

Articles of Faith & Biblical Principles for Living



Volume One
Faith & Order
of the
Bible Fellowship Church
2023 Edition

Produced by order of the
Conference of the Bible Fellowship Church
For additional copies or updates contact:
Communications@BFC.org or visit BFC.org
This edition includes changes through 2023.

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Foreword

The Faith and Order of the Bible Fellowship Church is comprised of two volumes. Volume One contains the Articles of Faith and the Biblical Principles for Living. Volume Two contains the Principles of Order. Together the two volumes contain the denomination's teaching on faith and practice.

This edition of the Faith and Order represents the latest official version and supercedes all previous editions. An electronic edition posted on the website, BFC.org, includes any intervening updates between printings.

Citations in this format are made by section and paragraph, not necessarily by page number. For example:

Composition of the Board of Elders	401-1.1
Bylaws for Particular Churches	Section 400
Board of Elders and Deacons	Article 401
The Board of Elders	401-1
Composition of Elders	401-1.1

The following words or phrases are technical terms in the Faith and Order and are usually capitalized:

- BFC Conference
- Board of Deacons
- Board of Elders
- Particular Church

A Table of Contents and Indexes are incorporated for easy reference.

Key and Abbreviations

Abbreviations:

BFC Bible Fellowship Church
F&O Faith and Order

Scripture References - Unless otherwise noted the ESV is used.

Gen.	Genesis	Nah.	Nahum
Exo.	Exodus	Hab.	Habakkuk
Lev.	Leviticus	Zeph.	Zephaniah
Num.	Numbers	Hag.	Haggai
Deu.	Deuteronomy	Zec.	Zechariah
Josh.	Joshua	Mal.	Malachi
Judg.	Judges	Mat.	Matthew
Ruth.	Ruth	Mark	Mark
1Sam.	First Samuel	Luke	Luke
2Sam.	Second Samuel	John	John
1Kgs.	First Kings	Acts	Acts
2Kgs.	Second Kings	Rom.	Romans
1Chr.	First Chronicles	1Cor.	First Corinthians
2Chr.	Second Chronicles	2Cor.	Second Corinthians
Ezra	Ezra	Gal.	Galatians
Neh.	Nehemiah	Eph.	Ephesians
Est.	Esther	Phil.	Philippians
Job	Job	Col.	Colossians
Psa.	Psalms	1Thes.	First Thessalonians
Pro.	Proverbs	2Thes.	Second Thessalonians
Ecc.	Ecclesiastes	1Tim.	First Timothy
Song.	Song of Solomon	2Tim.	Second Timothy
Isa.	Isaiah	Titus	Titus
Jer.	Jeremiah	Phi.	Philemon
Lam.	Lamentations	Heb.	Hebrews
Eze.	Ezekiel	James	James
Dan.	Daniel	1Pe.	First Peter
Hos.	Hosea	2Pe.	Second Peter
Joel	Joel	1Jo.	First John
Amos	Amos	2Jo.	Second John
Obad.	Obadiah	3Jo.	Third John
Jonah	Jonah	Jude	Jude
Mic.	Micah	Rev.	Revelation

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Preamble

The Bible Fellowship Church (BFC) has adopted this statement of Faith and Order to declare with clarity and precision its faith and testimony to the glory of God.

The BFC acknowledges as its sole Head, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of man. It submits to the written Word of God and to the Holy Spirit as its only sources of guidance and power in maintaining its redemptive life and work in the world.

The BFC has adopted this Faith and Order (F&O) not in substitution for, but in subordination to the Word of God. These standards have been received as being based on the Scriptures; even the elements not drawn directly from the Word have been acknowledged as based on the general rules and tenor of the Word. These standards seek to provide an effective means for the application of the teaching of the Scriptures to the faith, worship, government, and discipline of the church. Although these standards have been acknowledged to be of lesser importance than the inspired words of the Scriptures, they cannot be neglected without resulting in serious impairment of the life of the church.

The BFC acknowledges as brethren all those who share its confession of faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It confesses gladly the benefits of the historical and geographic breadth of this fellowship. It acknowledges specifically the benefits derived from similar statements of faith and order devised at many times in the history of the church. It seeks to respond to the responsibilities that these benefits bring by beseeching Almighty God to indwell it in such a way that it may, by His grace, bring glory to Himself and blessing to men.

Articles Of Faith

Article 1 - The Holy Scriptures

1-1 The Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, are the inspired,¹ infallible Word of God,² a divine revelation, the original writings of which were verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit.³ They are the supreme and final authority of faith and conduct.⁴

1-2 Inspiration is a special act of the Holy Spirit³ by which He guided the writers of the Scriptures so that their words would convey the thoughts He wished conveyed, would bear a proper relationship to the thoughts of the other inspired books, and would be kept free from error of fact, doctrine, and judgment.⁵

1-3 The Holy Scriptures, the written Word of God, are composed of all books of the Old Testament and New Testament, namely:

Old Testament

Genesis	2 Chronicles	Daniel
Exodus	Ezra	Hosea
Leviticus	Nehemiah	Joel
Numbers	Esther	Amos
Deuteronomy	Job	Obadiah
Joshua	Psalms	Jonah
Judges	Proverbs	Micah
Ruth	Ecclesiastes	Nahum
1 Samuel	Song of Solomon	Habakkuk
2 Samuel	Isaiah	Zephaniah
1 Kings	Jeremiah	Haggai
2 Kings	Lamentations	Zechariah
1 Chronicles	Ezekiel	Malachi

New Testament

Matthew	Ephesians	Hebrews
Mark	Philippians	James
Luke	Colossians	I Peter
John	I Thessalonians	II Peter
Acts	II Thessalonians	I John
Romans	I Timothy	II John
1 Corinthians	II Timothy	III John
2 Corinthians	Titus	Jude
Galatians	Philemon	Revelation

¹ And how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2Tim. 3:15-17).

² Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens (Psa. 119:89). If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— (John 10:35). The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever (Isa. 40:8).

³ 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. 1:21). Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories (1Pe. 1:10,11). Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual (1Cor. 2:12,13).

⁴ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth (John 17:17). And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:27,44). I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book (Rev. 22:18,19).

⁵ Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished (Mat. 5:17,18).

Article 2 - The Trinity

2-1 There are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son,¹ and the Holy Spirit.² These three are one God,³ the same in substance, eternally equal in power and glory.

¹ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Mat. 3:16,17). Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

² But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God" (Acts 5:3,4).

³ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 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" (Gen. 1:1,26). 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 (Mat. 28:19). The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all (2Cor. 13:14).

Article 3 - God The Father

3-1 There is but one living and true God,¹ immanent, transcendent, infinite in being and perfection, pure spirit,² invisible, immutable,³ eternal, almighty, all wise,⁴ most holy, most free, most loving, most gracious, most merciful, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin,⁵ the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, and withal most just and terrible in His judgments, hating all sin. He will by no means clear the guilty.

¹ I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other(Isa. 45:5,6).

² God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

³ I the LORD do not change (Mal. 3:6a).

⁴ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” (Rom. 11:33,34).

⁵ The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation” (Exo. 34:6,7).

Article 4 - God The Son

4-1 Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the Word,¹ the eternal and true God who is of one substance and equal with the Father.² He took on Himself man's nature, with all of its essential properties except sin: Being conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary,³ He embodied two perfect and distinct natures in one person. He is truly God and truly man, the only mediator between God and man.

4-2 The Lord Jesus Christ is the revelation of God to man.⁴ In the days of His humiliation⁵, He lived a sinless life, performed miracles, taught the will of God,⁵ was crucified, and died. He was buried and arose bodily from the dead on the third day. The Lord Jesus offered Himself a sacrifice for sins,⁶ satisfied the justice of the Father, propitiated the wrath of God, reconciled God and man,⁷ and obtained an eternal inheritance.

4-3 The Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, from whence He had come, and was exalted, taking His place at the right hand of the Father, where He makes intercession on behalf of all who come to God through Him.⁸

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 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 (John 1:1-3,14).

² He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 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. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 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. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 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).

³ All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us) (Mat. 1:22,23).

⁴ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 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. 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, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs (Heb. 1:1-4).

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:5-11).

⁶ 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).

⁷ 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 (Rom. 5:10).

⁸ 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. 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. 4:14,15).

Article 5 - God the Holy Spirit

5-1 The eternal¹ Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son,² is of the same substance and equal in power and glory with the Father and the Son. By Him the prophets were moved to speak the Word of God, and all writers of the Holy Scriptures were inspired to record infallibly the mind and will of God.³ He is the only efficient agent in the application of redemption. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,⁴ moves them to repentance, and regenerates⁵ them by His grace, enabling them to embrace Jesus Christ by faith.

5-2 The Holy Spirit indwells all true believers, baptizing them into one body, of which Christ is the head.⁶ He, the divine Comforter, Intercessor, and Advocate, empowers the believer for service.⁷

¹ Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God (Heb. 9:14b).

² And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever. —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 (John 14:16,26).

³ 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. 1:21).

⁴ 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. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged (John 16:7-11).

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” (John 3:5).

⁶ 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 (1Cor. 12:13).

⁷ “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” (Acts 1:8).

Article 6 - Creation

6-1 The triune God, according to His sovereign will, created out of nothing and out of things that He had made, by immediate and mediate action, the worlds and all that is in them.¹ He is the Governor and Upholder of the creation by His wisdom and by the word of His mighty power.²

¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 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 (Gen. 1:1,2). (See also Gen. 1:3-2:3). By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible (Heb. 11:3).

² 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. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Col. 1:16,17).

Article 7 - Satan

7-1 Satan is a created angelic being who fell from his first estate.¹ He is the god of this age, ruling by the permissive will of God.² He exercises authority over the unsaved, tempts the believer to sin, and continually accuses the brethren before the throne of God.³

7-2 He has been defeated by the finished work of Christ on Calvary. During the millennium he will be confined to the abyss,⁴ to be released at the end of that period to lead the armies of evil against God. He will be finally judged and doomed to the lake of fire.⁵

¹ How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit. Those who see you will stare at you and ponder over you: 'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world like a desert and overthrew its cities, who did not let his prisoners go home?' (Isa. 14:12-17). And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day (Jude 1:6).

² 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). In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2Cor. 4:4).

³ For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain (1Thes. 3:5). For the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down (Rev. 12:10b).

⁴ And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 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 (Rev. 20:2,3).

⁵ 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 (Rev. 20:10).

Article 8 - Man

8-1 God, by a special, instantaneous act, created man in His image¹ – holy, righteous, and possessing true knowledge² – by forming him out of the dust of the earth and breathing into his nostrils the breath of life. Thus man became a living soul.

8-2 Our first parents did not remain in the glorious and happy state of their original creation, but, through the subtlety and deception of the devil,³ they disobeyed and transgressed the command of God the creator, incurring on themselves and their posterity the sentence of spiritual and physical death. The guilt and consequences of Adam’s sin are imputed to the whole human race, so that all men are guilty,⁴ inherently corrupt, totally depraved,⁵ and subjects of the wrath of God.⁶

¹ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Gen. 1:27).

² And to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24). And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator (Col. 3:10). (See also Psa. 8:4-6.)

³ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate (Gen. 3:1-6).

⁴ 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—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 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. 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. 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. For 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. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men (Rom. 5:12-18).

⁵ No one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:11-18).

⁶ Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (Eph. 2:3). (See also Rom. 1:18.)

Article 9 - Sin

9-1 Sin is any lack of conformity to the will of God¹ or any transgression of the law of God.² Sin separates man from God, incurring His wrath and judgment, and is manifest in the selfishness, rebellion, unbelief and total depravity of man's being.³ Sin is the cause of the curse on and defilement of the created universe.⁴

¹ All wrongdoing is sin (1Jo. 5:17a). So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin (James 4:17).

² Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness (1Jo. 3:4). For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it (James 2:10).

³ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (Eph.2:1-3). For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 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 (Rom.1:18-21). (See also Rom. 3:10-12, 8:7-8.)

⁴ For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now (Rom.8:22). (See also Gen.3:17,18.)

Article 10 - Human Ability and Responsibility

10-1 In his original creation man was endowed with the ability to will and do good or evil and was accountable for his willing and doing.¹ But through the fall of Adam man lost his ability, apart from God's grace,² to will and to do those things necessary for a right relationship with God;³ however, he is still accountable to God for obedience to all of His commands.⁴ Man has not lost his ability to make decisions,⁵ but left to himself, he acts only in accordance with his fallen, sinful nature.⁶

10-2 Only by God's infinite grace can man will or do anything necessary to his salvation.⁷ By that grace, God saves those men whom He causes to will and to do good;⁸ however, He does this without nullifying man's ability to act responsibly.⁹

¹ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:16,17).

² And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (Eph. 2:1-3).

³ No one understands; no one seeks for God. (Rom. 3:11). Those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:8).

⁴ He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek (Rom. 2:6-10). The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).

⁵ For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. —I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live (Deu. 30:11,19).

⁶ As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one" (Rom. 3:10,12). Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil. (Jer. 13:23). (See also footnote 2.)

⁷ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy (Rom. 9:16).

⁸ Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures (James 1:18). But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12-13).

⁹ 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, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Phil. 2:12,13).

Article 11 - Election

11-1 Election is a free act of the sovereign God in which from eternity,¹ for reasons known only to Himself,² and apart from any foreseen faith and/or goodness found in man,³ He graciously chose from among the fallen mankind a people unto salvation, that they might be conformed to Christ's image.⁴ Those so chosen He redeemed by His Son⁵ and seals by His Spirit.⁶

¹ Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. —In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will (Eph. 1:4,11).

