

King of Kings Lutheran Church | What We Believe

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Sin, Grace & New Identity | unit one

...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. – Romans 3:22-23 (NIV)

So, how bad is it?

Ask anyone and they'll tell you: the world is not a perfect place. And while each person's assessment of just how "bad" things are will undoubtedly vary, there seems to be universal agreement that something is just not right. A quick read of the news reminds us that the world is constantly wrestling with things like suffering, injustice, loneliness, misery, depression, uncertainty, and death.

But perhaps the most troubling truth is that the problems of this world are not just *outside* of us, but they also exist *within* us. When we are honest with ourselves we can freely admit that not only do we deal with many of the sad things we read about in the paper (sickness, depression, uncertainty) but we also fail to meet our own personal standards for morality – let alone the standards of our family, community, world, and especially of God.

The whole of creation is off-kilter; everything is out of sync with how things "should" be. There is evil outside. There is evil within. This universal reality is what the Bible calls "sin."

Sin | its entrance

...sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned... – Romans 5:12 (ESV)

Scripture tells us that God created a perfect, sinless world, and that upon creating man and woman, He looked at all of it and declared it to be "very good." (Gen. 1:21) The first man and woman – Adam and Eve – enjoyed not just a perfect world around them but a perfect relationship between them and a perfect relationship with God.

God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil or they would die. (Gen. 2:16-17) Deceived by the serpent, who caused them to doubt and mistrust the Word of God, Adam and Eve acted in direct disobedience of His command. Man and woman sinned against the Creator.

This original sin, also known as the fall of mankind, marks the moment when mankind entered into a state of rebellion against God and His Word. Creation itself moved from a state of peace to that of chaos and uncertainty.

To this very day, all of sin finds its root in this original act of disobedience. Sin is, at its root, a distrust of the pattern of life set by God, and a desire to be our own law-giver. All sin, like the first, is grounded in a desire to love, trust, and obey someone or something other than God; usually, ourselves.

Sin | its effects

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. – Psalm 51:5 (NIV)

Original sin

Scripture teaches us that, as a result of "The Fall," all human beings – from Adam on down the line – have inherited his disobedience and distrust of God. (Romans 5:12) Even though we were not there, we too are implicated in his sin from the very moment of our conception. Thus, we are born in a state of broken relationship with our Creator and active rebellion against His Word. This sad but true attribute of human existence is what Christians call "original sin."

Strictly defined, original sin means that there is, for all of mankind, both a *hereditary guilt* and a *hereditary corruption* that flows from our father Adam.

Even in the most innocent of human creatures, young children, original sin makes itself visible: in their sense of omnipotence, which demands and expects that all else serve them; in their low threshold for patience and tolerance; in their demand for immediate satisfaction. And finally, their mortality reveals the

truth that they too carry the curse of sin. (Gen. 2:17; 3:19) Babies die; and death, Scripture tells us, is the fruit of sin.¹ (Romans 6:23)

Punishment of sin

The punishment for Adam and Eve's disobedience was three-fold: they were separated from God (Gen. 3:24), they were condemned to death (Gen. 3:19), and they were completely corrupted by sin. Since we carry Adam and Eve's sin as our own, we enter the world bearing the same punishments right from the start.

Death and the decay of life are inescapable elephants in the room that must be faced by all people. Likewise, we're each born cut off from God and outside of His kingdom. Lastly, as we know all too well, sin is embedded into the very nature of who we are. We cannot help but fall short of God's holy standards. (Eph. 2:1-3)

We are born absolutely impotent, completely cut off from God, destined for death and unable to do a thing about it.

What kinds of sins are there?

Original sin aside, there are actual sins that we commit on a regular basis; things that we speak, think, feel, or will, that are contrary to God's Word and God's Law.

These sins can be viewed in two general categories: sins of commission and sins of omission. A sin of commission is something we do even though it is forbidden (i.e. steal). A sin of omission is when we fail to do something that we should have done (i.e. not preventing someone from stealing).

Ultimately though, such classifications mean little. Scripture is clear that all sins — committed, omitted, intentional or accidental — are an equal offense to God; (Rom. 14:23) even though they may have different impact on those around us.

What is salvation?

Simply put, salvation is the act of being rescued from the wrath (angry punishment) of God that we rightly deserve because of our sinfulness. (Rom. 5:9-10)

This salvation comes through Jesus Christ alone and His death on the cross. There is no salvation apart from Him. (John 1:29, 3:17–18, 4:42, 5:19–23; Acts 4:12; Titus 1:15; 1 John 2:2; Rev. 5:9)

Scripture teaches that Jesus lived the life of perfect holiness and righteousness that we cannot live and then willingly died the death that we deserve for our sinful disobedience. In other words, Jesus has lived our life and died our death. In doing so, He has won for us forgiveness, eternal life and a "right" relationship with the Father. (2 Cor. 5:18-21)

Two common ways of understanding the work of Jesus are as *substitutionary atonement* and *redemption*.

Substitutionary atonement underlines the fact that, in His death, Jesus laid down his life as a substitute sacrifice for the sins of mankind. Sin requires a death as payment. Jesus lovingly and sacrificially died in our place, appeasing God's wrath and winning for us forgiveness of sin. (Rom. 5:6-8; Heb. 2:14; 1 John 2:2, 4:10)

¹Adapted from "The Christian Faith" by Robert Kolb, p. 91.

Redemption is connected to the concept of slavery. We are born as slaves to sin, death, and the devil; they own us. (John 8:34; Rom. 6:6) But through His innocent death, Jesus paid the debt for the sins of all humanity. Mankind is now free to have faith in a new “master;” who, through faith, offers us forgiveness, eternity, and triumph over sin, death, the devil and his demons. (Ps. 110:1; Rom. 6:19-23; 1 Cor. 15:21–28; Eph. 1:20–23, 2:16; Col. 1:20–21, 2:13–15)

The work of Jesus on the cross was not limited to only those who would eventually believe but was enough to pay for the sins of all people. (John 1:29; Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:2) Sadly however, not all receive this gift.

Saved by grace | through faith

By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God...– Ephesians 2:8 (ESV)

So, what actually happens to a person when they “receive salvation?” That’s a great question! But in order to answer it there are a few key ideas that we need to define:

Justification: To be justified means to be in a right relationship with someone. In a legal context it refers to being declared, “Not guilty.” Scripture uses this term to describe the new relationship that Christians enter into with God through faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection. (Rom. 3:23-25; 5:1-2)

Grace: God didn’t have to save us, and yet, out of love and mercy He offers us forgiveness and eternity. God’s undeserved attitude of mercy toward us is what we call “grace.” In Greek, the word for grace is “*charis*,” which simply means “gift.” This reminds us that salvation is a present given by God and in no way the product of our own work or effort. (Rom. 9:16; Titus 3:5-6)

Faith: Faith is a relationship of active trust in someone or something. In the context of Scripture, faith is a trust in the promises of God and the work of Jesus. (Heb. 11:1) *It is simultaneously a gift of God and an act of man.*²

Scripture tells us that individual salvation is being **justified by grace** through **faith**. That is, I’m restored to a right relationship and declared “not guilty” before God (justified) out of pure, undeserved mercy (grace) through a relationship of trust and dependence upon the work of Jesus (faith), that God Himself gives me. (Rom. 3:23-25; 5:1; Phil. 3:9; Gal. 3:11; Eph. 2:1-10; Titus 3:7)

It is in that moment of justification where the salvation “happens to me” and a “joyous exchange” takes place. While Christ has taken all of my sin upon Himself at the cross, all of His righteousness and holiness is now credited to me as if it were my own. (Rom. 1:17) And just as Jesus rose from the dead to a new life, so will I.

