

OUR BELIEFS

The Bible

The Bible (Holy Scripture) is the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God to all people at all times. Human authors wrote it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As such it is the supreme source of truth and is a completely reliable revelation of God. The Bible is the final authority in all matters of faith and doctrine. *2 Timothy 3v16* tells us that God inspired (*lit: breathed it out*) Scripture, and that it is useful to teach us, train us, and correct us – it straightens us out! Because of this it is of great benefit to read the Bible on a regular basis. *Joshua 1v8* tells us not to let God's Word depart from our mouths (confess the truth openly); and to meditate on it day and night (consider the truth thoughtfully); and be careful to do everything that is written in it (consolidate the truth practically); for then we will be prosperous and successful – in other words conquerors in life!

Worship & Prayer

Why we worship

Songs, music, instruments, singing, clapping, lifting hands and bowing down on our knees are all important expressions of our worship. But it is important to understand that they are not worship alone. So what is worship?

Worship is the lifestyle that Christians are to live every moment of every day. "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." (*Romans 12v1*)

The first mention of the word worship appears in the book of Genesis when God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Isaac was all Abraham had. He was the embodiment of every promise that God had given to Abraham, and in asking him to sacrifice Isaac, God was asking Abraham to lay down his whole life his future and his dreams in obedience to God. Abraham agreed and knowing what he was about to do said to his servants: "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." (*Genesis 22v5*)

Abraham's willingness to sacrifice was his act of worship; and that is what true worship is, laying down our lives, our hopes and dreams, preferring the will of God to our own. God stopped Abraham before he went through with it because He saw that He was first in Abraham's life. In laying down our lives and living out a lifestyle of worship we show God that He is first – that Jesus Christ is Lord of our life.

Why we pray

1 Thessalonians 5v17 says: "pray continually". It's an easy verse to remember for all of us but it's a verse of such importance. To live as a Christian is to have a personal relationship with your heavenly Father and that relationship needs to be cultivated and nourished. One way we can do that is through prayer.

Think of other relationships you have: maybe with a parent, a husband wife or child. Now begin to think of how difficult that relationship would be if you never communicated; never talked to them and just as important, never listened to them. That is exactly the same with prayer. We all need to grow and cultivate our relationship with our heavenly Father.

Don't let your prayer life be one sided; but spend time listening to God. He will speak to you if you take time to learn the sound of His distinct voice to you. Prayer has been described as our hotline to heaven. When we pray God listens and God always answers. As a Christian there is no greater privilege than to talk to your heavenly Father directly.

Prayer is more than a list of requests and wish-lists: in fact that is precisely what prayer should not be. In *Matthew 6v33* Jesus says: "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well."

When you pray, aim to make kingdom (the will of God) in all things your first priority.



OUR BELIEFS cont...

God the Father will bless you and abundantly supply all you need because he loves to bless his children and your Father knows what you need before you ask him (*Matthew 6v8*). Let us be clear, there is nothing wrong with going to Jesus in prayer for specific things, but do not make those things the sole reason for praying. Pray because you want to spend time with your heavenly Father and you want to hear what he has to say to you.

The Holy Spirit

Jesus promised to baptise his followers in the Holy Spirit (*Acts 1v5*). The Holy Spirit is not an 'influence' but a real person who is an equal part of the Godhead (Trinity) along with God the Father and Jesus the Son.

The Holy Spirit is described by Jesus as "another Comforter" (*John 14v16*) who comes to be with us to help us day by day. The word 'another' means 'of the same kind'; that is the same kind as Jesus himself. Therefore, at times the Bible describes the Holy Spirit as the "Spirit of the Lord" (*2 Corinthians 3v17*).

The Holy Spirit comes to give us the power to live and enjoy the "abundant life" (*John 10v10*) that Jesus has in mind for us. *Acts 1v8* says: "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you." The primary indicator of the power received is speaking in tongues (*Mark 16v17; Acts 2v4*).

The power Jesus described is extremely powerful! The actual Greek word used for power is *dunamis* from which we derive our English word dynamite! Read *John 7v37-39* and note that the Holy Spirit is a free gift of God, promised to every believer who comes to Him with a thirst to be filled; an expectancy to be filled; and a willingness to receive the infilling and overflowing of the Holy Spirit.

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Water Baptism

Water baptism is immensely important! The Bible puts water baptism alongside repentance (& faith) making it a vital part of God's full salvation 'package' in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. (*Mark 16v16, Acts 2v38, Acts 22v16*). Water baptism is a biblical command for all 'disciples' of Jesus to obey (*Matthew 28v19-20*).

Bible baptism is by full immersion in water; the Greek word baptise literally means to dip, submerge, immerse, plunge etc. It represents both a spiritual burial and resurrection with Christ – "in-down & up-out" – from a watery grave. Our old, dead self-life remains behind; we are freed from the power of sin; we are: "dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (*Romans 6v11*).

Water baptism is often referred to as "believer's baptism" and is for any person who has reached an age of understanding in such matters and has "believed on the Lord Christ Jesus" (*Acts 16v31*) and made a conscious decision to acknowledge their sins, repent and put their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

Sowing & Reaping

"Help and give without expecting a return. You'll never-I promise-regret it." (*Luke 6v35 MSG*)

The Bible teaches that the first thing we do with our finances is to bring God our tithe – ten percent. The tithe belongs to God; when we tithe we bring to him what is his. There is a difference between bringing and giving. When we tithe we do not give God anything: we bring him what already belongs to him.

Once we have brought God our tithe, we give to him. We love him and express that love in every area of life; so we are generous givers. When we give to God in our offering we consider how good he is. We calculate out of our finances what we are able to give. Since our giving to the Lord begins only after we have brought him our tithe, our giving will be generous.

Our giving is a practical expression of our love for God and is part of the life of sowing and reaping (*Luke 6v38*). God promises to meet all our needs and bless us, and to prosper us so that we may be a blessing to others.