² 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 (Mat. 11:27).

³ 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 (2Tim. 1:9). 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. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified (Rom. 8:29-30).

⁴ 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).

⁵ But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth (2 Thes. 2:13).

⁶ 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 (Eph. 1:13).

Article 12 - Salvation

12-1 Salvation is the work of God¹ in which He reconciles fallen men to Himself,² ultimately removes the consequences of the curse,³ and bestows upon His redeemed Creation⁴ the riches of His grace, all to His glory.⁵

12-2 Salvation is offered in the gospel to all men⁶ and is accomplished in all the elect.⁷ It is received by grace through faith and the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit,⁸ apart from works or human merit.⁹ Salvation centers in a person, Jesus Christ, and receiving Him¹⁰ includes the remission of sins on the grounds of His shed blood on the cross,¹¹ the imputation of His perfect righteousness,¹² the reception of the Holy Spirit,¹³ and the impartation of eternal life.¹⁴

¹ 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). (See also Eph. 2:4-5, 8-9.)

² And through him to reconcile to himself all things (Col. 1:20). 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 (Rom. 5:10).

³ No longer will there be anything accursed (Rev. 22:3a).

⁴ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 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. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience (Rom. 8:18-25).

⁵ "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins" (Isa. 43:25).

⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out (John 6:37). No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day (John 6:44). Since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him (John 17:2). And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed (Acts 13:48).

⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8).

⁹ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Eph. 2:8,9).

¹⁰ But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12).

¹¹ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace (Eph. 1:7).

¹² And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption (1Cor. 1:30).

¹³ Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him (Rom. 8:9b).

¹⁴ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life (1Jn. 5:11,12).

Article 13 - Repentance

13-1 Repentance unto life is a gift of God¹ and a voluntary act of man,² accomplished by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. Repentance consists in a knowledge of sin,³ a sense of guilt and corruption that results in the confession and forsaking of sin and a turning to God⁴ that results in loving, obedient service.⁵

¹ 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 (Rom. 2:4)? When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:18). Correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth (2Tim. 2:25).

² And that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).

³ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8).

⁴ For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God (1Thes. 1:9).

⁵ 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). Remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (1Thes. 1:3).

Article 14 - Regeneration

14-1 Regeneration, or the New Birth,¹ is an instantaneous creative act of God through the agency of the Holy Spirit,² whereby divine life is imparted to those dead in sin, making them members of the family of God.³

¹ Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” (John 3:3,6,7). Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God (1Pe. 1:23).

² 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 (Titus 3:5).

³ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:11-13). Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come (2Cor. 5:17). Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures (James 1:18).

Article 15 - Justification

15-1 Justification is the act of God's grace whereby the sinner is declared righteous solely through faith¹ in the redemptive work of Christ.² By this action the righteousness of Christ is imputed,³ sin is pardoned, and the sinner is restored to divine favor.⁴

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 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 (Rom. 5:1,2). And by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses (Acts 13:39).

² Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us (Rom. 8:33,34).

³ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men (Rom. 5:18). For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2Cor. 5:21).

⁴ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon (Isa. 55:7).

Article 16 - Sanctification

16-1 Sanctification is a progressive work of the Holy Spirit in the believer¹ that purifies the life² and conforms the whole man to the image of Christ as the Word of God is believed and obeyed.³ It begins at regeneration,⁴ continues throughout the believer's life⁵ on earth, and reaches its completion at the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁶

¹ 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 (2Cor. 3:18).

² For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality (1Thes. 4:3).

³ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth (John 17:17).

⁴ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1Cor. 6:11).

⁵ And to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. (Eph. 4:24,26,27).

⁶ Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1Thes. 5:23).

Article 17 - Perseverance of the Saints

17-1 Salvation is the work of God, from its commencement to its consummation.¹ Those regenerated by the Word of God through the work of the Holy Spirit become partakers of the divine nature.² They are preserved by the power of God³ so that they shall never totally or finally fall away,⁴ but shall persevere unto the end.⁵

¹ 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. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified (Rom. 8:29,30).

² 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).

³ 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 (Phil. 1:6). Who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1Pe. 1:5).

⁴ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand (John 10:27-29). Who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1Cor. 1:8). They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us (1Jo. 2:19).

⁵ But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command (2Thes. 3:3,4).

Article 18 - The Church

18-1 The Church is the body of which Christ is the head.¹ All those redeemed by His blood² and born of His Spirit are members of that body and are in mystical union and communion with Christ³ and fellow believers.⁴ The Church is universal and local, visible and invisible. The visible Church consists of all those professing faith in Christ. The invisible Church is composed of all those born of the Spirit.⁵

18-2 The purpose of the Church is to worship God,⁶ to edify the saints⁷ and to evangelize the world.⁸

18-3 The Head of the Church administers the affairs of His body through overseers chosen by Himself and selected by the people.⁹

18-4 A properly constituted local Church must include the ministry of God's Word, the observance of the ordinances, the oversight by elders,¹⁰ and the exercise of discipline.¹¹ The overseers of the Church are to be prayed for, obeyed, and honored.¹²

¹ And he is the head of the body, the church (Col. 1:18a).

² Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot (1Pe. 1:18,19).

³ 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. 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 (Rom. 6:5,6).

⁴ I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment (1Cor. 1:10).

⁵ 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 (1Cor. 12:13).

⁶ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:23,24). You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. —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. 2:5,9).

⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills (1Cor. 12:7,11).

⁸ 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Mat. 28:19,20).

⁹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11,12).

¹⁰ Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (1Pe. 5:2,3,5).

¹¹ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector (Mat. 18:17).

¹² Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Greet all your leaders and all the saints (Heb. 13:7,17,24a).

Article 19 - The Evangelistic Mission of the Church

19-1 The Church has been commissioned by Jesus Christ to preach the gospel to all nations.¹ Each Particular Church and every believer bear responsibility for this commission.²

19-2 God has clearly revealed in the Gospel the only way of salvation sufficient for and applicable to the whole lost race of mankind.³ Based on His infinite and perfect love and His expressed desire that all men be saved,⁴ He bids that the Church – with urgency, compassion, and persuasion – proclaim the gospel to all people and invite them to believe.⁵

19-3 It is the duty and privilege of everyone who hears the gospel to repent and receive its merciful provisions.⁶ Those who do are saved,⁷ and those who continue in impenitence and unbelief incur aggravated guilt and perish by their own fault.⁸

¹ 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Mat. 28:19,20). 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 (Acts 1:8).

² But in your hearts honor 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; yet do it with gentleness and respect (1Pe. 3:15).

³ He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world (1Jo. 2:2).

⁴ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1Tim. 2:3,4).

⁵ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 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. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2Cor. 5:18-20).

⁶ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

⁷ And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31). Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life (John 5:24).

⁸ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him (John 3:36). No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish (Luke 13:3). But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed (Rom. 2:5).

Article 20 - Ordinances

20-1 Baptism. Water baptism,¹ the immersion of the believer, is a visible testimony to the work of regeneration² and a mark of identification and union with Christ.³ It has no saving or cleansing power, but it is the answer of a good conscience before God; hence, it should be administered only to those who have, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, realized the forgiveness of sins and possess the assurance of acceptance with God.

¹ 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?” (Acts 8:36).

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

³ “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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mat. 28:19,20). Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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 (Rom. 6:3,4). In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 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. 2:11,12).

20-2 The Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the New Testament,¹ in which, by the giving and receiving of bread and wine, according to the appointment of Jesus Christ, His death is proclaimed.² Those who worthily partake in this remembrance of Him feed upon Him to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace,³ have their union and communion with Him confirmed, and testify and renew their thankfulness and commitment to God⁴ and their mutual love and fellowship each with the other as members of the same mystical body.⁵

The Scriptures direct that each one spiritually examine himself before partaking of the bread and the cup "until He comes."⁶

¹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood (Luke 22:19,20).

² For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1Cor. 11:26).

³ For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him (John 6:55,56).

⁴ You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons (1Cor. 10:21).

⁵ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1Cor. 10:17).

⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1Cor. 11:26).

Article 21 - The Lord's Day

21-1 The first day of the week has been recognized by the Church as the Lord's Day since apostolic times¹. We believe, therefore, that it ought to be observed by all believers, voluntarily and in love², as a day set apart as holy to the Lord for the corporate worship of God³, remembrance of the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, and fellowship and mutual encouragement of the saints.⁴

¹ Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb...On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." (John 20:1, 19). 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 (Acts 20:7). On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper so that there will be no collecting when I come. (1 Cor. 16:2).

² One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind (Rom. 14:5). For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (Gal. 5:13).

³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 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)

⁴ And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (Acts 2:42). Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph. 5:15-21). Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. (Col. 2:16).

Article 22 - Divine Healing

22-1 It is the believer's privilege to seek the will of the Lord in matters of physical healing. This healing, whether by natural, medical, or supernatural means, must come from the omnipotent God who created the human body. The believer may implore the Lord for physical restoration according to the Scriptures,¹ and if the healing is for the highest glory of God, His power will be displayed.²

¹ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 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 (James 5:14-16).

² But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (John 11:4).

Article 23 - Civil Government

23-1 God ordained and instituted civil government¹ for the welfare of society, to promote and to protect the good and restrain and punish the evil.² It is the duty of Christians to pray³ for those in authority, to render due loyalty,⁴ respect, and obedience⁵ to them, and to pay taxes and customs demanded of them. Where demands of civil law militate against the supreme and higher law of God, Christians should obey God rather than man.⁶

¹ The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men' (Dan. 4:17).

² Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval (Rom. 13:1-3).

³ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way (1Tim. 2:1,2).

⁴ Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good (1Pe. 2:13,14).

⁵ Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work (Titus 3:1).

⁶ But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge" (Acts 4:19). But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Article 24 - Resurrection

24-1 The bodily resurrection of Christ is the basis for the resurrection of man.¹ At the return of the Lord the bodies of the righteous dead will be raised, and the living believers will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.² Believers will, at the resurrection, receive spiritual and immortal bodies like Christ's own glorious body.³

24-2 The event of the resurrection is divided into two stages, separated by a period of a thousand years and differing in respect to both their subjects and their issues.⁴ The first resurrection includes only the righteous dead.⁵ The second resurrection is universal and occurs at the close of the millennium when all the unregenerate dead are raised to be brought before the great White Throne for judgment.⁶

¹ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

² For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 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. 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. 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. Therefore encourage one another with these words (1Thes. 4:14-17).

³ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself (Phil. 3:20,21). For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me! (Job 19:25-27).

⁴ And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2). Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment (John 5:28,29).

⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. 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 (Rev. 20:5,6).

⁶ 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 (Rev. 20:13).

Article 25 - The Second Coming of Christ

25-1 The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is the personal, visible, bodily return of our Lord to this earth¹ to conform believers to His image and to establish the millennial kingdom. In connection with Christ's return there will be the resurrection of the righteous dead,² the rapture of the saints,³ the salvation of Israel,⁴ the great tribulation,⁵ and the inauguration of the millennial reign.⁶ Following the millennium will be the resurrection and judgment of the unrighteous. The righteous will be eternally glorified with Him; the unrighteous will be eternally punished.

25-2 The Second Coming is the believer's source of encouragement and comfort inspiring him to active service for Christ, and is a motive for purification and holy living.⁷

¹ 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? 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 (John 14:2,3). "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" (Acts 1:11).

² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is (1Jo. 3:2). Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed (1Cor. 15:51,52).

³ 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. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 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. 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. 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. Therefore encourage one another with these words (1Thes. 4:13-18).

⁴ A partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:25b, 26a).

⁵ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be (Mat. 24:21).

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 (Rev. 20:6).

⁷ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure (1Jo. 3:3).

Article 26 - The Judgments

26-1 The Scriptures enumerate several judgments that differ in time, place, subjects, and results. All judgment has been entrusted to the Son by the Father.¹

26-2 Through the death of Christ on the cross, the believer's sins have been judged, and he has passed from death unto life.² In no case do the redeemed come again into judgment concerning their eternal destiny. Each saint, however, will be required to give an account before the judgment seat of Christ regarding his works and conduct.³

26-3 The unregenerate will be judged, condemned, and banished to eternal damnation in the lake of fire.⁴

¹ The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son (John 5:22).

² Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life (John 5:24).

³ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). 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 (2Cor. 5:10).

⁴ 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. 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. 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. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

Article 27 - The Kingdom of God

27-1 God is the almighty Sovereign who reigns eternally over all His creation.¹ His kingdom triumphs forever according to His will. Even the sinful rebellion of mankind cannot defeat Him, but instead serves and glorifies Him.²

27-2 God's plan, demonstrated throughout human history, has been to reveal His kingship on earth by delegating kingly dominion to human beings as His image bearers.³ Through Adam's fall the exercise of this dominion has been corrupted, and man needs redemption in order to glorify God and reign in accordance with His will. As the Last Adam, Jesus in His humanity manifests the proper vice-regency of the kingdom of God for the purpose of redemption and restoration, which will ultimately usher in the glorious kingdom for which creation was destined.⁴ Thus, the kingdom of God is advanced in Jesus' life, death, resurrection, ascension, and His present reign.⁵ Acknowledging this reign, Christians confess Christ as Lord and willingly submit to His rulership in their personal lives and welcome His authority over all creation.⁶

27-3 The millennial reign of Christ is a further advancement of the kingdom whereby Jesus, through His second coming, brings His inaugurated kingdom to earth and makes it visible. During this reign, Christ will fulfil kingdom promises as He establishes righteousness, justice and peace throughout all creation.⁷ At the start of this period, saints will be resurrected bodily to join in the reign with Christ. Satan will be bound and his deceitful activities suspended. Nevertheless an undercurrent of human sinful resistance will continue through the millennium, though held in check as Christ rules with a rod of iron. At the end of this millennial reign, Satan will be released to lead a rebellion against God's people and the Lord Jesus. In a climactic manifestation of His kingship, Christ will defeat the rebellion.⁸

27-4 When Christ has subdued all enemies, including death, He will present the kingdom to His Father.⁹ The triune God will preside over a new heaven and a new earth, and the people of God will dwell with Him forever.¹⁰ All prophecies of Scripture will have been fulfilled. God's eternal kingship, having been established and vindicated by the royal exercise of the Son's authority, will at that time be present and manifest in full glory over all creation forever and ever.