As G.E. Veith puts it, “I now have the same favor with God, the same access, the same assurance of eternal life, as Jesus does. When I stand before the Holy God, He does not turn away in judgment. Rather, He sees me through the lens of Christ. Jesus has claimed all of my sins and has paid for them with His blood. He provides all of the good works I need, clothing me in His righteousness, not mine.

This is what it means to be saved, and all of it happens through faith.”³

²See the addendum to Week Four (p.35) for further explanation of “faith.”

³Adapted from “*The Spirituality of the Cross*” by G.E. Veith, p. 32.

How do I receive saving faith?

...this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast. – Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

Simply put, even our faith is a gift of God. It's tempting to put the onus back on us and to talk about choosing Jesus or making a decision of salvation. Yet Scripture tells us time and time again that salvation is not a work of our own but an act of God. It's not about us reaching up to Him but about Him reaching down to us.

So, how does God reach down to us and give us saving faith? In the *means of grace*. We're connected to Jesus, and the Holy Spirit works faith through the Word and the Sacraments.

In the next chapter we'll take a look at how through simple elements — bread, wine, water, and words — God does such amazing things.

Sin & Grace | bottom line

This understanding of sin and grace is not just an idea but is reflected in nearly every aspect of our life as a community church. For example, you'll see it embedded into King of Kings in the following ways:

- *Honest teaching on the depravity of man and the seriousness of sin that affects all people*
- *A constant focus on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the free gift of salvation*
- *Corporate confession of sin and the proclamation of forgiveness*
- *Regular celebration of the Lord's Supper and Baptism*
- *Sharing life in a King of Kings Growth Group*
- *Programming that equips and heals those wrestling with the effects of sin and the remedy of grace*
 - *Journey Coaches*
 - *Recovery Ministry*
 - *On-site Christian Counseling*
 - *Groups for those experiencing grief or divorce*

Transforming Power of God's Grace/New Identity in Christ

Coming to faith in Christ gives more than a heavenly destination after this life. It gives eternal life that begins now and is lived out every day. We have been brought from being spiritually dead to being spiritually alive. Though we still wrestle with our old sinful nature, because of God's grace we are being transformed into a Christ-likeness. We see ourselves as new creatures because Christ himself lives in us through the Holy Spirit.

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ Jesus, he is a new creation, the old has passed away; behold, the new has come." II Cor. 5:17

Consider seeing yourself with a new identity because of what Christ has done for you. Take a few minutes each day to consider a couple of the identity markers listed on the following page.

Discover Your Identity In Christ

Because He Is.....	We are.....
The Advocate, 1 Jn 2:1	I am the defended one
The Lamb of God, Jn 1:29	I am covered by the blood
The Resurrection/Life, Jn 11:25	I am one living forever
The Shepherd/Bishop of Souls, Pr 2:25	I am one secured
Man of Sorrows, Is 53:3	I am not alone in sorrow
Head of the Church, Eph 5:23	I am a member of His body
Master, Mt 8:19	I am the secure servant
Faithful & True Witness, Rev 3:14	I am a witness
The Rock, 1 Cor 10:4	I am on solid ground
High Priest, Heb 6:20	I am brought near
The Door, Jn 10:9	I am in insider
Living Water	I am quenched
Bread of Life	I am spiritually satisfied
Rose of Sharon, SoS 2:1	I am a garden dweller
Judge, Act 10:42	I am declared righteous
Lord of Lords, 1 Tim 6:15	I am a royal heir
Alpha & Omega, Rev 22:13	I am destined for eternity
True Vine, Jn 15:1	I am a branch abiding
Messiah, Jn 9:25	I am delivered at last
The Teacher, Jn 3:22	I am a learner enlightened
Holy One, Mk 1:24	I am a worshipper
The Beloved, Eph 1:6	I am the delight of His affection
Branch, Is 11:1	I am the fruit of the harvest
The Carpenter, Mk 6:3	I am a fellow worker
Good Shepherd, Jn 10	I am a sheep cared for
Light of the World, Jn 8:12	I am a light on a hill
Image of the Invisible God, Cor 1:15	I am a reflection-His image
The Word, Jn 1:1	I am one listening to God
Chief Cornerstone, Eph 2:20	I am a stone in God's building
Savior, Jn 4:2	I am the rescued one
Servant, Mt 12:18	I am a fellow servant
Author & Finisher of Faith, Heb 12:2	I am a victor in the end
The Almighty, Rev 1:8	I am the humbled one
Everlasting Father, Is 9:6	I am His child forever
Shiloh, Gen 49:50	I am a peace dweller
Lion of the tribe of Judah	I am a warrior clansman
I Am, Jn 8:58	I am the sent one
King of Kings, 1 Tim 6:15	I am a prince in his kingdom
Prince of Peace, Is 9:6	I am a citizen of peace
Bridegroom, Mt 9:15	I am His beloved
Only Begotten Son, Jn 3:16	I am adopted
Wonderful Counselor, Is 9:6	I am one comforted
Immanuel, Mt 1:23	I am one visited by God
Son Man, Mat 20:28	I am an heir on the last day
Dayspring, Lk 1:78	I am the satisfied one
The Amen, Rev 3:14	I am a character in His story
King of the Jew, Mk 15:26	I am an heir of their promise
Prophet, Mt 21:11	I am one redirected
Redeemer, Job 19:25	I am priceless
Anchor, Heb 6:19	I am safe in storms
Bright Morning Star, Rev 22:16	I am hope-filled
The Way, The Truth, The Life, Jn 14:6	I am homeward bound
Jesus Christ, 2 Cor 5:17	I am a new creation in Christ!

Digging Deeper | fifteen minute intensive

Let God's truth sink into your soul as you pause to reflect on your perspective. Writing your responses will help you slow down and consider God's truth.

- 1 Living in a fallen world, the effects of sin can be seen everywhere. What do you think is the biggest "sin" issue that our culture is currently wrestling with and why?

- 2 Read Ephesians 2:1-3 and take note of the words used to describe our spiritual state prior to our faith in Jesus Christ. Which two words in particular jump out at you? Do these words paint a picture of someone who is capable of saving himself in any capacity? Why / why not?

Read Ephesians 2:4-5; 8-10. According to this, what is the purpose behind God choosing to bring us "back to life" through faith in Jesus?

