

# Jesus Collective Theological Beliefs

## **WE AFFIRM THESE FOUNDATIONAL/CENTRAL BELIEFS:**

**JESUS IS LORD.** Everything about us starts and ends with Jesus, the alpha and omega, the author and finisher of our faith, and the King of our Kingdom. Jesus is God in the flesh, the union of God and humankind, our doorway to knowing, understanding, and experiencing God and our true humanity, and the model and means for our reunion with God. Jesus is the authoritative living God to us, and we submit to him as his lifelong apprentices, kingdom citizens, commissioned ambassadors, and beloved friends.

**GOD IS LOVE.** The essence of the Source and Sustainer of the universe is agape love. Love is relational energy, within and between persons. God is, by definition, always relating within Godself. God is triune, three-in-one, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Everything God does is an expression of who God is, which is eternal infinite love. Through Jesus, we get to know the Father and learn about the Spirit. Through the Spirit, we have the mind of Christ, and continue to experience the presence of God at all times for conviction, confirmation, and comfort. The Spirit, the breath of God, blows us toward Jesus, grows the fruit of love in our hearts, and distributes gifts among the Church to help build up the Body of Christ.

**WE ARE VALUABLE.** Humans are made in God's image and likeness, made by Love for love. As the parables of the lost coin, lost sheep, and lost son affirm, we have lost our way through our own sin and are unable to save ourselves. But Jesus shows us a God who values us enough to pursue us, restore us to who we were made to be, and celebrate with us whenever we come home.

**SOMETHING IS WRONG.** The Bible teaches, history demonstrates, and experience affirms that something is wrong with everything. This world is filled with both beauty and horror, and humans amplify experiences of both. The Bible calls the corrosive force that separates us from God, from each other, and from our better selves, "sin". Jesus came to heal our hearts, save us from sin, and show us a better way.

**SAVED BY GRACE.** Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God brought an end to his own religion (the Old Covenant), inaugurated the New Covenant (a new way of being in relationship with God and one another), and offers us eternal and abundant life now, all as a gift. In this New Covenant, God gives all believers a new heart, a new spirit, and God's own Spirit to change us from the inside out. This is pure grace, which we receive by simple faith, expressed in following Jesus.

**SCRIPTURE IS INSPIRED.** Like John the Baptist and the star of Bethlehem, the Bible points people to Jesus. The Bible, Old and New Testaments, is our God-given window to see Jesus most clearly, and is useful to equip us for living as his disciples. We believe in the divine inspiration and delegated authority of all Scripture and we read and interpret the Bible together, with Jesus at the centre. Most importantly, the Bible helps us know Jesus, and Jesus helps us interpret, understand, and apply the Bible.

## **THEREFORE, WE ALSO AFFIRM THESE IMPORTANT BELIEFS:**

**FREE WILL.** Human will is freed by God to trust him or to reject him. God wants all people to trust him, but does not force his will upon his own image bearers.

**BELIEVERS BAPTISM.** Christians are not saved because of our family of origin or religious heritage, but because we choose to trust Christ and receive his gift of salvation. Hence, baptism is the Jesus-given symbol of our faith in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection on our behalf and our commitment to his lordship. This means that baptism should be an expression of our own faith, not the faith of our parents.

**SIMPLICITY & PEACE.** Because we see Jesus' life and teaching as God's authoritative Word to us, we take his teachings about all things – including non-violent enemy-love, forgiveness, simplicity, self-denial, and sacrifice for the good of others – very seriously. We seek to live peaceful, hospitable, generous, and reconciled lives.

**NEW COVENANT ATONEMENT.** The crucifixion of Christ is the centre of human and cosmic history. The cross is the source of our healing, our redemption, victory over the kingdom of darkness, the coronation of our King, the inauguration of God's kingdom on earth, and the cutting of the New Covenant, which offers forgiveness and cleansing to everyone. This New Covenant opens the way for the Holy Spirit to be offered to all. The Holy Spirit changes our hearts and offers us not only justification (imputed righteousness) but rebirth and renewal (imparted righteousness).

**ETERNITY & EVANGELISM.** It is our privilege and passion to prioritize learning, living, and giving the good news of Jesus to anyone who has ears to hear. In matters of salvation, God is the final judge and we are not. While those who do not believe will not spend eternity with Jesus, the emphasis of New Testament gospel preaching is not the threat of hell as much as the promise of life with God. It is not the Church's job to guarantee hell to non-believers, but based on the good news of Jesus, we can announce the guarantee of heaven to those who do believe.

**EQUALITY IN MINISTRY.** God has made all people in his image and likeness and grants us all gifts, including leadership gifts, as the Holy Spirit decides. Therefore, all mature and gifted believers should be considered for all expressions of leadership in the Church, regardless of gender, race, or socioeconomic status.

**THIRD WAY.** Early Anabaptists were considered neither Protestant nor Catholic, but a "third way." This "third way" idea can be helpful when approaching a variety of issues today, including and especially the hot topic of same sex marriage. Whether someone is conservative/traditional or liberal/progressive on this topic, we seek to embrace Christians on both sides of the divide as family from whom we have much to learn. A third way church, whether traditional or progressive, will be clear about their stand on same sex marriage and other issues, but equally clear that we seek unity with all Christians, including those with whom we disagree on this issue.

**CHURCH AND COMMUNITY.** Humans were made by Relationship for relationship, and Jesus calls us to express our image together as the Church. The goal of the Gospel is not just a collection of redeemed and renewed individuals, but a redeemed and renewed family of faith that lives and loves together. The "Church" (*ecclesia*) is the gathering of a people with a purpose, and our purpose is to experience, express, and extend the Kingdom of heaven on earth. To that end, the Holy Spirit gives every believer gifts to build one another up, and fruit to better experience and express the love of Jesus.