¹ The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all (Psa. 103:19). His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation" (Dan. 4:34).

² The LORD works out everything for his own ends – even the wicked for a day of disaster (Prov. 16:4). Surely the wrath of men brings you praise, and with the remainder of wrath you arm yourself" (Psa. 76:10).

³ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Gen. 1:26).

⁴ For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ (Rom 5:17). The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Rom. 8:19-21).

⁵ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone (Heb. 2:9). For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'" (Acts 2:34-35). But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom" (Heb. 1:8).

⁶ If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved (Rom. 10:9-10). Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10).

⁷ I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. ... On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Rev. 19:11,16). He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore (Isa. 2:4). With righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked (Isa. 11:4).

⁸ He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ... When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth – Gog and Magog – to gather them for battle ... But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev. 20:2-4, 7-10).

⁹ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery (Psa. 2:8-9). Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

¹⁰ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away (Rev. 21:1). No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever (Rev. 22:3-5).

Article 28 - The Eternal State

28-1 There are two final, eternal destinies for man: heaven for the righteous and penitent, and hell for the unrighteous and impenitent.¹ At the great white throne judgment, all of the enemies of God will be consigned to the place of eternal conscious punishment, from which there is no escape.² The new heavens and the new earth shall be created³ as the final state in which the righteous shall dwell forever in the presence of God.⁴

¹ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life (Mat. 25:46).

² 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. 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. 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. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

³ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2Pe. 3:10-13).

⁴ 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 (Rev. 21:3).

100

**Biblical Principles
For Living**

Article 100-1 - Preamble

100-1.1 The Bible Fellowship Church sets forth these Biblical Principles for Living to inform and guide disciples of Jesus Christ in making moral decisions and living lives of obedience.

100-1.2 The BFC acknowledges the Scriptures as the supreme and final authority of faith and conduct and the Holy Spirit as the source of power and guidance for the believer. These principles are summaries of the biblical truth that reveals the Lord's directives in various aspects of life.

100-1.3 Increasing ethnic and cultural diversity in many of the churches and the prospect of new congregations being formed among various people groups have prompted the BFC to seek to state the principles so that they may be understood and applied by believers in any cultural context.

100-1.4 These principles are not exhaustive in that they do not cite all that the Bible says in any of the aspects included and that they do not cover all areas of life that the Scriptures address. In the future it may become apparent that additional aspects of life need to be addressed and that the current principles may need to be reconsidered with a view to amending them after further reflection on the biblical truth.

100-1.5 Every believer is accountable to God for all that the Bible says. Moral choices and actions should be based on the whole counsel of God. Each believer must faithfully read, study and review all parts of the Scriptures (2Tim.3:16,17).

100-1.6 In seeking moral guidance, the believer should study the Old Testament books of the Law with special focus on the Ten Commandments (Exo.20:1-17). The implications of the Law are explained and applied in the rest of the Old Testament.

100-1.7 The Lord Jesus summarized the Law in the Great Commandments (Mat. 22:34-40; Mark 12:30,31) and explained the spiritual depth of the Law in the Sermon on the Mount (Mat.5-7). The application of the Law in the individual life of the believer and the corporate life of the church is set forth in the New Testament letters.

100-1.8 Since each believer is indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit, there is an enabling to obey God's requirements (Rom.8:3,4). The Spirit-controlled person will demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22,23). He or she will receive and employ the gifts of the Spirit (1Pe.4:10,11; Rom.12:4-8; 1Cor.12:1-11). Where the life and power of the Holy Spirit are present in an individual or church, the three abiding qualities, faith, hope and love, will be evident (1Cor.13:13; 1Thes.1:3; Rom.5:1,2). The greatest of these is love, and "love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom.13:10).

101
Biblical Principles for
Living

Relating to God

The Christian Before God

Article 101-1 - Worship

101-1.1 Worship is response to God in all of life, whereby, in love, adoration, confession, thanksgiving, praise, and service God's worth is declared.¹ Worship is rooted in reverence for and awe of the Lord and deepens as knowledge of God increases.² Worship is the privilege and responsibility of each individual, family, and congregation. For the believer, worship is a lifestyle not limited by location or circumstance.

101-1.2 Worship is the ultimate purpose of the church. The mission of the church is to declare God's glory and His salvation to all ethnic groups so that some from all the families of nations shall worship Him.³ Corporate worship is the assembled church celebrating the glory of God and ascribing to Him praise and honor. Christ, the head of the church, meets with and strengthens His people, who are called out from the world by the Holy Spirit.⁴

101-1.3 God declares that He alone is to be worshiped⁵ and this worship must be in spirit and truth.⁶ Such worship engages both mind and emotion, listening and responding to God in joyful obedience, not simply in routine activity.⁷ For disobeying God's instructions and substituting their own form of worship,⁸ Israel was severely punished. We, therefore, seek to learn from the Bible what kinds of worship please the Lord.

101-1.4 Worship in the Old Testament was a celebration of the mighty acts of the Lord, the covenant God of Israel. Corporate worship was highlighted through prescribed ritual: a priesthood, a sacrificial system looking forward to Christ's atonement,⁹ and particular times and places when and where worship should occur.¹⁰ This ritual was not made valuable by its repetition.¹¹ Its value came through heartfelt, thoughtful response to God, uniting the worshipers.¹²

101-1.5 Worship in the New Testament is a celebration of the finished work of Christ, His victory over Satan, sin, and death through His own incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus claims for Himself authority over temple, Sabbath, sacrifice, and service.¹³ The former place, priesthood, and ritual were set aside¹⁴ as believers now observe¹⁵ a new day, the Lord's Day,¹⁶ and new ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.¹⁷

101-1.6 Examples of corporate worship in the New Testament include: the reading of Scripture, prayer, praise, confession, singing, giving, thanksgiving, preaching and teaching, and the ordinances.¹⁸ The expression of these may be shaped by the cultural setting of a particular church and must be done in a fitting and orderly way.¹⁹

¹ Psa.96:7-9; Rom.12:1

² Psa.96:4; 2:11

³ Psa.96; Rom.16:25-27; Rev.7:9-10

⁴ Eph.1:22,23

⁵ Exo.20:1-4

⁶ John 4:24

⁷ Mat.15:7-9; 1Cor.14:15,16

⁸ 1Kgs.12:25-13:10

⁹ Heb.9:13,14

¹⁰ Exo.20-40

¹¹ Isa.29:13

¹² Psa.51:16,17; 84:1,2

¹³ Mark 2:18-28

¹⁴ Heb.10:8-18

¹⁵ Heb.10:19-25

¹⁶ John 20:19,26; Acts 20:7

¹⁷ Mat.28:18-20; 1Cor.11:23-26

¹⁸ Acts 2:42-47; 4:23-37; 1Tim.4:13

¹⁹ 1Cor.14:40

Article 101-2 - Prayer

101-2.1 Prayer is a drawing near in our hearts to the living and triune God.¹ In prayer we express our praise² and thanksgiving³ to our sovereign God. We confess our sin⁴ and ask Him to give to us what we need and desire⁵ according to His will.

101-2.2 Prayer is the natural way that the child of God communicates with his heavenly Father.⁶ This relationship was formed because of the death and resurrection of Christ, by whom we have bold access to the Father.⁷ Without this union in Christ, we could never hope to speak to and be heard by the sovereign God of the universe.⁸ The believer's prayer, offered in the name of Jesus,⁹ by the power of the Holy Spirit,¹⁰ is a means of receiving the promises of God's Word.¹¹ While God may hear the prayer of an unbeliever,¹² the unbeliever has no assurance or guarantee that the Lord will answer his prayer.

101-2.3 The Scriptures give much instruction on prayer. Jesus Himself demonstrated the need for prayer in his earthly life and ministry. The Lord taught His disciples a model prayer.¹³ In the model prayer Jesus revealed that the believer is privileged to address God as Father. Jesus taught that we should pray for God's name to be seen as holy. Jesus emphasized praying about the plan of God in the world. Jesus instructed believers to pray that their daily, physical needs would be met. Jesus also instructed believers to pray that our sins be forgiven, temptation be avoided and the evil one be resisted.¹⁴

101-2.4 Prayer that is acceptable to God is not so much the right words but the right heart.¹⁵ This includes freedom from known sin,¹⁶ an unforgiving spirit,¹⁷ and selfish desires.¹⁸ Acceptable prayer includes asking in faith¹⁹ with an attitude of never giving up.²⁰ Right prayer is both powerful and effective.²¹

101-2.5 God's people are encouraged to come together to pray.²² In the Old Testament, the assembling of Israel for prayer was for dedication,²³ worship,²⁴ confession,²⁵ and for petition in time of great need and crisis.²⁶ In Acts, the Church came together corporately for times of devoted prayer.²⁷ Therefore, the local church ought to gather together to worship the Lord in prayer,²⁸ to seek God's guidance,²⁹ to ask God's protection in times of persecution,³⁰ to pray for one another³¹, and to pray for openness to the gospel.³²

101-2.6 The practice of fasting in Scripture is often associated with prayer. To fast is to voluntarily abstain from food,³³ or from anything else that is legitimate in and of itself,³⁴ for the purpose of spending more time and intensity in prayer and worship.³⁵ Fasting is a statement that we want our appetite for God to be greater than our physical appetites. The reasons that

may prompt us to fast include a personal or national crisis,³⁶ a sense of contrition and repentance over sin,³⁷ and a desire to seek the Lord and His help.³⁸ The New Testament does not require believers to fast, but in His teachings, Jesus expects that they will fast.³⁹ The early church practiced corporate fasting at times.⁴⁰

101-2.7 God hears and responds to the prayers of the righteous.⁴¹ God often responds differently than we ask,⁴² but always according to His perfect plan and will.⁴³ Our joyful responsibility is to submit to His answers and trust His grace. Prayers that magnify the name of God, glorify Him, and seek to fulfill His purposes in this world,⁴⁴ are prayers that He answers according to His timing for His glory and our good.⁴⁵ While God is fully capable of accomplishing these purposes on His own, He chooses to use the prayers of His children to fulfill them.

¹ Psalm 62:8; Heb. 4:16, 10:22

² 1 Chron. 29:10-13

³ Phil. 4:6

⁴ Psalm 32:5, 139:23-24; Acts 8:22

⁵ Matt. 7:7-11; 1 Tim. 2:1

⁶ Matt. 6:9; Rom. 8:15

⁷ Heb. 4:14-16, 6:19, 10:19-22

⁸ Psalm 66:18; John 9:31

⁹ John 14:12-14; 16:23-24

¹⁰ Rom. 8:26-27; Eph. 6:18; Jude 20

¹¹ Neh. 1:8-11

¹² Gen. 20:4-5; 1 Kings 8:41-43; Acts 10:2-4

¹³ Matt. 6:9-13

¹⁴ 1 Peter 5:8-9

¹⁵ Psalm 66:18-19

¹⁶ Prov. 15:29, 28:9; Isa. 1:15, 59:1-2

¹⁷ Mark 11:25

¹⁸ James 4:2-3; 1 Peter 3:7

¹⁹ Mark 11:23-24

²⁰ Luke 18:1, Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17

²¹ James 5:16-18; Eph. 3:20-21

²² Col. 4:2-4; Matt. 18:19

²³ 1 Chron. 29:10-20

²⁴ 2 Chron. 6:12-42

²⁵ Ezra 9:4-15

²⁶ 2 Chron. 20:5-13

²⁷ Acts 1:14, 2:42, 12:5, 12

²⁸ Acts 13:2-3

²⁹ Acts 1:24

³⁰ Acts 4:24-31

³¹ Col. 1:9

³² Col. 4:2-4; 2 Thess. 3:1

³³ Matt. 4:2 cp. Luke 4:2

³⁴ 1 Cor. 7:5

³⁵ Luke 2:37

³⁶ Neh. 1:4; Esther 4:3

³⁷ Joel 2:12

³⁸ 2 Chron. 20:3; Ezra 8:21-23

³⁹ Matt. 6:16, 9:15

⁴⁰ Acts 13:2-3, 14:23

⁴¹ Prov. 15:29

⁴² Luke 22:42; Heb. 5:7

⁴³ 1 John 5:14-15

⁴⁴ Matt. 6:9-10, John 14:13-14

⁴⁵ 2 Cor. 12:7-9

Article 101-3 - Spirit World

101-3.1 God is spirit¹ and has created everything, including the visible and the invisible.² The invisible includes a great number³ of spirit beings. Among these are angels, who are without flesh⁴ and remain invisible except when supernaturally revealed.⁵ Angels surround God's throne to worship and serve Him.⁶ They are powerful⁷ and are sent as God pleases⁸, to provide and care for,⁹ to protect and deliver,¹⁰ to instruct and guide,¹¹ to discipline and punish.¹² They long to comprehend fully the grace of salvation and rejoice over each sinner who repents.¹³ God also created human beings, who are spirit¹⁴ and flesh, to worship and serve Him as God alone.¹⁵