- 3 Some Christians have said, "Look, people come to church to feel good, not to hear about sin." How would you respond to such a comment?

Will everyone be saved?

No. Hell is a very real place, and those who remain as enemies of God — not reconciled to Him through faith in Jesus' death on the cross — will go there as punishment.

As we learned above, Scripture tells us that Jesus' death atoned for the sins of all mankind. God would like for all to be saved, and all people are invited into salvation. (Dan. 12:1–2; Isa. 66:22–24; Matt. 5:22–30; 10:28; 25:46; John 3:36; Rom. 1:18–32; 2 Peter 2:4–22; 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2; Matt. 28:18–20; John 3:16; Acts 16:31) Yet, sadly we also know that not everyone has a saving faith. Why is this? Why do some continue in unbelief?

We do not get to know. God simply implores us to spread His message of forgiveness to as many as we can and to leave the rest up to Him. (Matt. 28:18-20)

Is salvation possible after death?

Nope. Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed for a man to die once, and then comes the judgment." Jesus also tells us that those who reject Him are bound for an eternal punishment. (Matt. 25:46) Purgatory, reincarnation, and the like are simply not scriptural.

How should I deal with sin?

- **Confession & Repentance:** Through the conviction that comes by the Holy Spirit within you and the truth of God's Word, confess your sin to God and actively turn away from it. (John 16:7-11; Acts 3:19)
- **Faith & Forgiveness:** Trust in the promise of forgiveness found in the cross of Jesus Christ and receive God's Word of absolution spoken for you: "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." (Is. 1:18) "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)
- **Restitution & Reconciliation:** If necessary, make amends with those you have sinned against and grant grace to those who have sinned against you. (2 Cor. 2:10; Eph. 4:32)

Can a Christian become perfect?

No. Scripture is clear in telling us that while sin is something we can be forgiven of, it is still a part of everyday life for all people until the return of Jesus when He will wipe out all of the effects of sin for good.

Once saved however, Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit which daily guides us, changes us, and shapes us in holy living and a God-pleasing life. This same Spirit also enables us to overcome certain sins, doubts, and many other things that one might wrestle with. This life-long process of becoming more and more like Jesus is called *sanctification*, and it won't be completed until Jesus returns. Our identity is in Christ in this world, but we won't be completed in the likeness of Christ until we are made new in heaven! (Phil. 3:12-14; 1 Cor. 15; 1 John 1:8; Rev. 19:11-21)

...the LORD is God; there is no other besides Him. – Deuteronomy 4:35 (ESV)

How do we know God?

As we learned last week, the centerpiece of any and all religion is the belief that God not only exists but can be known. While all religions differ as to the details of just how one comes to know God, most assert that mankind has to search, discover, or work its way towards Him.

Some assert that moralism is the answer to finding God; that through perfection in conduct, God not only makes himself manifest in your life but allows for you to earn favor in His eyes.

Others claim that speculation and consumption of knowledge is the ticket to spiritual fulfillment. The key idea in this paradigm is that if one only knew the truth and understood the crazy complexities of life then we would know both God and peace.

Still others hold that mystical experiences are the only gateway to God. Through ecstatic and emotional personal experiences we can become one with God and transcend ordinary life to connect with the divine and ascend to different spiritual realities. Often in this view of spirituality, the fine line with trying to become one with God and seeing yourself as God gets blurred. Such is the case with Hinduism and much of the New Age Movement where the ultimate discovery is that you are God, or a part of God.

Not coincidentally, moralism, speculation, and mysticism are all rooted in the very first sin of mankind – the desire to be like God: perfect, all knowing, and beyond creation. (Gen. 3:5; Rom. 3:12)

Christianity however is distinctly different from these. While we believe the human mind to be far too limited to comprehend the fullness of God (Rom. 11:33-34), we hold that God, in His mercy, has made Himself known to us. Rather than us climbing our way to an understanding of God, He has come near to us and made His existence abundantly clear to all of creation.

Revealed in general

God has left “hints” or “traces” of his existence throughout his creation. While none of these “hints” offer a complete view of God – no more than a footprint tells us all we’d like to know about the animal that left it – they do tell us in arguably unmistakable terms that God is real, and God is alive.

Theologian Robert Kolb points out that God has left “traces” of His existence in at least five places: nature, history, conscience, reason, and emotion.

For example, through nature – with its beauty, complexity, and ability to provide for our needs – one can plainly see that the world is not the product of random chance, but that there must be a purposeful designer or creator behind it all. (Rom. 1:20; Acts 14:17)

Likewise, human conscience reflects the existence of God. Embedded within humanity is a universally recognized sense of right and wrong which points inevitably to a “law-giver” who established certain natural boundaries within the heart of mankind. The apostle Paul points this out when he argues that non-Jews, who knew nothing of God or Moses’ law, still lived in many ways according to His basic moral code. (Rom. 2:14)

Lastly, reason, or basic human logic, asserts that there must be – as Aristotle said – an “unmoved mover” who, at the very least, set all things in motion. Others have argued that human reason leads all people to believe in the existence of something that is “greater than all things.” Each day we see that something like love is greater than hate and a mountain is greater than a small hill. Therefore, something or someone must be greater than all things and, by definition, this would be God.

This general revelation is given to all of mankind. (For a fuller treatment of this subject see Robert Kolb’s book, [The Christian Faith: A Lutheran Exposition](#))

Revealed in detail

While things like nature and reason can reveal the existence of God in *part*, we have already learned that there is just one place where He has made Himself known with specificity: His Word. It is in the Word of God – written in Scripture, spoken by His people, and in the flesh of Jesus – where we learn about God in detail. God’s Word is where, among many other things, we learn about God’s character, His love for us, and our need for the forgiveness found in Jesus.

This specific revelation is given to God’s people (that’s us), and it is we who are charged with sharing the details of God, His love, Jesus, etc. with a waiting world.

How many Gods are there?

How great you are, O Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears. – 2 Sam 7:22-23 (NIV)

This is easy: one. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that there is but one, true God. (Ps. 96:5; Isa. 44:6) All other “gods” are false and not really gods at all but idols – and there are a lot of idols out there. (1 Cor. 8:4-5)

It has been said that the opposite of Christianity is not atheism but idolatry. And that is because everyone worships something or someone. All of us hold on to something as our ultimate source of identity, security, and meaning; and that one thing is our “god.” So while mankind may have many gods, the truth of Scripture is there is just one, true God. (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20-21)

What is God like?

Having revealed Himself to us in His Word and having left glimpses of Himself throughout His creation, we now know enough about God to point out certain characteristics and attributes that belong to Him. After all, we believe that God is not just some philosophical idea or indefinable energy, but a living and active person.

Just as with you and me, there are a ton of ways to describe God. Some are traits that we share with Him in some small way (shared attributes), while others belong solely to Him (unshared attributes). A few of the most important ones are listed below.

