms 139:13-16, Psalms 57:2-3). We are to praise the Lord (Psalms 150:6). We are to bring glory to God; loving God and loving others (1 Peter 4:11, Mark 12:28-31). "Bring all who claim me as their God, for I have made them for My glory. It was I who created them" (Isaiah 43:7).

MARRIAGE

The Bible teaches that God established marriage in the beginning as a lifelong exclusive relationship between one man and one woman (Genesis 1:27-28, Matthew 19:4-6). God has reserved sexual intimacy as an expression of love and commitment between married couples only (Genesis 2:23-25, Ephesians 5:21-33). Any expression of sexuality outside of Biblical marriage is sin (Romans 1:24-31, Hebrews 13:4, 1 Corinthians 6:17-20).

SALVATION

Salvation is a free gift from God received by grace to all who have faith in Jesus Christ and not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Grace is accepted and is reflected by submission and obedience to God's Word and His will for our lives. One accepts Christ as Lord and Savior through the conversion process of faith (Romans 3:22-25) that includes repentance, confession, (Romans 10:10) and baptism (*immersion*) (Acts 2:38). In baptism a believer is immersed, crucified and buried with Christ, receives forgiveness of sin (Ephesians 1:7) and the gift of the Holy Spirit, is resurrected and clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27) and becomes saved because of God's free gift of grace received by faith. Once saved a Christian is assured of their eternal home in Heaven with God. (Romans 8:38-39). Those who have rejected Christ live eternally in hell separated from God. Assurance of salvation is only received when submission and obedience to God's Word and will represent in a believer's life (Matthew 25:31-46).

What We Practice

BIBLE AS OUR SOLE AUTHORITY

¹⁵ You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. —2 Timothy 3:15-17 (NLT)

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. — Ephesians 4:14 (NLT)

The Bible is the only reliable and truthful authority. It is inspired by God and inerrant. We practice daily Bible reading, Bible study, and Bible memorization. We seek guidance from the Bible for all decision making for each person and the church.

AUTONOMY OF EACH LOCAL CHURCH

“Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything.” —Colossians 1: 18 (NLT)

“¹And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share in his glory when he is revealed to the whole world. As a fellow elder, I appeal to you: ²Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. ³Don’t lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. ⁴And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor.” —1 Peter 5:1-4 (NLT)

Christ is the head of every local congregation of believers called church, and is the head of the invisible global body of believers also known as church. We believe every local congregation should be self-governing and independent from any denominational control. Jesus is the one chief Shepherd with elders called to shepherd each local church. Central is an elder led church.

BAPTISM BY IMMERSION

For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. — Colossians 2:12 (NLT)

We practice baptism by immersion under water—the way Jesus was baptized, and the way the Bible commands. Immersion is a requirement for church membership.

PRIESTHOOD OF EVERY BELIEVER

⁹But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. —1 Peter 2:9 (NLT)

“¹⁹ And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. ²⁰By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. ²¹And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God’s house, ²²let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ’s blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.” —Hebrews 10:19-22 (NLT)

Every believer has direct access to God through Jesus Christ as our High Priest and has no need of any other intercessor. There is no special class of people needed to mediate the wisdom, presence, and forgiveness of Christ to other believers. As priests, we confidently approach God in prayer and petition through faith in Jesus’ shed blood.

MINISTRY OF EVERY BELIEVER

⁶ *In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. ⁷ If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. ⁸ If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly. —Romans 12:6-8 (NLT)*

All who are saved by grace, by our Lord and Savior, are called to be ministers. He equips every believer individually with different gifts for ministry. His Spirit provides us paths of service and with situations of ministry to serve others both in and out of the Church.

SUPPORTING THE CHURCH THROUGH TITHING

²¹ *Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be. —Matthew 6:21(NLT)*

⁶ *Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. ⁷ You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." ⁸ And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. —2 Corinthians 9:6-9 (NLT)*

We practice tithing for the support of Christ's body, the church, as God commands. We recognize that giving 10% or more of our income is a Biblical standard and should be the place where we begin our generous giving to God with cheerful hearts.

LIVING BY THE SPIRIT

⁵ *"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. —John 15:5*

²⁵ *Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. —Galatians 5:25*

The only way to live the Christian life is by God's power through the Holy Spirit within us. We practice a daily dependence on God's Spirit to enable us to do what is right and remain in Him.

COMMUNION

²⁷ *So anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup. —1 Corinthians 11:27-28 (NLT)*

²⁶ *As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "Take this and eat it, for this is my body." ²⁷ And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them and said, "Each of you drink from it, ²⁸ for this is my*

blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many –Matthew 26:26-28 (NLT)

We partake of the communion elements “on the first day of the week”; the bread representing Jesus’ broken body and the juice representing His shed blood that washed away our sin. We do this in remembrance of Jesus’ sacrifice made for us that opened up the only way into heaven. As we take communion, we remember His sacrifice on the cross, we examine ourselves, confess our sins, and we proclaim Him as our Lord and Savior.

TELLING OTHERS ABOUT CHRIST

¹⁸ Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”—Matthew 28:19-20 (NLT)

It is the joy, responsibility, and command of every Christian to share the Good News of Jesus Christ to those God brings into contact with them. Believers are to pattern their living after the life and teachings of Christ and faithfully witness to all people.