101-3.2 A created angelic being, later known as the devil or Satan, rebelled against God.¹⁶ Within limits allowed by the sovereign God,¹⁷ Satan leads a powerful world system of wickedness which is hostile toward God and His purposes.¹⁸ Satan may inflict pain, suffering, and emotional problems, and may cause death.¹⁹ He can control people to oppose the work of God, blind their minds to prevent their understanding the Gospel, and oppress the servants of God.²⁰ Anyone not led by the Holy Spirit is open to Satan's influence.²¹ He seeks to influence nations and governments.²² Satan is a masterful deceiver, appearing at times as an angel of light and called the father of lies.²³ False prophets, false religions, and cults are instruments of deception.²⁴ Those blinded and deceived by Satan live a lifestyle that is opposed to God.²⁵

101-3.3 Other angels followed Satan in his rebellion against God. These fallen angels, also known as evil spirits or demons, serve Satan, the god of this evil world system.²⁶ Satan and evil spirits can influence the believer²⁷ and possess unregenerate people and animals.²⁸ God has enabled believers to cast out demons by His Spirit.²⁹ God may continue to give this enablement; however, the casting out of demons is not in itself reason for boasting and not necessarily an evidence of an individual's relationship with Christ.³⁰

101-3.4 Believers are commanded to stand against the evil spirit world³¹ and are warned against such detestable things as divination, witchcraft, sorcery, interpreting of omens, casting of spells, and consulting the dead. These things are devices that Satan uses to lure people toward destruction. People who practice these things are under the condemnation of God.³² Because of Satan's power, victory is possible only through our Lord Jesus Christ.³³ Through the blood of Christ that was shed on the cross, God has provided victory over this world system for those born of God.³⁴ In prayerful dependence upon God, they are protected from and victorious over the powers of darkness as they use all the armor God provides, submissively draw near to Him, and resist the devil.³⁵

101-3.5 The sovereign God is in control of the entire social, political, and spiritual realm.³⁶ God will cast Satan and all his followers into the lake of fire, which has been prepared for them, where they will remain forever.³⁷ The kingdom of this world will one day become the kingdom of our Lord and He will reign forever and ever.³⁸

¹ John 4:24

² Neh.9:6; Psa.148:2-6; Col.1:16

³ Dan.7:9-10; Rev.5:11

⁴ Luke 24:39; Eph.6:12; Heb.1:14

⁵ Gen.28:12; Luke 2:8-13; Mat.28:1-6

⁶ Psa.89:5-7; Isa.6:1-8; Rev.7:11-12

⁷ 2Chr.32:21; Acts 12:5-11; 2 Pe.2:11

⁸ Psa.103:20-21

⁹ Gen.24:7, 40; 1Kgs.19:5-8; Gen.21:17-19; Luke 22:43

¹⁰ Exo.23:20; Psa.91:11-13; Dan.6:22; Num.20:15,16; Psa.34:7; Acts 5:19-20

¹¹ Luke 1:26-37; Acts 27:23-26; Rev.1:1; Mat.2:13; Acts 8:26; 10:3-6

¹² Luke 1:18-20; 2Sam.24:16-17; Acts 12:23

¹³ 1Pe.1:10-12; Luke 15:10

¹⁴ Rom.8:16; 1Thes.5:23

¹⁵ Exo.20:3-5; John 4:23-24

¹⁶ Eze.28:13-16; Rev.12:9

¹⁷ Job 1:10-12; Psa.103:19; Pro.21:1; Col.2:9-10

¹⁸ Eph.6:11-12; 1Jo.2:15-17; 5:19

¹⁹ Job 1:8-20; Luke 13:10-16; John 8:44

²⁰ Mat.16:23; Luke 22:3-4; 2Cor.4:4; 2Tim.2:25-26

²¹ Mat.12:43-45; Acts 5:3; Eph.4:27

²² Acts 4:25-26; Rev.20:3

²³ 2Cor.11:13-15; John 8:44

²⁴ Acts 13:6-11; 2Thes.2:9-10

²⁵ John 8:37-38,41; Eph.2:1-3

²⁶ Mat.25:41; Eph.6:11-12; Rev.12:9

²⁷ 2Cor.11:12-15; Eph.4:25-27; 1Pe.5:8,9

²⁸ Mat. 8:28-32; Mark 5:2,6-13

²⁹ Mark 3:14-15; Acts 8:6-7; 16:18; Mat.12:28

³⁰ Mat.7:22-23; Mark 9:38-40; Luke 10:20

³¹ Eph.6:10-14; James. 4:7; 1Pe.5:8-10

³² Exo.20:4,5; Lev.19:26; Deu.18:10-14,20; Isa.8:19,20

³³ Rom.8:37-39; 2Thes.3:3; 1Pe.1:3-7

³⁴ 1Cor.15:57-58; Col.2:13-15; 1Jo.5:4-6

³⁵ Eph.6:13-18; James 4:7-8; Rev.12:10-11

³⁶ Job 1:1-2:13; Psa.2:1-12

³⁷ Mat.25:41,46; Rev.20:10,14-15

³⁸ Dan.7:13-14; Zec.14:9; Rev.11:15

102
**Biblical Principles for
Living**

Relating to Personal Qualities

The Christian in Christ

Article 102-1 - Holiness

102-1.1 God is holy.¹ He is separate from and superior to all creation.² He is absolutely pure and good.³ He cannot sin and hates sin.⁴ Because He is holy, He calls people to holiness.⁵

102-1.2 Holiness involves a setting apart a dedicating or devoting of someone or something for a special purpose.⁶ Believers are set apart for God and called saints, or holy ones.⁷ The Bible reveals the holiness of God and declares His standard for a holy life.⁸ God's law teaches all people are sinners and His Spirit convicts of sin.⁹ All those who belong to God are, through the work of Christ, declared holy and are responsible to live holy lives.¹⁰ God's purpose is that every believer, through the experiences of this life, be changed into the likeness of His Son.¹¹

102-1.3 Sanctification, or holy living, is progressively realized by the power of the Holy Spirit.¹² For Christians, there is to be a separation from all forms of evil, and a full surrender to the Lord.¹³ Believers should not participate in any group which demands behavior or an affirmation of beliefs that are opposed to our allegiance to Christ.¹⁴ They are not to continue any longer in the sinful ways of the world but should rather seek to have all thoughts and actions conformed to the revealed will of God.¹⁵ Sin's control and its continued practice must cease.¹⁶

102-1.4 The church is also called to holiness.¹⁷ Believers are to encourage one another to live righteously,¹⁸ warn against the dangers of all sin,¹⁹ confess and repent of all individual and corporate sin,²⁰ and submit to discipline as taught by the Lord.²¹ Christian leaders have a particular responsibility to set proper examples of holy living.²²

¹ Exo.15:11; Psa.99:9; Isa.6:3

² Psa.89:5-8; Isa.57:15; Rev.15:4

³ Psa.33:5; Hab.1:13; James 1:13

⁴ Exo.34:6-7; Psa.5:4-6; 1Jo.1:5

⁵ Lev.10:3; 19:2; Acts 17:30, 31

⁶ Exo.20:8; Deu.7:6; 1Pe.2:9-10

⁷ 1Cor.1:2; Rom.1:7; Heb.12:14

⁸ Exo.20:1-17; Mat.22:37-40; James 2:10

⁹ Rom.3:19-20; John 16:7-14; 1Tim.1:8-11

¹⁰ Rom.3:23-26; Rom.8:1-17; Heb.10:10

¹¹ Rom.8:28-29; Phil.1:6; 2Pe.1:3-4

¹² Rom.8:26-30; 2Cor.3:18; 2Thes.2:13

¹³ 2Cor.6:14-7:1; Eph.4:17-5:14

¹⁴ Mat.6:24; Acts 4:19,20; Rom.12:1, 2;

1Cor.7:23; Eph.5:11

¹⁵ Rom.12:1-2; Col.3:9-10; 1Pe.1:13-16

¹⁶ Rom.6:1-14; Titus 2:11-14; 1Pe.2:11-12;

1Jo.2:13

¹⁷ 1Cor.3:16-17; Eph.5:25-27

¹⁸ Gal.6:1-2; Heb.10:23-25

¹⁹ 1Thes.5:14; James 5:19-20

²⁰ Pro.18:13; 1Cor.5:1-2; 2Cor.2:5-8; 1Jo.1:9;

Rev.3:19

²¹ Mat.18:15-17

²² Phil.3:17; Heb.13:7; 1Pe.5:1-3

Article 102-2 - Justice

102-2.1 By nature God is morally perfect and righteous in every way. To say that God is just is to affirm the rightness of His law and His faithful and consistent adherence to that law in His judgments.¹ Justice is the perfect application of His law in the lives of human beings. Both human law and the application of that law can distort God's justice and therefore be sinful and produce sin. Sin causes human beings to enact and apply laws in ways that are unjust.² Because God is just, He abhors the distortions of His law.³

102-2.2 In a world of sinful people, injustice results when human beings are judged by such things as color of skin, ethnicity, gender, age, social, economic and occupational status. To evaluate people based on such external characteristics is inconsistent with faith in Jesus Christ.⁴ Those who value people in this way are acting out of ungodly cultural biases and sinful pride.⁵ Injustice also results when persons allow their own sinful motivations, such as greed,⁶ jealousy,⁷ and envy,⁸ to shape their relationships with other people. In Jesus Christ such wicked and false distinctions or motivations are abolished.⁹

102-2.3 God's love for humankind knows no racial, national, economic, age, or gender boundaries and God's people must demonstrate this same impartial love.¹⁰ The proclamation of the gospel to every person regardless of location or status will be a matter of great priority among those who love justice.¹¹

102-2.4 Those who value justice will seek consistent and upright applications of human law so that no one is denied due process because of sinful distinctions.¹² Those who love justice will seek truth and act with integrity in all relationships.

102-2.5 The quest for justice in a world distorted by sin will often yield imperfect and incomplete results. The people of God who love justice will repent when they recognize their failure to do justice and will renew their efforts to bring justice to those who have been denied it.¹³

¹ Deu.10:17,18; Isa.5:6

² Deu.16:19,20

³ Isa.10:1, 2

⁴ James 2:1-4

⁵ Lev.19:5

⁶ Col. 3:5

⁷ James 3:14

⁸ Gal.5:25,26

⁹ Gal.3:28; Eph.2:14-16

¹⁰ Acts 10:34-36

¹¹ Rom.3:9; 1Tim.2:3,4

¹² Gen.18:19

¹³ Mic.6:8

Article 102-3 - Mercy

102-3.1 Mercy, the unmerited response to human need,¹ finds its source and highest expression in God, in Whom justice and mercy meet in perfect harmony.² Rather than overlook sin, God showed His mercy most clearly and fully by giving His beloved Son to die in our place.³

102-3.2 God the Father demonstrated His mercy in providing salvation.⁴ God the Son became the supreme example of that mercy in offering Himself for our sins.⁵ Jesus offered forgiveness to the sinner,⁶ acceptance to the rejected,⁷ healing to the afflicted,⁸ food to the hungry,⁹ comfort to the bereaved,¹⁰ and life to the dead.¹¹

102-3.3 God's intention is that mercy characterize His people.¹² In extending mercy, we should pattern ourselves after our Head, Jesus Christ.¹³ The church and its individual members are called to a ministry of mercy-giving,¹⁴ which aids in our growth and assurance of salvation.¹⁵

102-3.4 Our ministry of mercy may be limited by our resources, our discernment, and the Word of God,¹⁶ but it must never be limited by our bias against any group or individual.¹⁷ In all humility, each congregation ought to search itself for the presence of any cultural arrogance, of social or racial prejudice, or of ungodly complacency, all of which will hinder the offering of mercy. In some cases a congregation will need to repent of its sinful attitudes.

¹ Titus 3:5-7

² Exo.34:6,7; Psa.89:14

³ Rom.3:21-26

⁴ Eph.2:4,5

⁵ Heb.2:17

⁶ Mat.9:2-6

⁷ Mat.9:9-13

⁸ Mat.9:35,36

⁹ Mat.14:13-21

¹⁰ John 11:32-38

¹¹ John 11:25,26,43,44

¹² Mic.6:8; Mat.23:23

¹³ Phil.2:1-4

¹⁴ Mat.25:34-40; Gal.6:10; James 1:27

¹⁵ 1Jo.3:17-19

¹⁶ 2Thes.3:10; 2Jo.10,11

¹⁷ Luke 10:30-37; Mat.5:44-46

Article 102-4 - Humility

102-4.1 Humility is an attitude of heart and mind perfectly exemplified in the person and life of Christ.¹ It characterizes those united with Christ,² pleases God,³ and shapes both the life of the community of faith⁴ and the ministry of the Lord's servants.⁵ The opposite of humility is pride, which meets divine resistance and anger.⁶

102-4.2 Humility is an acceptance of one's true position in relationship to God,⁷ authorities, other believers,⁸ society,⁹ and all of creation.¹⁰ Its reality is demonstrated in joyful service and appropriate submission, seen most clearly in the willing self-sacrifice of Christ.

102-4.3 In the individual Christian, humility recognizes the grace of God, which has made each believer to be accepted in Christ. This viewpoint becomes a source of forgiveness and patience within the Christian community.¹¹ The Christian's love for others is greatly aided by the development of godly humility.