- **Personal** – God speaks of Himself in personal terms. We also know that He is a living, active, rational being who speaks, works, and relates with His world. (Isa. 46:10-11; Jer. 10:10; Rom. 11:33)
- **Omnipresent** – God is everywhere at all times. (Ps. 139:7-12; Col. 1:17)
- **Omniscient** – God has complete and perfect knowledge of all things past, present, and future; actual or potential. (1 Sam. 2:3; Ps. 139:1-4; Prov. 15:3; 1 John 3:20)
- **Omnipotent** – God has the power to do and will whatever He wants. (Ps. 33:9, 115:3; Luke 1:37; Eph. 3:20)
- **Sovereign** – God has supreme rule and authority over all things. He can do what He wills and still be good; still be God. (Ps. 103:19; 2 Sam. 7:28; Rom. 9:13-14)
- **Love** – God is love and He loves what He created. (1 John 4:7-10)

What about the Trinity?

It’s true; do a word search in your Bible and you will be unable to find the word “trinity” on any of its pages. The word itself was not coined until the late second century by Tertullian, a church father. However, the concept is plain to see throughout Scripture.

To say that God exists as Trinity does not mean that there are three Gods (for God clearly and incessantly refers to Himself as being “one”; i.e. Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29-32), or that God simply makes Himself appear in three different ways.

To confess that God exists as a Trinity is to confess that there is one God; unified in His essence who exists eternally as three equal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Here the analogy of “family” seems to work well. Within one family there are multiple persons with distinct roles, characteristics, etc. Yet each person is equally “family.”

The Father is God | creator

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth. – Apostle’s Creed; 1st Article

The Scriptures speak plainly that the Father is wholly God. To Him is ascribed the role of Creator and Sustainer of all things who sent His Son, Jesus Christ.

He created us, along with all creatures and He gave to us body and soul, all possessions and all of our talents. As a loving Father He also provides everything we need to live, as well as protects us against all evil. He does all this because of His pure, fatherly and divine goodness and mercy, not because we’ve earned it or deserved it. (Gen. 1:1; 1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 1:3-4; Eph. 1:3-4; 1 Peter 1:3)

The Son is God | redeemer

And [I believe] in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into Hell. On the third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there He shall come to judge the living and the dead. – Apostle’s Creed; 2nd Article

Jesus Christ is repeatedly referred to as God throughout the Scriptures. The fact of Jesus’ deity was spoken clearly by Him and recognized as a claim to be God by the Jewish leaders of His day without Jesus’ apology or correction.⁴ Not only that, but Jesus’ power over death exhibited in His resurrection proves Him to be true and trustworthy in all He says – even His claims to be God. (Matt. 28:9; John 1:1–4, 1:14, 5:17–18, 8:58, 10:30–33, 12:37–41 cf. Isa. 6:9–11; 20:28–29; Acts 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Col. 1:16–17, 2:8–9; Phil. 2:10–11; Heb. 1:8; 1 Co. 8:4–6; 1 Tim. 6:15; Titus 2:13; 1 John 5:20; Rev. 1:8, 1:17–18, 17:14, 19:16, 22:13–16)

We confess therefore that Jesus is truly God, born of the Father in eternity (not created) and also truly man, born of the Virgin Mary. He has redeemed us, lost and condemned people, bought and won us from all sins, death and the authority of the Devil through His substitutionary death on the cross.

⁴ Adapted from *Gospel Class*, Mars Hill Church, p. 24.

The Holy Spirit is God | sanctifier

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen. – Apostle's Creed; 3rd Article

The Holy Spirit is clearly called God throughout the Scriptures. In the Old Testament He is all-powerful (Micah 3:8; Acts 1:8; Rom. 15:13, 19), eternal (Heb. 9:14), all-knowing (Isa. 40:13–14; 1 Cor. 2:10), creator (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:30) and all-present (Ps. 139:7). In the New Testament, He is also clearly declared God (Acts 5:3–4; John 14:16; 2 Cor. 3:16–18).

The Holy Spirit is not merely an impersonal force, but a person who can be grieved (Eph.4:30), resisted (Acts 7:51), and insulted (Heb. 10:29).⁵

We believe that we cannot come to faith in Jesus Christ by our own intelligence or power. But it is the Holy Spirit that calls us, opens our eyes, changes us, and keeps us in the faith. God's Spirit is that which resides within all believers, thus making us, as Scripture says, the temples of God. (1 Cor. 3:16)

God | bottom line

This understanding of God is not just an idea but is reflected in nearly every aspect of our life as a community church. For example, you'll see our belief in one God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – embedded into King of Kings in the following ways:

- *A conservative, Biblical stance on issues of life and sexuality*
- *An open embrace of creation and the Creator taught in all settings*
- *Clear proclamation of Jesus Christ as the sole source of forgiveness and new life*
- *Corporate confession of the Apostle's Creed*
- *Encouragement and modeling of prayer and the study of Scripture*

Can you think of any others?

⁵ *Ibid.*

Digging Deeper | fifteen minute intensive

Let God's truth sink into your soul as you pause to reflect on your perspective. Writing your responses will help you slow down and consider God's truth.

- 1 During World War II, Father William Thomas Cummings claimed that "there are no atheists in foxholes." His point was that when life gets tough everyone grasps for, or calls out to something or someone for help.

What are some of the common things – other than the one, true God – that people in our culture hold on to for security, meaning, and a sense of purpose?

- 2 Consider some important attributes about God. In particular recall that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. Why might these attributes be considered a fearful thing for those who do not have a saving faith in Jesus and a joyful, comforting thing for those who do?

- 3 Take a look at Psalm 14:1-3 and Romans 3:12. What kind of a picture do these verses paint of humanity's ability to know God and to follow His commands? Positive or Negative? Next, look up 1 John 4:9-10. What is the Father's answer to this messed up state?

The Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed dates back to the earliest days of Christianity and developed out of the early Christian communities as they sought to summarize the key tenets of the historic Christian faith. The Creed grew independently amongst the early Christians and was circulated in various forms until it was officially recognized between the 6th and 8th centuries.

The Apostle's Creed (along with the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds) has long been a key part of Christian faith and identity in expressing our faith in the one, true, and Triune God and in combating common heresies or false understandings that have emerged throughout the centuries.

*I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ,
His only Son, our Lord:
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.
On the third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,
from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.*

The Apostle's Creed | Luther's Catechism explanation

In 1529 the noted reformer, Martin Luther, published his Small Catechism. It was designed to equip fathers to teach the basic tenets of the Christian faith to their families. In it, were simple explanations of the 10 Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostle's Creed.

At King of Kings we have found this to be a simple, yet effective tool for all ages in understanding key pieces of the faith.

I. The First Article: On Creation

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth.

Q. What does this mean?

A. I believe that God created me, along with all creatures. He gave to me: body and soul, eyes, ears and all the other parts of my body, my mind and all my senses and preserves them as well. He gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and land, wife and children, fields, animals and all I own. Every day He abundantly provides everything I need to nourish this body and life. He protects me against all danger, shields and defends me from all evil. He does all this because of His pure, fatherly and divine goodness and His mercy, not because I've earned it or deserved it. For all of this, I must thank Him, praise Him, serve Him and obey Him. Yes, this is true!