102-4.4 The unique servant quality of Christian leadership is a direct result of godly humility. Elders of the church do not dominate the congregation but are servants to the whole body.¹² They do not desire to control, but rather to promote the development and enrichment of every member. As heirs of grace together with their brothers and sisters, Christian leaders must renounce the pride which creates divisions and factions¹³ based on secondary theological issues,¹⁴ on areas of Christian liberty,¹⁵ or merely on personalities.¹⁶

102-4.5 Humility encourages each church to cooperate with believers in gospel outreach,¹⁷ compels us to seek to meet needs of others,¹⁸ and causes us to be advocates for those who have none.¹⁹ Concern shown for the disadvantaged in our world must be expressed through ministries of mercy²⁰ and efforts to promote the growth of the congregation among all kinds of people.²¹

¹ Phil.2:5-11

² Phil.2:1-3

³ James 4:6

⁴ Eph.4:1,2

⁵ 1Cor.3:6-9

⁶ Pro.3:34; James 4:6; 1Pe.5:5

⁷ 1Pe.5:6; Luke 18:14

⁸ Eph.4:2; Phil.2:3

⁹ Luke 14:11

¹⁰ Psal.8

¹¹ Col.3:12,13

¹² 1Pe.5:2,3

¹³ 1Cor.1:10

¹⁴ Gal.5:6; Eph.4:2,3

¹⁵ Rom.14,15

¹⁶ 1Cor.3:5; 4:6,7

¹⁷ Luke 9:49,50; Phil.1:15-18

¹⁸ Gal.6:9,10

¹⁹ Psal.82:3,4; Pro.31:8, 9; Isa.1:17

²⁰ Rom.12:14-16

²¹ Luke 10: 25-37; James 2:5-10

Article 102-5 - Truth and Integrity

102-5.1 The Triune God — God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit — is the only true God.¹ God the Father is the God of truth,² who has never lied,³ and never will. He is absolutely truthful.⁴ Jesus, who is God the Son, is the truth.⁵ He is full of grace and truth.⁶ He always tells the truth.⁷ God the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth.⁸ He is the truth⁹ and He guides believers into all truth.¹⁰

102-5.2 The Word of God is truth¹¹ and is the standard for truth. Truth does not change¹² and the opposite of truth is falsehood. God desires¹³ and requires¹⁴ that all people speak the truth. His directives for truthfulness are found in the third¹⁵ and ninth¹⁶ commandments. Truth is truth even if it is not understood or fully disclosed.¹⁷ The failure to be truthful, including deceitfulness, is sin.¹⁸ Lying is among the sins of unbelievers that will be judged in hell.¹⁹ Believers who lie are disciplined by the Lord, possibly even to the point of death.²⁰

102-5.3 The believer and the believing community are commanded to be truthful.²¹ This includes keeping promises and honoring contracts, whether written or oral. In speaking the truth believers may formally call God to witness with an oath or simply affirm the truth of their statements.²² The Christian and the church must keep their promises even when it is costly to do so.²³

102-5.4 In the Scriptures, truth and integrity stand together.²⁴ Integrity is soundness, wholeness, consistency of character. Without truth there is no integrity.²⁵ God is pleased with integrity²⁶ and judges accordingly.²⁷ Integrity protects believers²⁸ and upholds them through difficult times in life.²⁹ It provides security and guidance for a believer's life.³⁰ All teaching of God's truth must show integrity.³¹ Truth and integrity must be lived out in love so that the body of Christ might mature.³²

102-5.5 To fail to keep one's word is a lack of integrity, betraying the trust of others and dishonoring the God of truth.³³

¹ John 17:3

² Isa.65:16

³ Num.23:19; Titus 1:2

⁴ Isa.45:23; John 3:33

⁵ John 14:6

⁶ John 1:14; Eph.4:21

⁷ John 8:40,45,46; 16:7; Rev.3:7,14 ¹⁹ Psa.5:6,9,10; Rev.21:8;

⁸ John 14:16, 17; 1Jo.4:6

⁹ 1Jo.5:7

¹⁰ John 14:16,17, 26

¹¹ John 17:17

¹² Psa.119:89,160

¹³ Psa.51:6

¹⁴ Exo.23:1; Psa.34:12-14;

Eph.4:15,25

¹⁵ Exo.20:7; Lev.19:12

¹⁶ Exo.20:16

¹⁷ Mark 4:33,34; John 16:12

¹⁸ Mark 7:22; Rom.1:29

¹⁹ Psa.5:6,9,10; Rev.21:8;

22:14,15

²⁰ Jer.9:4-9; Acts 5:1-10

²¹ Col.3:8,9

²² Mat.26:63,64; 2Cor.1:23;

Heb.6:16,17; James 5:12

²³ Psa.15:1-4

²⁴ Job 27:4,5; Mat.22:15,16;

2Cor.1:17-20

²⁵ Isa.59:3,4

²⁶ 1Chr.29:17

²⁷ Psa.7:8

²⁸ Psa.25:21

²⁹ Psa.41:12

³⁰ Pro.10:9; 11:3

³¹ Titus 2:7

³² Eph.4:14-16

³³ Mat.5:33-37

103

**Biblical Principles for
Living**

Relating to Personal Relationships

**The Christian in Personal
Relationships**

Article 103-1 - Humanity in God's Image

103-1.1 The human race exists as a result of an instantaneous creative act of God.¹ Humanity shares many characteristics with other creatures, but is unique in that each individual bears the image or likeness of God.² This image makes possible the worship of God,³ relationships between persons,⁴ and responsibility to rule over God's creation.⁵ Only God confers this image, and it cannot be removed by any created being. Originally God's image in humanity included true righteousness and holiness; but by the entrance of sin into humanity these have been lost⁶ and the image distorted yet not destroyed.⁷

103-1.2 Because human beings are made in God's image, every person has a unique identity, individual worth, and purpose to live for God's glory.⁸ The image of God is also the basis for the dignity of every person. All human life should be cherished and protected, not neglected, despised or abused. God forbids the unlawful destruction of human life, both murder and suicide, and provides the strongest of sanctions, including capital punishment, to protect it.⁹ The killing of the weak and defenseless by means of abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia is a crime against both those persons and the God whose image they bear. Christians should exert every effort to oppose these evils in society, and other evils as defined and condemned by Scripture,¹⁰ including racism;¹¹ cultural bias;¹² gender discrimination;¹³ ignoring the poor,¹⁴ disabled¹⁵ and aged;¹⁶ and every other form of injustice against human beings.¹⁷ They should respect the image of God in every person despite the sins of that person or the consequences of those sins.¹⁸ They should also work to protect the dignity of every human being.¹⁹

¹ Gen.1:26, 27; 2:7

² Gen.5:1

³ Gen.3:8-9; Acts 17:26-28

⁴ Gen.2:18,23

⁵ Gen.1:28; 2:15; Psa.8:3-8

⁶ Eph.4:24; Col.3:10

⁷ James 3:9

⁸ Psa.139:1-18

⁹ Exo.20:13; Gen.9:6

¹⁰ Pro.24:11-12

¹¹ Deu.10:17-19; Gal.2:6

¹² Acts 10:27,28; 1Cor.9:19-23

¹³ Mark 10:6,10-12; Gal.3:28,29

¹⁴ Pro.14:31; 21:13; James 2:1-4

¹⁵ Lev.19:14; Deu.27:18

¹⁶ Lev.19:32; 1Tim.5:1,2

¹⁷ Deu.27:19; Acts 20:35

¹⁸ 1Cor.6:9-11; James 3:9

¹⁹ Rom.13:8-10; 12:10

Article 103-2 - Repentance and Restitution

103-2.1 God commands every person to repent.¹ Without repentance there is no salvation.² Repentance is a work of the Holy Spirit, producing change of mind and heart that leads to a changed life.

103-2.2 For the believer, repentance is a daily obligation to live according to the Word of God. When believers sin, they should repent and confess their sins. When they do this, the Lord promises forgiveness and cleansing.³

103-2.3 People who repent are to produce fruit of repentance in their lives.⁴ One fruit of repentance for the believer who has sinned is to make restitution for any loss the sin caused other people. Restitution is a demonstration of repentance. Believers should make restitution⁵ in accordance with the Word of God to satisfy the righteousness of God.

103-2.4 Restitution involves restoration to the offended party of that which was lost through injury to reputation, life, limb or property which has been destroyed, lost, stolen, or damaged due to one's sin, negligence or carelessness. Restitution was commanded by the Lord God in the Law.⁶ It is reiterated in the Proverbs⁷ and the prophets.⁸ It was advocated by John the Baptist⁹ and practiced by Zacchaeus the chief tax collector.¹⁰ Jesus directed His followers to settle any claims that anyone had against them, even before going to the Lord in worship.¹¹ Such settlement would include restitution of any loss suffered by others. Restitution is taught by the Apostle Paul in his letter to Philemon¹² and implied in his letter to the Ephesians.¹³

¹ Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30

² Luke 13:3, 5

³ 1Jo.1:9; Pro.28:13

⁴ Mat.3:8; Acts 26:20

⁵ Rom.13:7-10

⁶ Exo.21:26-36; 22:1-15; Lev.6:1-7; 24:18; Num.5:5-8

⁷ Pro.6:30,31

⁸ Eze.33:14-16

⁹ Luke 3:7-14

¹⁰ Luke 19:8,9

¹¹ Mat.5:23,24

¹² Phile.18,19

¹³ Eph.4:28

Article 103-3 - Sexual Holiness

103-3.1 A life of sexual holiness is a life lived by faith, believing that what God says about the purposes and parameters of sexual expression is both true and good.¹ When a believer's thoughts and actions are not in conformity to the revealed will of God, they are to repent of their sin, submit to His lordship, and pursue delight in what God has ordained.

103-3.2 The purpose of sexual expression and the gendered roles we play in it has been given to mankind by his Creator. The sexual union between a man and a woman was created, in part, to image the unity of the Godhead and God's covenantal relationship with His people.² In addition, sexual union was given for the procreation of children and for the mutual enjoyment of husband and wife.³

God created the human race into two complementary sexes ("male and female") and determines each person's sex/gender at conception. This distinction of male and female is the first fact mentioned in connection with mankind being made in the image of God.⁴ The first marriage, and thus the first sexual act, was a recognition, expression, and celebration of this complementary distinction. God designed sexual union such that two complementary sexual halves, one man and one woman, come together and become a sexual whole.

The Bible refers to this sexual union as becoming "one flesh." This "one flesh" sexual union between the first man and his wife establishes the pattern and standard of sexual expression for all of humanity.⁵ The participation in, or promotion of, any sexual act other than this "one flesh" union, within the marriage covenant,⁶ or the willful neglect of this sexual union is a sinful disregard of its intended purpose and fails to glorify God in our bodies.⁷

Sexual expression is authorized within the bond of marriage between male and female. God's name is glorified when the sexual union between male and female within the bond of marriage is honored and protected.⁸ God is dishonored when His design for sexual union is disregarded and perverted, and He will not allow this perversion to go unpunished.⁹ In addition, sexual expression outside the biblical standard corrupts the ideal in human relationships and prevents human flourishing.¹⁰

As sexual expression and sexual union are God's design and created according to His purpose, it is sinful for a man or woman to give in to the temptation to pursue or engage in changing the sex or gender given by God.

103-3.3 There is hope in Jesus Christ for the sexual sinner, not only for forgiveness but also for the transformation and redirection of life.¹¹ The battle against improper sexual desires may persist until our weak and fallen bodies are raised anew with Christ, but the present resurrection power of the indwelling Holy Spirit enables the repentant sinner to overcome the controlling influences of sinful fleshly impulses.¹² When a person comes to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, he is freed from sin's guilt through forgiveness and liberated from sin's tyrannical power by the Holy Spirit.¹³

103-3.4 We are to approach all sin, including sexual sin in the Church, with humility and sacrificial resolve.¹⁴ We need to recognize and convey that we are all

fallen creatures¹⁵ whose present joy and hope lies in the result of Christ's persistent and tender mercy on our behalf. We need to demonstrate that same mercy with one another as we heal and grow together as rescued sinners into the fullness of Christ. In love, we must also exhort all who profess faith in Christ to obey His commands and pursue His holiness in all facets of their lives. If that appeal is rejected and sexual sin persists without repentance, we must be willing to pursue loving discipline with the hope of restoring the sinner and guarding the life of Christ's body.¹⁶

¹ Gen. 1:27, 2:24; 1 Cor. 6:19-20.

² Gen. 2:24; Mark 10:6-9 (cf. Deut. 6:4); Mal. 2:14-15; 1 Cor. 6:14-19; Eph. 5:30-32.

³ Gen 1:27-28; Song of Solomon 7:6.

⁴ Gen 1:27.

⁵ Gen. 2:24; Mal. 2:14; Matt. 19:4; Mk. 10:7-8; 1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:31.

⁶ Mal. 2:14.

⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:2-5.

⁸ Gen. 2:24; 1 Cor. 7:1-5; 1 Cor. 6:9-11, 13, 18-20; Eph. 5:30-32; Heb. 13:4.

⁹ Lev. 18:1-30; Ex. 20:14; Matt. 5:28; Rom. 1:25-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5-6; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; 1 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 13:4; Jude 7; Rev. 21:8, 22:15.

¹⁰ Gen. 19:30-38; 2 Sam. 11:3-12:23; Ps. 51; 2 Sam. 13; Matt. 14:1-12; Mk. 6:14-29.

¹¹ 1 Cor.6:11.

¹² Gal. 5:16-25; Titus 2:11-14.

¹³ Rom.8:1,2.

¹⁴ Gal. 6:1.

¹⁵ Rom. 3:9, 23; Pro. 20:9.

¹⁶ Matt. 18:15-17.