II. The Second Article: On Redemption

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried, descended to Hell, on the third day rose again from the dead, ascended to Heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Almighty Father. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

Q. What does this mean?

A. I believe that Jesus Christ is truly God, born of the Father in eternity and also truly man, born of the Virgin Mary. He is my Lord! He redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, bought and won me from all sins, death and the authority of the Devil. It did not cost Him gold or silver, but His holy, precious blood, His innocent body -- His death! Because of this, I am His very own, will live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him righteously, innocently and blessedly forever, just as He is risen from death, lives and reigns forever. Yes, this is true!

III. The Third Article: On Becoming Holy

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Q. What does this mean?

A. I believe that I cannot come to my Lord Jesus Christ by my own intelligence or power. But the Holy Spirit called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as He calls, gathers together, enlightens and makes holy the whole Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus in the one, true faith. In this Church, He generously forgives each day every sin committed by me and by every believer. On the last day, He will raise me and all the dead from the grave. He will give eternal life to me and to all who believe in Christ. Yes, this is true!

What are the various Christian views on creation?⁶

Among Bible-believing, Jesus-loving Christians there are at least six primary interpretations of the creation account in Genesis 1–2. We find the first two positions to be the most persuasive biblically. But we would like to stress that our Christian brothers and sisters who hold the other views listed below are welcome at our church. Our only request is that the Christians in our church would not become divisive over this matter and seek to make their view the litmus test for Christian orthodoxy. As Paul says, we only see in part now but one day in Jesus' presence we will know in full and we will all be in complete agreement on this and other matters.

View #1 – Creationism

In this view, God created the entire universe, including Adam and Eve, in six literal twenty-four hour days. This view is almost always accompanied with a belief in a young earth as it seeks to be faithful to the Biblical text. While some argue that this view does not give much credence to the scientific community – this is not the case. For an example see: *Darwin's Proof: The Triumph of Religion over Science*, by Cornelius G. Hunter.

View #2 – Historic Creationism

In this view, Genesis 1:1 records the making of all of creation by God out of nothing (or *ex nihilo*) through a merism of "heavens and earth," which means the sky above and land below, or the totality of creation. This view hinges on the idea that creation was completed over an extended period of time (anywhere from days to billions of years). Then Genesis 1:2 begins the description of God preparing the uninhabitable land for the creation of mankind. The preparation of the uncultivated land for and creation of Adam and Eve occurred in six literal twenty-four hour days. This view leaves open the possibility of both an old earth and six literal days of creation.

View #3 – Gap Theory

In this view, Genesis 1:1 explains a first creation that happened perhaps billions of years ago. Then, a catastrophic event, likely the fall of Satan from Heaven, left the earth in the destroyed condition of Genesis 1:2. God responded to this disaster by recreating the earth again a few thousand years ago in

⁶Adapted from "Resurgence: Answers to Common Questions about Creation" by Mark Driscoll

six literal days and repopulating the earth as is recorded in Genesis 1:3–27. According to this view the earth is old from the first creation, and mankind is young because of the recent creation. The problems with this view include the fact that nothing in the Bible speaks of two creations, and at the end of the six days of creation God declared all that He had made “very good,” which does not correlate with the claim that the earth had been destroyed and made “very bad.”

View #4 – Literary Framework View

In this view, Genesis 1–2 is intended to be read as a figurative framework explaining creation in a topical and not sequential order. In this view the six days of creation listed in Genesis 1 are also to be interpreted metaphorically as not literal twenty-four hour days. The Literary Framework view is outlined as follows:

- Day 1 – light and darkness
- Day 2 – sky and waters separated
- Day 3 – dry land and waters
- Day 4 – sun, moon, stars (lights separated in Heaven)
- Day 5 – fish and birds separated, plants and trees
- Day 6 – animals and man

But there are some problems with this view. Most obviously, Exodus 20:11 clearly states that the six days of creation are literal, saying, “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

View #5 – Day-Age View

In this view, God created the universe, including Adam and Eve, in six sequential periods of time that are not literal twenty-four hour days. The problem with this view is that the six days of creation are seemingly clearly literal days as will be further explored in the next section. Also, Exodus 20:11 clearly states that the six days of creation are literally, saying, “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

View #6 – Theistic Evolution

In this view, God essentially began creation and then pulled back from working directly in creation to instead work through the process of evolution. The only exception would be God involving Himself again directly in the making of human life. For the most part, this view accepts the hypothesis of evolution but seeks to insert God as the creator of matter and overseer of the evolutionary process. This view also believes that species evolved over a long period of time, which requires an old earth.

The biblical problems with theistic evolution are many.

First, Genesis 1 repeatedly states that creation and its species came into existence because “God said” and not because of evolutionary process. Additionally, Genesis 1 continually states that after God commanded creation to come into existence, “it was so,” which shows that God’s commands brought about the instantaneous response of creation coming into being and not through a long evolutionary process detached from God.

Second, evolution teaches that one species evolves into other species while Genesis 1 says that each species had offspring “according to its kind” (e.g., 1:21, 1:24, 1:25) and not another kind as evolution postulates.

Third, the rest of Scripture portrays God as continually involved in the details of creation, including making the grass grow (Psalm 104:14; Matthew 6:30), feeding the birds (Matthew 6:26), and feeding the other creatures (Psalm 104:21, 25–30). This portrait of God from Scripture clearly paints Him as intimate and involved with creation directly.

For further study:

- *Luther's Small Catechism*
- *The Spirituality of the Cross*, by G.E. Veith
- *The Christian Faith*, by Robert Kolb
- *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, by Edward W. A. Koehler
- *Darwin's Proof: The Triumph of Religion over Science*, by Cornelius G. Hunter

The Sacraments | unit three

...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word. – Ephesians 5:25-26 (NIV)

How do I receive saving faith?

...this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.
– Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

In the last section we learned that God saves human beings in a very particular way: we are justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. (Eph. 2:1-11) While it is tempting to put the focus back on us and to talk of “choosing Jesus” or “making a decision” of salvation, time and time again Scripture tells us that salvation is not a work of our own but an act of God. It’s not about us reaching up to Him but about Him reaching down to us.

So, how then does God ‘reach down’ to earth and grant this saving faith and trust in Jesus? Simple: through God’s Word and the Sacraments; also known as the ‘means of grace’.⁷

In earlier sections we’ve discussed how God’s Word has the power to stir up and create faith in the heart of the unbeliever. (p. 5-8) However, God’s word itself speaks of other tangible ‘means of grace’ which, by the power of God’s Word, give faith. The sacraments are Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

Earthly elements | spiritual benefit

Strictly defined, a sacrament is a rite instituted by Jesus where earthly vessels are used to convey the gifts He won for us on the cross. In the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, God has selected certain elements in His created world to use as instruments in saving and sustaining fallen people.

While some scoff at the idea of God working through earthly elements, we must remember that God consistently has shown himself to work through earthly vessels to deliver His divine gifts and do His perfect will. And the Word and Sacraments are no different.

Just as God has chosen to use human language to bring the message of the Gospel to mankind in His Word, He has also chosen that same Word to work with simple water (Baptism) as well as bread and wine (the Lord’s Supper) to grant a saving faith and constant assurance in the hearts of those who receive them. (1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3-11; 1 Cor. 11:23-26)

Why does God work like this?

[God] saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit... – Titus 3:5 (NIV)

So, why does God choose to instill saving faith through such earthly, tangible means? The answer is simple: love and assurance.

In a world riddled with sin, uncertainty abounds. Spirituality is no different. The inner workings of the human heart sway back and forth between devotion and disbelief. (Ps. 25:16-17) To use one’s own good works or their inner sense of commitment and determination as a gauge for salvation leads one to only doubt God’s love and their salvation all the more. When the emphasis is placed on our mental capacity, devotion, or deeds, our assurance of salvation becomes inherently subjective and uncertain. People find themselves wrestling with questions like, “How does one know where they stand with God? How can I be certain that He loves me? Am I good enough? Did I really mean it, when I asked Him into my heart?”

⁷“Means of grace” is a theological designation that means “the delivery methods of grace.”

But knowing all of this, God, out of pure love, set out to give His people assurance in the midst of such uncertainty. Therefore, God centers our assurance on events that are objective and outside of ourselves.

Out of pure love and mercy God gives us tangible, experiential, and historical actions to latch on to, to remember, and to return to.

Through a real, historical Jesus crucified, died, and risen, a Word proclaimed and written in our language, and through water, bread, and wine God anchors our spirituality *outside of us* so that there might always be certainty *within us*. We say it this way: Jesus has been given FOR us, that He might live IN us and therefore work THROUGH us to reach the world with His love.

Baptism

...baptism now saves you...not by the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ... – 1 Peter 3:21 (NIV)

Why do we baptize?

Christian churches practice baptism because the Scriptures command us to. More specifically, Jesus Himself commands His disciples to go out into the world and to build the church through baptism and the teaching of God's Word. This command stands true for us today. Followers of Jesus not only receive baptism, but they see to it that others receive it as well. (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38)

What happens in baptism?

The Bible tells us plainly that "baptism...now saves you." That is, in the act of baptism God is doing His saving work of instilling faith. And that as a result, the one who receives it has the promise of a "good conscience toward God" and he/she is connected to Jesus' death and resurrection. That is, through the faith received in baptism, all of the work that Jesus did in dying on the cross and rising from the dead is credited to me; namely, forgiveness of sin, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of eternal life. In other places, Scripture tells us that in this baptism the old, sinful, unsaved person is drowned and dies. Thus, born again, the person is a new, forgiven, follower of Jesus. (John 3:3-7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Peter 3:21)

Perhaps the clearest text outlining the sacrament of baptism is found in the book of Acts. Here, the Apostle Peter follows up the very first Christian sermon with a call to baptism. In doing so he tells the wondering crowd what God will accomplish in their lives through simple water and His Word:

*"Repent and **be baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the **forgiveness of your sins**. And you will receive the **gift of the Holy Spirit**. 39 The promise is **for you and your children** and for all who are far off—for all whom **the Lord our God will call**." – Acts 2:38-39 (NIV)*

Here we see baptism connected to both the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, Peter is clear in saying that baptism is a gift that can and should be given to the whole family. Lastly, Peter says that baptism is not merely a human rite or a means by which humans show their commitment to God, but that God Himself draws, or "calls" us to baptism; indeed, baptism is something God does *to us*. Bottom line: in baptism God grants and confirms a saving relationship of faith and trust in the work of Jesus.

Who do we baptize?

There are some within Christianity who see baptism not as God's action, an event where He is working and instilling faith, but rather as an act of human will – a response to God. Therefore, they see no need for those who cannot "choose" baptism to receive it. However, the overwhelming majority of believers throughout the history of the church have baptized all ages – from infants to elderly.⁸

⁸Adapted from *The Christian Faith*, by Robert Kolb. This book offers a fantastic overview of infant baptism.

Why offer baptism to all ages? First, because Scripture clearly teaches that God is doing His saving work in and through it. (1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3-11)

Second, all ages need to be brought into saving, forgiving relationship with God. We've already learned that everyone is not only infected with sin but also bears the punishment of sin (i.e. struggle, disease, death, etc.). (Romans 3:22-23, 6:23; Ps. 51:5) In baptism, God establishes a relationship with all people apart from our psychological capabilities – even though such capabilities are a key part of an adult's response to God's work.

Thirdly, Scripture commands it. Jesus' told the disciples, and the church as a whole, to baptize "all nations." (Matt. 28:19) Likewise, the Apostle Peter in the book of Acts, as seen above, clearly states that the promise of baptism is for the entire family to receive. (Acts 2:38-39) Later in the book of Acts, Luke tells us of the jailer of Philippi and his entire family being baptized – in which most likely infants were present. (Acts 16:33)

Fourth, all ages can have faith! While the very young undoubtedly express faith differently than the average adult, the fact remains that even they have the capacity to live in faith. Faith is not, after all, a certain intellectual mastery but a trust, relationship of dependence. Does an infant, in all of its inability of expression, still have a trust in and dependence upon its mother created by the parent's action toward him/her? Yes. Why can't they then have a faith and trust in God, which grows in expression and understanding just as their faith in mom and dad will do the same?

Do I need to get re-baptized?

No. The reason again stems from our belief of just "who" is doing the baptizing and "what" is happening. If baptism is an act of the will and a means by which I show my devotion to Jesus and the world, then I should get baptized every day. If however baptism is something God does *to me* marking me as His child, forgiving me, and filling me with His spirit then there is no need to "re-do." There's only a need to remember what was done. (Eph. 4:5)

Does the type of baptism matter?

Once again, No. Both immersion baptism and sprinkle baptisms are perfectly valid. A Christian baptism simply involves the combination of water applied to the body of the person being baptized along with the Word of God, summarized in the phrase "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

The Lord's Supper

...whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
– 1 Corinthians 11:26 (NIV)

Why do we celebrate it?

As with baptism, we practice the Lord's Supper because the Scriptures command us to. Specifically, Jesus Himself has told us that regular celebration of this meal is to be a part of our life together as a community of faith. In the famous moment known as the "Last Supper," Jesus broke bread and said, "This is my body given for you." Then he took the wine and said, "This cup is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me." (Matt. 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20)

What happens in the Lord's Supper?

We take Jesus at His word when he says that we should receive the bread and wine given in this meal as His very own body and blood. (Matt. 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20) Holding to a high view of Scripture, we do not attempt to peer around or beyond these words and see them as purely symbolic or sentimental. Rather, by faith we believe that in this meal we receive both bread and wine and the body and blood of Jesus. Why? Because Jesus said so.