Article 103-4 - The Family

103-4.1 The family was divinely ordained by God at creation and is basic in God's dealings with man. God's revealed pattern for the family is the marriage of one man and one woman and includes their children and others who may reside with them. Each marriage establishes a new family.¹

103-4.2 The foundation for right relationships in the family is submission, one to another, out of reverence for Christ.² The husband is the head of the family as Christ is the head of the church.³ As such, he should fear the Lord; love, nurture, and encourage his family; provide materially for them; take the lead in burden bearing and problem-solving; and through godly living and prayer give them wise and effective spiritual leadership.⁴ He is to love his wife and live with her in a compassionate and understanding way.⁵ The wife should fear the Lord,⁶ submit to and respect her husband as the church is to submit to Christ,⁷ and demonstrate loving and diligent concern for her household.⁸ The marriage covenant is defined as a man and woman committing themselves to a unique, exclusive, and lifelong relationship with each other and becoming "one flesh"⁹ under God's authority as found in the Bible.

103-4.3 God instituted the covenant of marriage prior to the fall of mankind in Adam's sin. When sin entered the world, the effects of sin corrupted all things. The marriage covenant between a man and his wife was also corrupted.¹⁰ It is only in Christ, as husband and wife submit to Him, that there is hope for marriage as God intended.

One of the most destructive sins in the marriage relationship is that of spousal abuse. Spousal abuse is the physical, emotional, or sexual mistreatment of the marriage partner. Such abuse is clearly put forward as sin in God's Word.¹¹ It is any kind of behavior that a person uses, or threatens to use, to control one's spouse. This is a distortion of God's revealed design for marriage.¹² It is a clear violation of Christ's command to love one another¹³ and Paul's admonition to do no wrong to your neighbor.¹⁴ It is enslaving a spouse rather than giving of oneself. It instills fear rather than developing holiness, and corrupts the relationship rather than cleanses. It is treating a spouse as an enemy rather than offering Christ-like sacrificial love. It is the opposite of caring for one's spouse as one would one's own body. Abuse devalues the marriage in order to establish personal superiority.

The Church is to rebuke the abuser for his/her sin and exhort the abuser to confess, repent, and be reconciled through Christ.¹⁵ When a church member abuses a spouse, the Bible requires that fellow believers use the means of church discipline in order to urge the individual to repent and be restored. The Church shall act for the protection of the abused and give comfort¹⁶ and hope

in the gospel.^{17**}

** Refer to the 2015 Yearbook, pp. 140-143, for guidelines as the church ministers to people in spousal abuse situations.

103-4.4 The biblical pattern for a married couple is to have children and to manage the home.¹⁸ Some may elect not to have children for valid reasons. Other couples may choose to adopt children. Adoption is a God-honoring way to demonstrate unconditional love by building families and bringing up children in a loving and godly home.¹⁹ Some couples may be providentially prevented from having children. In each of these cases the church must not be judgmental.²⁰ Where married couples choose to use artificial birth control, great care must be exercised to use only those forms which clearly do not cause an abortion.²¹

103-4.5 When more than one income seems necessary and added employment is considered, the couple must carefully evaluate the impact on their relationship and children.²² The decision should be made only after prayer, interaction, counsel,²³ and mutual consent.²⁴

103-4.6 Within the church there exist family units such as single-parent and blended families as well as never-married adult singles who are a part of family units that require special attention and mercy from the church. With prayer, loving support, wise counsel, and God's abundant grace these families and individuals can be nurtured.²⁵ The church should gladly and unwaveringly supply comfort, encouragement, affirmation, and deep fellowship for all family units and individuals of family units for the ministry of the Word.²⁶

103-4.7 Children are gifts and blessings from God.²⁷ The family is the primary setting in which to nurture children in the faith. Great care is to be exercised by parents, and by fathers in particular, to build Christian families and lead them in worship.²⁸ The father is not to exasperate his children,²⁹ but to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.³⁰

103-4.8 The instruction and guidance of children is the duty of parents.³¹ Fathers are primarily responsible for exercising leadership in the maturing of children,³² and preparing them for service in the church and for living all of life for the glory of God.³³ Mothers share with husbands the bringing up of children.³⁴ The Scriptures also encourage grandparents to assist in the training and instruction of their grandchildren.³⁵

103-4.9 Children are to obey their parents in respect and love.³⁶ As long as their parents live, sons and daughters are to honor them with loving concern and material care.³⁷

103-4.10 Christian homes are manifestations of the kingdom of God and

each believing family member is an ambassador of the King, to call lost men, women, and children to reconciliation.³⁸ We should open our homes in vigorous and sustained hospitality to the unsaved as well as to the saved.³⁹ Genuine compassion and Christian service will involve taking carefully measured risks,⁴⁰ but such risks are never a legitimate excuse for cold-heartedness.

¹ Gen.2:23, 24; Mat.19:4-6

² Eph.5:21

³ 1Cor.11:2, 3

⁴ Pro.4:1-4,10,20-23; Eph.5:22-33; 1Tim.5:8

⁵ 1Pe.3:7; Eph.5:25

⁶ Pro.31:30

⁷ Eph.5:22; 1Pe.3:1

⁸ Pro.31:27

⁹ Gen.2:24

¹⁰ Gen.3:16

¹¹ Ex.20:13; Mat.5:21-22; 1Cor.7:3-4; 1Tim.5:8

¹² Lev.19:17; Eph.5:22-33; Col.3:19; 1Pet.3:7

¹³ Mat.22:39; John 13:34-35

¹⁴ Rom.13:10

¹⁵ Mat.18:15-20; 1Cor.5:4-12; Gal.6:1; 2Tim.4:2; James 5:19-20

¹⁶ Isa.1:12-17; Micah 6:8

¹⁷ Rom.5:2-7; 2Cor.1:3-7; 2Cor.4:17-18; James 1:2-4; 1Pe.1:3-9

¹⁸ Gen.1:27,28; 1Tim.5:14; Titus 2:3-5

¹⁹ Est.2:7; Psa.68:4-6; Eph.1:4, 5

²⁰ Rom.14:1-23; 1Cor.7:1,7,8

²¹ Exo.20:13

²² 1Tim.5:8

²³ Pro.11:14; 15:22

²⁴ 1Pe.3:1-9

²⁵ Eph.4:16

²⁶ Psa.10:14; Rom.15:1,2; Gal.6:10

²⁷ Gen.4:1; 33:5; Psa.113:9; 127:3-5

²⁸ Josh.24:15

²⁹ Eph.6:4; Col.3:21

³⁰ Pro.22:6; 29:15; Eph.6:4; Col.3:21

³¹ Deu.5:28,29; 6:1-9

³² Isa.38:19; Eph.6:4; Col.3:21

³³ 1Tim.3:4,5,12; Col.3:17,23

³⁴ Pro.1:8; 6:20

³⁵ Deu.4:9; Psa.78:4-7; 2Tim.1:5

³⁶ Exo.20:12; Eph.6:1-3

³⁷ Mark 7:9-13; 1Tim.5:4,8

³⁸ 2Cor.5:18-21

³⁹ Pro.11:30; Gal.6:10; Heb.13:2; 1Pe.4:7-11

⁴⁰ Mat.25:14-30

Article 103-5 - Divorce

103-5.1 Divorce is the breaking of the marriage covenant instituted and ordained of God. God hates it because it is inconsistent with His purpose¹ and creates problems for all those associated with it.

103-5.2 Divorce may only be initiated after a partner has committed adultery.² In case of adultery, divorce should be considered only after careful and prayerful attempts for forgiveness and reconciliation.³ Scripture permits but never requires divorce in this instance.⁴ In the case of adultery, the Lord places the guilt of the divorce on the unfaithful spouse even if the innocent spouse initiates the divorce.

103-5.3 In the event that an unbelieving spouse initiates divorce against the innocent believing spouse, the recipient of the divorce is not guilty for the sin of divorce, but rather the initiator is. The believer in this case is not enslaved to the bonds of the marriage and may remarry.⁵

103-5.4 People divorced for reasons other than that allowed by Scripture ought not marry another, but be reconciled, and seek God's resolution for the breakdown of the marriage.⁶ Divorced persons must seek forgiveness for any sin that may have led to, or is associated with, their divorce. They should seek the grace of God for their spiritual growth and healing.⁷

103-5.5 The church should seek to prevent divorce by offering both premarital counseling and ongoing opportunities for marital instruction.⁸ The principles that make for a godly marriage should be evident in the life and example of every Christian family, especially the leadership of the church.⁹

103-5.6 By the grace of God, those who have been divorced and those who have married divorced persons, if they give evidence of forgiveness and Christian living, may be admitted to church membership and do not forfeit the privilege of serving within the Church.¹⁰ The elders of each particular church should evaluate the circumstances surrounding a divorce or remarriage in order to assure obedience to Scripture and confirm or establish the legitimacy of any remarriage.¹¹

103-5.7 The church should counsel those considering divorce to seek other solutions to the problems in their relationships. There are times when a church is called upon to exercise discipline towards those who are seeking or who have obtained a divorce. There are also times when a church is called upon to exercise discipline towards those who are seeking to remarry, or who have already remarried. Remarriage is permissible for those who are divorced due to adultery, believers divorced by their unbelieving spouse, or whose return to the former partner is determined by the elders, as they study the Scriptures,

to be impossible.¹² Individuals involved in these circumstances must submit themselves to the Word of God in their present situation.¹³

103-5.8 The responsibility of the church towards people considering divorce, remarriage, or those who have been divorced or remarried, is always to apply the Word of God in love.¹⁴ The goal of this ministry is to restore any break in their fellowship with God and with the life of the church, to preserve the purity of the church¹⁵, and to clear the reputation of a person.

¹ Gen. 2:24; Prov. 2:17; Mal. 2:14-16

² Matt. 5:32; Rom.7:2

³ Mark 10:6-9; 1Cor. 7:10, 11

⁴ Matt.19:9

⁵ 1 Cor. 7:12-15

⁶ Psa. 139:23, 24; Rom.7:2, 3; 1 Pet. 3:7-9

⁷ Gal. 5:14-23; Eph. 4:32; Col.3:12, 13

⁸ Prov.11:14, 15:22-23; Titus 2:3-8

⁹ 1 Tim.3:1-7; Titus 1:6

¹⁰ 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Heb. 2:11

¹¹ Heb. 13:4

¹² Deut. 24:1-4; Mark 10:11-12; 1 Cor. 7:39

¹³ 1 Cor. 7:17-24

¹⁴ Eph. 4:15, 16

¹⁵ 1 Thess. 4:3-7

Article 103-6 - Shared Life

103-6.1 Each believer belongs to Jesus Christ and to every other believer.¹ This belonging is a relationship to God the Father,² God the Son,³ God the Holy Spirit⁴ and to all who belong to God.⁵ This relationship is not the result of human effort, but begins with being born from above⁶ and is the living out of the divine nature⁷ under the Lordship of Christ and the authority of His revealed Word.⁸ It unites all believers to one another and causes them to be different from their world.⁹

103-6.2 The union with the Lord and with one another is spiritual. The relationship of each believer with the Lord is the basis for the relationship between believers¹⁰ in sharing truth,¹¹ love,¹² and possessions.¹³ It is dependence, not self-sufficiency, and inter-dependence, not independence.¹⁴ Participation in this life affects every believer and church¹⁵ and impacts their ministry in the world and to the world.¹⁶

103-6.3 Shared life is a privilege and a responsibility.¹⁷ The life of the church, therefore, must be a renewing, God-glorifying celebration of life in Christ and a spiritual participation with other believers.¹⁸ Sharing this life in the presence of God is worship¹⁹ and demands the loving exercise of spiritual gifts²⁰ as well as realization that we are responsible to one another before God.²¹ The exercise of these gifts builds up one another and equips the saints for the Lord's work.²² Because this responsibility and accountability are necessary for the church to grow in godliness,²³ discipline must be practiced in every community of believers.²⁴ Not to do so brings the very name of Christ into dishonor.²⁵

103-6.4 Responding in mercy, carrying each other's burdens,²⁶ is also a responsibility and privilege of all believers to one another, and causes them to love, care, share, and be involved with one another.²⁷ All believers, and the church as a body, must recognize, accept, and practice the spiritual responsibilities of being one in Christ, no matter how deeply a fellow believer has fallen into sin or the miseries of this world.²⁸

103-6.5 Every believer is a member of the body of Christ and must be joyfully and personally responsible to live a life of loyalty to the Lord of the church,²⁹ to His Word³⁰ and involvement in its ministry³¹ and purpose.³² This responsibility, although primarily focused on the local body, extends beyond the particular church to other bodies of believers.³³ Because this is true, the shared life of the church breaks down the barriers of race, class, culture, ethnicity, gender, and geography, for all believers are one in Christ.³⁴

- ¹ Rom.1:6; 12:4,5
- ² 1Jo.1:3
- ³ Rom.6:3,4
- ⁴ 1Cor.12:13
- ⁵ 1Pe.2:9,10
- ⁶ John 3:3,5
- ⁷ 2Pe.1:4
- ⁸ 1Jo.1:7
- ⁹ 1Cor.10:14-22; 2Cor.6:14,15
- ¹⁰ Eph.2:11-16; Rom.15:5-7
- ¹¹ Eph.4:14-16
- ¹² 1Jo.3:13-18
- ¹³ Acts 4:32-35; 2Cor.8:1-5
- ¹⁴ 1Cor.12:14-27
- ¹⁵ Acts 2:44-47
- ¹⁶ 2Cor.8:23; Phil.1:5; Phile.6; Heb.13:16
- ¹⁷ Gal.5:13-16
- ¹⁸ 1Jo.1:1-4
- ¹⁹ Rom.12:1,2
- ²⁰ 1Pe.4:10
- ²¹ Rom.12:3-13:10
- ²² Eph.4:11-16
- ²³ 1Tim.6:11,12
- ²⁴ 1Cor.5:12,13
- ²⁵ Acts 5:11
- ²⁶ Gal.6:2; Heb.13:16
- ²⁷ Eph.4:31-5:2
- ²⁸ 2Cor.2:7,8; Gal.5:25-6:2; Phile.10,11,15,16
- ²⁹ 1Cor.12:6-11
- ³⁰ John 10:3-5
- ³¹ Phil.1:27
- ³² Acts 11:19-26; Phil.4:14-16; Col.2:1,2; 1Pe.5:9
- ³³ Acts 13:1-4
- ³⁴ Gal.3:27,28; Eph.2:14-16