Likewise, the Apostle Paul in the New Testament tells us that there are some extraordinary things happening in this Supper. He warns the church in Corinth that to take this meal lightly or to do so in an unworthy manner is a sin against "the very body and blood of the Lord." Paul goes on to say that anyone who takes part in this meal without 'recognizing the body of the Lord' that is present there, does so to his/her judgment. If this meal were purely symbolic then why worry about spiritual harm? Indeed, Paul is saying that in this meal – through the promise of Jesus Himself – the body and blood of the Lord are present, and carry spiritual power. (1 Cor. 11:27-29)

Therefore, we – as well as the vast majority of Christians throughout history – believe that Jesus' body and blood are **actually present** in and with the bread and the wine. We also hold that in this meal God grants the faith which receives the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life. Why? Once again we go back to the words of Jesus Himself, "...this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins..." (Matt. 26:28)

G. E. Veith puts it like this, "In the sacrament, Christ gives Himself to me. All of His promises and everything that He did for my redemption and forgiveness on the cross, are made so tangible I can taste them. I am touching, in fact, the risen Christ as the first disciples did. And God's Word, ringing in my ears as I take this nourishment, tells me that His body and blood are for *me*."⁹

Who can take the Lord's Supper?

While some who support a symbolic view of the Lord's Supper allow any and all to take part in this meal, the church family at King of Kings sees things differently. The Apostle Paul is clear in his teaching that both the ability to "examine" oneself inwardly as well as an ability to "recognize" what is happening in the meal are both essential in celebrating it in a worthy manner. (1 Cor. 11:27-30)

For us, this means that those actually receiving the Lord's Supper should be able to answer "Yes" to the following questions:

- 1 Do you believe that you are a sinner in need of the forgiveness of sin and do you intend to turn from your sin to a new life?
- 2 Do you believe that Jesus' body and blood are really present in this meal to grant you forgiveness and assure you of your salvation?

Young children and guests are always welcome to come to the Lord's Table, as we believe this meal is an important witness to how God works and to what Jesus has done for the world. For children wishing to take the meal, we offer a five week class called, "First Communion" which outlines our beliefs and prepares them for a lifetime of celebrating this powerful meal.

⁹"*The Spirituality of the Cross*," by G.E. Veith, p. 52.

What are the other views of the Lord's Supper?

There are three major views of the Lord's Supper. While thousands of books have been written on each of these doctrinal positions, the three views are best (albeit simplistically) summarized on the chart below:

Denomination	Bread	Wine	Body	Blood	Explanation or Name
Roman Catholic			X	X	TRANSUBSTANTIATION
Baptists & others	X	X			SYMBOLIC
Lutheran	X	X	X	X	REAL PRESENCE

Those who hold to transubstantiation in the Lord's Supper believe that upon consecration of the bread and wine by a pastor / priest, and the reception of the consecrated bread and wine on the tongue of the believer, the elements of the meal cease to be bread and wine and literally change substance becoming purely body and blood.

A symbolic view holds that the meal consists solely of bread and wine, and that God conveys no spiritual benefit in the meal. It is purely an act of devotion and remembrance done by Christians.

The Lutheran view, upheld by King of Kings, is known as the Real Presence. In this view we believe, by faith, that upon consecration, God offers to those who celebrate the meal both bread and wine, body and blood. We believe that all four are *really present* in the meal. Is the meal bread and wine? Yes. Is it also the very real body and blood of Jesus? Yes.

The Sacraments | bottom line

This understanding of the sacraments is not just an idea but is reflected in nearly every aspect of our life as a community church. For example, you'll see it embedded into King of Kings community in the following ways:

- *A regular, monthly celebration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper*
- *A regular and proud call to baptism for all ages*
- *Regular teaching on God's grace active within the sacraments*
- *Living the reality that God's presence in us makes us a sacrament to our families and communities: **Jesus in me, with you, for the world***

Tell me again, what is faith?

Another way to look at saving faith is to speak of it as less of an action and more as a relationship. That is, faith is a relationship of trust and dependence. Yes, there are acts of faith (confession, worship, trust, belief), but they all flow from a relationship of faith that God gives us with Himself.

The best illustration of this is that if faith is simply a “cognitive grasp and/or expression of trust in Jesus” then one must wonder, “Am I ‘in faith’ when I’m asleep?” What about when I am blindly grinding through my day? What about the moment I’m lusting after a woman and get hit by a semi-truck? Did I die without faith? Lastly, what about when I get dementia and can no longer confess my faith or am even certain of it? If faith is simply an act or cognitive thought then I’m in and out of faith all day long and my assurance of salvation is shot!

But if it is a relationship that God gives me and keeps me in, then it is in place even when my actions are not. This also pertains to infants. Infants demonstrate a faith and trust in parents that they cannot express nor cognitively grasp – yet they “have faith” in mom. Do they not? The infant has a relationship with mom and dad even though they cannot express it. This relationship is intact until the infant grows up, recognizes it or rejects it. They can even grow up and confirm it.

God gives us baptism as a moment of marking our entrance into this relationship of faith and trust in the promises of Jesus – a faith that will grow, be confessed, and lived out along with the life of the one being baptized.

When do we celebrate the sacraments?

At King of Kings baptism is celebrated on available Sundays and the Lord’s Supper every other week depending on the service being attended.

The Lord’s Supper | other names

Depending on what Christian tradition you are accustomed to you may be more familiar with the Lord’s Supper being called by a different name. None of the names are more valid than any other. Each simply emphasizes a different aspect of the meal. Here is a quick overview:

- **Holy Communion:** emphasizes the connection made both between believers and with God.
- **The Eucharist:** emphasizes the celebratory aspect of the meal and thanksgiving for what it delivers.
- **The Breaking of Bread:** emphasizes its nature as a family meal.
- **The Lord’s Supper:** emphasizes that it was instituted by, and belongs to Jesus.

Baptism and The Lord's Supper | Luther's Catechism explanation

In 1529 the noted reformer, Martin Luther, published his Small Catechism. It was designed to equip fathers to teach the basic tenets of the Christian faith to their families. In it could be found simple explanations of the 10 Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostle's Creed and more.

At King of Kings we have found this to be a simple, yet effective tool for all ages in understanding key pieces of the faith.

BAPTISM

As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household

I.

Q. What is Baptism?

A. Baptism is not just plain water, but it is water contained within God's command and united with God's Word.

Q. Which Word of God is this?

A. The one which our Lord Christ spoke in the last chapter of Matthew:

Go into all the world, teaching all heathen nations, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

II.

Q. What does Baptism give? What good is it?

A. It gives the forgiveness of sins, redeems from death and the Devil, gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, just as God's words and promises declare.

Q. What are these words and promises of God?

A. Our Lord Christ spoke one of them in the last chapter of Mark:

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; but whoever does not believe will be damned.

III.

Q. How can water do such great things?

A. Water doesn't make these things happen, of course. It is God's Word, which is with and in the water. Because, without God's Word, the water is plain water and not baptism. But with God's Word it is a Baptism, a grace-filled water of life, a bath of new birth in the Holy Spirit, as Paul said to Titus in the third chapter: *Through this bath of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit, which He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that we, justified by the same grace are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying.*

IV.