104

**Biblical Principles for
Living**

Relating to Personal Activities

The Christian in Society

Article 104-1 - Stewardship

104-1.1 God owns everything because He is God and created all things.¹ Believers belong to God not only by creation but also by redemption.² They are, therefore, to be good stewards or managers of all God has entrusted to them.³

104-1.2 Believers have the responsibility to proclaim the message of redemption and reconciliation to the unredeemed.⁴ Spiritual gifts, skills and abilities are given by God⁵ and are to be used for the benefit of others, especially the body of Christ.⁶ Children⁷ and all others needing care call believers to exercise stewardship.⁸ All the believers' relationships provide opportunities to bring people to Christ and to strengthen believers in the Christian life.⁹ The earth and all things in it are for God's glory.¹⁰ People are given the responsibility to conserve and manage the earth and its natural resources.¹¹

104-1.3 A believer's possessions are to be used for God's glory. The Bible teaches that a portion of all resources is to be willingly and cheerfully returned to God through tithes and offerings. Tithing,¹² the giving of a tenth, was practiced since the time of Abraham¹³ and was required by God after the law was given.¹⁴ The New Testament teaches that our giving is to be systematic, proportionate, cheerful, and generous.¹⁵ Such giving is an act of worship¹⁶ and a means of supporting the work of Christ's Church.¹⁷

104-1.4 Good stewards live all of life in submission to the Creator/Redeemer. This life should be used to please God and glorify Him in thought, word, and action.¹⁸ The believer's body is the temple of God¹⁹ and is to be acceptable to Him.²⁰ This wonderful creation is meant to glorify God,²¹ in ways such as abstaining from sexual immorality,²² maintaining a healthful diet²³ including not overeating,²⁴ proper exercise,²⁵ and adequate rest.²⁶ Believers are called to resist worry²⁷ and to be clear-minded and self-controlled by purifying themselves from everything that contaminates body, mind, and spirit.²⁸

104-1.5 Before physical or mental disability occurs, believers should take steps to provide for children, health care, assets, payment of debts and other personal responsibilities. Good stewardship includes developing an adequate plan to avoid unnecessary loss of resources and to distribute assets in a God-honoring manner.²⁹

¹ Gen.1-2; Deu.10:14; Psa.24:1, 2

² Gen.3; Rom.5; 1Cor.6:20

³ Deu.8:11-18; Luke 12:41-48

⁴ 1Cor.9:16,17; 2Cor.5:17-19; 1Thes.2:3,4

⁵ Exo.35:30-35; Rom.12:4-8; 1Cor.12:28; 1Pe.4:10

⁶ Rom.14:19; 1Cor.14:12

⁷ Psa.127:3

⁸ Luke 10:25-37; Eph.6:4; 1Tim.5:8

- ⁹ Rom.12:4,5; 15:7; Phil.1:12-14
¹⁰ Psa.19:1-6; Rev.4:11
¹¹ Gen.1:28; 2:15; Psa.8:6-8; Lev.25:23
¹² Mal.3:8-10; Mat.23:23; 1Cor.16:2; 2Cor.9:6, 7
¹³ Gen.14:20
¹⁴ Lev.27:30; Deu.14:22; Mal.3:8
¹⁵ 1Cor.16:2
¹⁶ 2Cor.9:12-15; Phil.4:14-18
¹⁷ Num.18:21,24; 1Cor.9:7-14; 1Tim.5:17,18
¹⁸ 1Cor.10:31; 2Cor.5:9; Col.3:17
¹⁹ 1Cor.6:19
²⁰ Rom.12:1, 2
²¹ Psa.139:13,14; 1Cor.6:19,20; Phil.1:20
²² 1Cor.6:18
²³ Gen.1:30,31; 9:3; Psa.107:9
²⁴ Pro.23:2,3,21; Phil.3:18,19
²⁵ 1Tim.4:8
²⁶ Psa.127:2
²⁷ Mat.6:25-34; Phil.4:6
²⁸ 2Cor.7:1; 1Pe.4:7
²⁹ Pro.13:22; 19:14; Ecc.2:18-21

Article 104-2 - Work and Rest

104-2.1 Human work and rest find their origin in the work and rest, or Sabbath, of God.¹ The original cycle of God's work and rest at creation sets the pattern for human work and rest.² Work and rest are therefore an essential part of God's design for the human race.³ Humanity's fall into sin brought a curse upon work and rest, resulting in pain, difficulty, and futility.⁴

104-2.2 Redemption lays the groundwork for the restoration of human work and rest to their place in the original creation.⁵ Christians are therefore to engage in work with honesty,⁶ diligence,⁷ and excellence,⁸ seeing their labor as an aspect of worship,⁹ service,¹⁰ and witness.¹¹ Laziness is condemned in Scripture,¹² as is poor and dishonest work¹³ and unjust treatment of workers.¹⁴

104-2.3 Christians should do their work both as a service to the Lord¹⁵ and as a calling from God,¹⁶ undertake it with dependence on Him,¹⁷ and enjoy its fruit as His blessing on their labors.¹⁸ Christians who supervise the work of others are responsible to treat them justly and pay them fairly, without threat or intimidation, realizing that they will answer to God for any injustice to those under them.¹⁹ Work is given both to supply the worker's needs, and to allow the worker to provide for the needs of others.²⁰

104-2.4 Christians should also observe the principle of rest in reverence for God,²¹ who mercifully provides a weekly rest for weary workers. The law of Moses also required rest during the three annual feasts, and during the sabbatical and jubilee years.²² These establish a precedent for occasional opportunities of extended rest as the Lord provides.²³ The principle of rest is violated when people fail to take proper physical and emotional rest.

104-2.5 Human work and rest will be consummated at the return of Jesus Christ, when He rewards Christians for their labor and invites them into His rest.²⁴ In heaven, where the Christian will be completely free from sin's curse, meaningful work for the Lord and glorious rest in His presence will continue forever.²⁵

¹ Gen.1:31; 2:1-3

² Exo.20:8-11

³ Gen.1:28, 2:15

⁴ Gen.3:17-19; Ecc.2:17

⁵ Rom.8:18-25; 1Cor.15:57-58

⁶ Pro.11:1

⁷ Pro.2:24

⁸ Pro.22:29

⁹ Col.3:17,22

¹⁰ Col.3:23-24

¹¹ 1Thes.4:11,12; Titus 2:9,10

¹² Pro.6:6-11; 2Thes.3:10-12

¹³ Pro.18:9; Amos 8:4-6

¹⁴ James 5:1-6

¹⁵ Eph.6:5-7

¹⁶ 1Cor.7:17

¹⁷ Psa.127:1,2

¹⁸ Ecc.2:24; 5:18,19

¹⁹ Eph.6:9; Col.4:1

²⁰ Pro.16:26; Eph.4:28

²¹ Deu.5:12-15

²² Lev.23,25

²³ Mark 6:31

²⁴ Mat.25:19-21; Heb.4:9-11

²⁵ Rev.22:3

Article 104-3 - Civil Government

104-3.1 God, the King of Kings, has established civil government to be under His authority, over people for the public good, and to carry out His sovereign will.¹ He has revealed in His Word how this government should function in order to provide for a peaceful, orderly society in which the Gospel might spread;² protect the law-abiding people from the law-breakers by punishing the evildoers;³ and bring justice and help to the defenseless, poor, and needy of society.⁴

104-3.2 God requires all people to submit to the civil government. People must pay required taxes for the support of government functions;⁵ they must give respect and honor to government officials;⁶ and they must be obedient and helpful citizens of society.⁷ God also requires governments to be accountable to Him for violation of His law and lawless governments come under His judgment.⁸

104-3.3 Christians may serve in the various positions of civil government, including the police and military.⁹ Christians have special responsibilities toward the civil government, including praying for those in authority over them,¹⁰ exposing corruption and wickedness in government,¹¹ and bringing a godly influence to bear upon the government.¹² This means setting a godly example as a citizen, raising a biblical voice on issues, accepting positions of leadership when appropriate, and, under a democratic government, voting wisely. The exercise of these responsibilities should demonstrate a Christian's sensitive consideration of the views of others in love without violence and without forsaking biblical principles or the priority of glorifying God.

104-3.4 A Christian's ultimate allegiance must be to God, for the government's authority over the believer is limited by God's prescribed boundaries.¹³ Therefore, a believer may find it necessary at times to disobey human authority in order to heed God's higher laws, bearing the cost or sacrifice involved.¹⁴

104-3.5 All Christians have dual citizenship; they are citizens of an earthly nation, and of the kingdom of God.¹⁵ Both of these citizenships have their privileges and responsibilities, and it is possible to cooperate with civil government without compromising biblical principles.¹⁶ Yet, when the believer is forced to choose between the two, he must submit to Jesus as Lord. One day, every knee will bow to Him, and even today He rules sovereignly over the affairs of civil government.¹⁷

¹ Psa.24:1; Pro.21:1; Dan.4:31-37; Mat.28:18; John 19:11; Acts 17:24; Rom.13:1-4; 1Pe.2:13,14

² 1Tim.2:1-4

³ Gen.9:6; Rom.13:3-5; 1Pe.2:14; Pro.24:23-25

⁴ Pro.29:14; 31:8-9

⁵ Rom.13:6,7; Mat.22:15-22

⁶ Rom.13:7; 1Pe.2:17

⁷ Gen.41:46-57; Jer.29:7; Titus 3:1,2

⁸ Psa.2:1-5; 9:17; 75:6-7; Dan.2:21; Luke 1:52

⁹ Pro.8:15,16; Luke 3:14; Acts 10:1,2; Titus 3:1

¹⁰ 1Tim.2:1, 2

¹¹ Pro.25:5; Dan.4:27; Luke 3:19

¹² Pro.11:11; Dan.2:40-49; Mat.5:13-16; Luke 3:12-14

¹³ Exo.20:1-7; Deu.6:4-5; Luke 20:25; Rom.13:1, 2

¹⁴ Dan.3:8-18; Acts 5:29

¹⁵ Jer.29:7; Phil.3:20

¹⁶ Dan.1-6

¹⁷ Pro.21:1; Isa.43:13; Phil.2:9-11; 1Pe.3:22

Article 104-4 - Christian Liberty & Servanthood

104-4.1 Christian liberty is the freedom of the believer to practice everything that is not sin; it is the freedom of the believer to serve God without human restraint.¹ This privilege is obtained by the obedience of Jesus Christ.² The believer's authority for faith and conduct is the Holy Scriptures,³ revealing the unchanging holiness of God. With Jesus Christ as Lord, every thought and action of the believer should be submitted to Him.⁴ Christ's death has broken the believer's slavery to sin⁵ and has freed the believer to yield obedience to Christ in all things.⁶ Though all things apart from sin are permissible, the believer should direct his actions according to what will please the Lord and what will benefit others.⁷ Liberty should not be used as a cover-up for evil.⁸

104-4.2 Believers will find that there are issues of lifestyle and worship not clearly addressed in Scripture. On these issues they may disagree due to differences in spiritual maturity, varieties of cultural or economic backgrounds, personal conscience or associations with their past.⁹ In these instances, believers should come to their convictions through studying the Scripture, prayer, and godly counsel, knowing that they will give an account to God.¹⁰ They must not look down upon or withhold acceptance of those who differ.¹¹ In love they must be willing to limit their actions for the sake of building up rather than harming their brothers and sisters.¹² In so doing, they follow the example of their Lord, who laid aside His rights for their good.¹³

104-4.3 Occasionally, concerns may arise that will trouble the life and witness of the church. Clear and consistent teaching of the Scriptural principles that govern the life of the believer should prepare the church for a peaceful consideration and resolution of these issues. The particular church or the fellowship of churches may counsel concerning that which is beneficial and that which may well be avoided in a particular setting and time.¹⁴ Church leaders must be careful to avoid unnecessarily burdensome rules, communicate clearly this counsel and provide the biblical basis for their thinking.¹⁵ They should be ready to acknowledge and accept the sometimes temporary nature of such decisions.¹⁶

104-4.4 Secular notions of freedom imply unlimited exercise of desires and rights. Christian liberty, on the other hand, includes submission to divinely established authorities and to the needs of others. Obedience to God's appointed overseers¹⁷ does not limit freedom but is an active exercise of it. Great care must be taken to discern what are rightful directives of authority under God for good¹⁸ and what are improper attempts to curtail Christian liberty.¹⁹

104-4.5 Christian liberty may be set aside voluntarily for the sake of others or the exercise of one's own spiritual discipline.²⁰ Glorifying God,²¹ edifying fellow believers,²² growing in grace²³ and avoiding all sin²⁴ justify yielding up one's rights and desires in keeping with the call to servanthood in the Christian faith.²⁵

¹ Gal.2:4; 5:1; Col.2:20-22

² Col.2:13-14; 1Pe.2:24

³ Deu.6:1-3; Mat.5:17; 2Tim.3:16-17

⁴ 2Cor.10:4-5; Eph.4:1; Phil.1:27

⁵ Rom.6:5-7,11; Col.3:3-5

⁶ Rom.6:11-14,19

⁷ 1Cor.9:15,23; Phil.2:4-5; Col.3:1-2

⁸ Gal.5:13; 1Pe.2:16

⁹ Rom.14:1,2,14,23; 1Cor.8:7; 10:27-30

¹⁰ Rom.14:5-12; 1Jo.3:21-22; Col.3:16

¹¹ Rom.14:1,3,4,13; 15:7

¹² Rom.14:13-21; 1Cor.8:9-13; 1Cor.10:32, 33

¹³ Phil.2:5-8; 1Pe.2:21-25

¹⁴ Mat.28:18-20; Acts 15:13-30

¹⁵ Acts 15:19-21; 28-29; 1Cor.11:14,15

¹⁶ Acts 15:29; 1Cor.7:25-28; 8:4,8

¹⁷ Heb.13:7,17; 1Pe.5:1-4

¹⁸ Acts 15:19,20,28; 2Cor.1:12

¹⁹ Mark 7:7,8; Gal.2:3,4

²⁰ Rom.14:15; 1Cor.8:9-13; 10:23,24

²¹ 1Cor.10:31-11:1

²² 1Thes.5:11

²³ James 4:6; 2Pe.3:18

²⁴ 1Thes.5:22

²⁵ Gal.5:25 - 6:2; Rom.12:9-13

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**Declarations on
Particular Issues**

Article 151 - Dedication of Children

151-1 Child dedication is a voluntary act in which believing parents publicly present their child to the Lord as an outward expression of their gratitude to Him for the child¹ and as a formal appeal to God for divine assistance in the bringing up of the child. It is not to be confused with baptism, or to be considered as imparting salvation, or viewed as an ordinance of the church.

151-2 The child is a gift from God and therefore the parents promise, as God's stewards, to bring up the child in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.²

151-3 In dedicating their child in the presence of fellow believers, parents are publicly dedicating themselves to the faithful fulfillment of their parental responsibilities³ and are acknowledging their need of the prayerful support and encouragement of those fellow believers.⁴

151-4 Child dedication becomes meaningful as the parents explain to the child the meaning of this act and consistently carry out the promises made before God and the church at the time of dedication. When one of the parents is an unbeliever, only the believing parent shall make the public presentation.

¹ Psa.127:3; James 1:17

² Eph.6:4; Col.3:21

³ Deu.6:4-9; Pro.22:6

⁴ Eph.6:18; Heb.10:24,25

Article 152 - Abortion

152-1 God is the creator, sustainer, and giver of life. Only He has the right to say under what conditions it may be taken away.¹ His Word declares that man is made in His image,² and it is for this reason that the death penalty was commanded for murder in the Old Testament.³ It is an evil before God voluntarily to kill unborn children, since they too bear His image, even if they are disabled or the result of rape or incest. Consequently, as members of Christ's body, the Church, we may not have, give direct assistance to, or perform an abortion,⁴ except in the very rare circumstances where the life of the mother would almost surely be lost by carrying the baby to term.

152-2 Within the marriage bond a pregnancy and resulting child must be accepted as from God, and the parents are commanded to love the child.⁵ Pregnancies resulting from promiscuous or licentious behavior are not to be terminated by abortion, which only adds sin forbidden by the sixth commandment to sin forbidden by the seventh commandment.⁶ Therefore, anyone contemplating an abortion, even though outside the Church, should be encouraged to preserve life by completing the pregnancy.⁷ The child can either be raised by its biological parents or be adopted by others.

¹ Gen.9:5,6

² Psa.139:13-16; Gen. 1:27

³ Exo.21:14

⁴ Pro.24:11,12

⁵ Psa.127:3-5

⁶ Exo.20:13,14; 1Cor.6:18

⁷ Heb.10:24

Article 153 - Harmful Indulgences

153-0.1 All believers are saved through faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross. God calls His people to live by faith.¹ This life of faith is an obedient response to the revealed truth of God in the Scriptures.²

153-0.2 At salvation believers are baptized into the Church, the body of Christ, sealed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.³ They are to be filled and led by the Holy Spirit.⁴ This filling and leading by the Holy Spirit progressively transforms believers into the Lord's likeness.⁵

¹ Col.2:6, 7; 2Cor.5:7

² 1Thes.2:13; 2Tim.3:14-17; 2Pe.1:19-21

³ 1Cor.12:13; Eph.1:13,14; Rom.8:9

⁴ Rom.8:14; Eph.5:18

⁵ 2Cor.3:8

153-1 - Alcoholic Drinks

153-1.1 The abuse of alcoholic beverages is one of the most serious problems in many parts of the world. This abuse has led to personal and family suffering, serious physical and mental health problems, and increased rates of accidental and criminal injury and death. The financial cost and the consequences of such abuse are a tremendous and unnecessary burden on all of society.

153-1.2 The Scriptures teach that drunkenness is sinful.¹ Due to the addictive quality of alcohol, even the moderate use of alcoholic beverages may lead to serious consequences.² This is especially true because the alcoholic content of some beverages has been tremendously increased since biblical times. Furthermore, moderate use may be a stumbling block for believer and unbeliever alike.³

153-1.3 Therefore, the BFC strongly and persistently warns its people of the dangers of alcoholic beverages and urges all members of the BFC to consider abstaining voluntarily from the use, manufacture and distribution of them.

¹ Rom.13:13; 1Cor.6:9,10; Gal.5:18-21

² Pro.20:1; Pro.23:31-35

³ Mat.18:6,7; Rom.14:20,21; 1Cor.8:9-11, 13

153-2 - Tobacco

153-2.1 Because the use of tobacco is harmful to the body and addictive, it is inconsistent with Christian living.¹ Its use may negatively affect the believer's ministry to the saved² and unsaved.³ Consequently the church should warn its people of the dangers of tobacco products and strongly urge complete abstinence from them.⁴

¹ 1Cor.6:12,19-20; 2Cor.7:1; 1Pe.2: 9,10

² 1Cor.8:9-13; Rom.14:15-21

³ 1Cor.9:12

⁴ 1Cor.9:24-27

153-3 - Drugs and Other Substances

153-3.1 The misuse of, and overindulgence in, drugs and other substances, including prescribed and non-prescribed, are sin and are not of faith. Such abuse controls the believer and gratifies the sinful nature.¹ Both misuse and overindulgence cause the believer to live by feelings, not by faith in God's revealed Word.² The continued abuse of drugs and all other substances destroys self-control, leads to addiction³ and makes it impossible for the believer to live for the will of God.⁴

153-3.2 Sinning in this way affects the thinking, attitudes, and passions of the believer.⁵ This results in the believer falling deeper and deeper into sin,⁶ and can damage the body and the mind. Encouraging or aiding others to misuse or overindulge in drugs or all other substances is sin. Selling drugs or other substances to a person for the purpose of gratification of the sinful nature is sin against God and may be against the law.⁷ The Lord Himself holds those who do this responsible⁸ and has many ways to exercise His justice.⁹

153-3.3 The Church must warn against the dangers of the misuse of, and overindulgence in, drugs and all other substances, provide counsel to those enslaved, direct them to places of treatment, help them to rebuild their lives, and determine when such a person is free for ministry in the church.¹⁰

¹ Rom.8: 5-13; Gal.5:16,17

² Eph.2:1-3; 4:20-24

³ Rom.6:16; 2 Pe.2:19

⁴ Col.1:9,10; 1Pe.4:2

⁵ Eph.4:17-19; Titus 3:3

⁶ Pro.23:29-35; Rom.7:14-24; Col.3:5-10

⁷ Luke 17:1-3; Gal.5:19-21

⁸ Pro.4:14-19; 5:22; Hab.2:15-16

⁹ Zeph.3:5

¹⁰ 1Cor.6:9-11; 1Tim.1:12-16

Article 154 - Sexual Immorality

154-1 God's Word declares that the expression of sexual relations is authorized only in the union of male and female within the bond of marriage.¹ Any sexual act outside this biblical standard is sinful in God's sight.

154-2 The Bible teaches that activities such as adultery, bestiality, fornication, homosexuality (i.e. indulging in a lust for or engaging in a sexual act with a member of the same sex), incest, polygamy, transgenderism, and sexual lust are perversions of God's created order.²

154-3 It is a violation of the Word of God to admit into church membership or office any unrepentant man or woman engaged in sexual immorality because such unrepentance invalidates a Christian profession of faith.³ When a church member yields to sexual immorality, the Bible requires that fellow believers use the means of church discipline in order to urge the individual to repent and be restored.⁴

¹ Gen.2:24.

² Ex.20:14,17; Lev.18:6-23; 20:13; Mat.19:4-6; Rom.1:25-27; 1Cor.6:9-10, 7:3-5,9; Heb.13:4; Rom. 13:13-14, Matt. 5:27-28.

³ 1Cor.6:9-10.

⁴ Mat.18:15-17.

Article 155 - Affiliations

155-1 It is highly inconsistent and anti-Scriptural for Christians to be members of organizations or societies that bind their members with oaths or affirmations that require involvement in practices or with philosophies which are contrary to our allegiance to Christ. We urge believers to refrain from joining and to withdraw their membership from any such organization or society. In addition, believers must look with grave concern upon organizations or societies which require secrecy for their basic tenets and practices.

155-2 The Scriptures teach about both proper and improper taking of oaths.¹ While oaths are not forbidden, the kinds of oaths taken by members of such associations are clearly against the teaching of Christ.² The secrecy and higher allegiance required by such associations are not in keeping with the believers' call to be light-bearers in the world. This violates Christ's example of openness that rejects secret hidden agenda.³

155-3 Often, being a member of such an organization or society violates the commands of the Scriptures not to be yoked together with unbelievers⁴ nor to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.⁵ Of supreme importance is that membership in any organization or society must not supercede our brotherhood with believers⁶ and must not violate our allegiance to Christ.⁷ We cannot serve God and any other master.⁸

155-4 Therefore, elders are encouraged to consider most seriously the affiliations maintained by persons who are seeking membership or hold membership in a BFC, giving godly counsel whenever necessary. Elders may choose to withhold membership or exercise church discipline in certain circumstances based on an individual's affiliations.⁹

¹ Lev.19:12; Num.5:19-21; 2Cor.1:23; Heb.6:13-16

² Mat.5:34-37; James 5:12

³ John 3:21; Mat.5:14; John 18:20

⁴ 2 Cor.6:14

⁵ Eph.5:11,12

⁶ John 17:21

⁷ Mat.10:37

⁸ Mat.6:24

⁹ Lev.20:26; 2Cor.6:17; 1Pe.1:16

Article 156 - Immigration

156-1 – God has a special love and compassion for the alien—whether an immigrant, stranger, or outsider in our midst.¹ He created all human beings in His image, and therefore all people from all cultural backgrounds are dignified.² Mary, Joseph, and Jesus as a child escaped into Egypt, per God’s instructions.³ Our Savior understands the plight of refugees who leave hostile conditions.

156-2 – Jesus equated welcoming a stranger with welcoming Him. He gave special attention to people who were not accepted⁴ and spent time with those on the fringes of society. His mission included bringing good news to the captives, broken-hearted, and oppressed.⁵ The New Testament writers challenge the church to break down barriers of hostility and to recognize that we too are strangers and aliens.⁶

156-3 – People migrate for many reasons, including economics, armed conflicts, and family needs. Such migration provides gospel opportunities which might not otherwise exist. The church should seek ways to reach the alien with the good news of Christ and disciple the new believer in a way that will honor the Lord and obey the laws of government.⁷

156-4 – Christians are to obey the laws of government⁸ except in cases where a regulation is in conflict with the law of God.⁹ In faithfulness to God, Christians should stand against injustice and be a voice for the oppressed. Circumstances vary from country to country; however, a believer should attempt to follow the legal process in order to remain in the country. Christian employers who have found an employee to be an illegal immigrant should make every effort to comply with the law¹⁰ while seeking ways to minister to the employee in accordance with our gospel mission.

156-5 – The church must understand the priority of its heavenly citizenship.¹¹ The church must not allow political issues to surpass her mission of gospel-centered ministry.¹² Pastors and church leaders should give biblical counsel to those illegally residing in a country, proclaim the truth, and pray for the Holy Spirit to work in the believer’s life.¹³ The church should assist believers seeking legal status.

156-6 - Not all are aliens of their own volition. They are victims of human trafficking and slavery, unwillingly working in situations as diverse as the commercial sex trade and child labor. They are found in places as varied as restaurants, factories, brothels, laundries, and sweatshops. The church needs to stand against this evil by praying and advocating for such victims. The church should be ready to minister to them.¹⁴

¹ Lev. 19:9-10, 24:19-22; Deut. 10:17-19, 14:28-29, 24:17, 26:12-13

² Gen. 1:26,27; 1 Cor. 11:7; Jas. 3:9

³ Matt. 2:13-18

⁴ Matt. 25:31-46; Lk. 17:11-19, 19:1-10

⁵ Isa. 61:1; Mk. 7:24-30; Lk. 4:18-20

⁶ Acts 10:28; Eph. 2:11-22

⁷ Mt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Heb. 13:1-2

⁸ Rom. 13:1; Tit. 3:1

⁹ Acts 5:29

¹⁰ 1 Pet. 2:13-20

¹¹ Phil. 3:20; Tit. 2:14

¹² 1 Cor. 2:2

¹³ Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 5:1-2

¹⁴ Philemon 16

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