Q. What is the meaning of such a water Baptism?

A. It means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance, and die with all sins and evil lusts, and, in turn, a new person daily come forth and rise from death again. He will live forever before God in righteousness and purity.

Q. Where is this written?

A. Paul says to the Romans in chapter six:

We are buried with Christ through Baptism into death, so that, in the same way Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, thus also must we walk in a new life.

LORD'S SUPPER

(THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR)

As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household

I.

Q. What is the Lord's Supper?

A. It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under bread and wine for us Christians to eat and to drink, established by Christ Himself.

II.

Q. Where is that written?

A. Matthew, Mark, Luke and Paul write this:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the night on which He was betrayed, took bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to His disciples and said: "Take! Eat! This is my body, which is given for you. Do this to remember me!" In the same way He also took the cup after supper, gave thanks, gave it to them, and said: "Take and drink from it, all of you! This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you to forgive sins. This do, as often as you drink it, to remember me!"

III.

Q. What good does this eating and drinking do?

A. These words tell us: "Given for you" and "Shed for you to forgive sins." Namely, that the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are given to us through these words in the Lord's Supper. Because, where sins are forgiven, there is life and salvation as well.

IV.

Q. How can physical eating and drinking do such great things?

A. Of course, eating and drinking do not do these things. These words, written here, do them: "given for you" and "shed for you to forgive sins." These words, along with physical eating and drinking are the important part of the Lord's Supper. Anyone who believes these words has what they say and what they record, namely, the forgiveness of sins.

V.

Q. Who, then, receives such a sacrament in a worthy way?

A. Of course, fasting and other physical preparations are excellent disciplines for the body. But anyone who believes these words, "Given for you," and "Shed for you to forgive sins," is really worthy and well prepared. But whoever doubts or does not believe these words is not worthy and is unprepared, because the words, "for you" demand a heart that fully believes.

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.— Hebrews 4:12-13 (ESV)

What is the 'Word of God?'¹⁰

When most people think of 'God's Word' they think of the Bible. And while this isn't wrong, it is certainly not the whole picture. The actual definition is slightly broader.

Strictly speaking, the 'Word of God' encompasses the whole spectrum of how God speaks to and does His work in this world. Just as humans use words to communicate, command, create, to maintain and establish relationships, so does God. God communicates and acts within a human world through the means of human language.

While some religions teach that God communicates and acts through vague intuition or mystical experience, Christians believe that a God who really loves humanity speaks and acts in real human words; words that can be heard, have been written down, can be obeyed, and are accessible to all.

The Bible tells us that God spoke and created all things. (Gen. 1:3; Ps. 33:6; John 1:1-3) We also know that God, through the Holy Spirit, spoke to men in human language and used them to bring us the Bible. (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21) Likewise, many Christians have experienced that every proclamation of God's truth – whether preached in a sermon or shared between friends, as long as it lines up with Scripture – is God's Word delivered by human voice. (Romans 10:13, 17) And lastly, Scripture tells us that Jesus Himself is the Word of God made flesh. (John 1:1-3, 14)

And whether this Word is spoken, written, preached in a church or made flesh in Jesus, it is powerful, incisive, and convicting.¹ It is the means by which God created all things, is communicating with the world and is actively saving and sanctifying His people.

The Word | written

As we have said, God speaks His Word in various forms. The Old Testament tells us that He spoke through the human voice of leaders and prophets like Moses, Jeremiah and Isaiah. However, God then turned that prophetic human voice to written form – commanding these same leaders to record the words He was speaking to them so that they might be the guide, rule and norm for His people. This written Word would then be accessible and available for all to encounter, to be transformed by and to obey.

The message of the early church apostles – in their preaching, teaching, and writing – was also recognized as God's Word. Since the earliest days of Christianity, followers of Jesus have embraced the writings and teachings of the Old and New Testaments as the authoritative and absolutely reliable Word of God. (Eph. 3:2-6; 1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Thess. 2:13)

Together they comprise the full message of God given to mankind, *outlining the history of His work in creating, redeeming, and restoring the world through Jesus*. God is clear that He wants these Scriptures to be the ultimate authority for how we live our lives both as individuals and as a church. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

The writings of the Old and New Testaments are often referred to as the Bible – a word derived from the Greek word simply meaning 'book.' It is a compilation of 66 separate writings (39 in the OT and 27 in the NT). Over a period of roughly 1,500 years God used more than 40 different men from every walk of life (kings, poets, and fishermen, etc.) on three different continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe) and in three different languages (Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic) to bring His written Word to the world. It includes history, sermons, letters, a song book, even architectural specifications and population statistics. Yet, it has one unified message. Why? Because it all has one author: God.

¹⁰ Parts adapted from G.E. Veith's *The Spirituality of the Cross*, p. 36-37.

Divine in nature

Since God is the author of Scripture then it follows that it carries certain divine attributes. Chiefly, we believe that the Scriptures are *inerrant* (without mistake or contradiction), *infallible* (totally trustworthy), and *authoritative*. After all, keep in mind: God is the author. The words that are contained in the Bible are inspired by the Holy Spirit. (2 Tim. 3:16; Ps. 12:6; Ps. 119:89; 2 Sam. 7:28; Titus 1:2)

Knowing this, we must also keep in mind a few key things: Scripture is not an encyclopedia of every answer to every question, but that which God has seen fit to share with the world. Likewise, we remember that God's ways are not our ways. (Isa. 55:9) Our vision and perception of things is cloudy at best (1 Cor. 13:12), and our sinful nature often suppresses the truth of God's Word.¹¹ (Rom. 1:18-19)

But perhaps the most exciting aspect of Scripture's divine nature is that it is living – that is, God is present and active within its pages: they have power. It's not as if God is imprisoned or boxed up in the ink and paper, but God is somehow there. He is there waiting for readers and hearers to encounter Him in words of *law* where he convicts us of sin and guides us in living; and in words of *Gospel* where He promises forgiveness and eternity through the work of Jesus.

Countless Christians have experienced the power and the presence of God in the words of Scripture. The Word brings us to confession of our sins and stirs up hope and faith in Jesus. God is living and working in the written word. (Heb. 4:12-13)

Human in nature

The Scriptures also have an unmistakable human aspect to them as well. After all, God entered human history and worked through human beings and human language to put it all together. Therefore, it's important to remember a few key things:

- 1) Each of the writings has a real world historical context and were written to specific groups, comprised of different literary genres (history, narrative, letter, song, etc).
- 2) They sometimes contain personal insights and opinions of the authors.
- 3) The original manuscripts were written in specific languages that require careful interpretation.

While fully divine, the Scriptures are also fully human – even to the point where we can find sloppy grammar or run-on sentences.

Some balk at the “humanness” of Scripture, saying it undermines its divinity. To that, we lovingly say, “Get real.” God has consistently shown himself to work through human or earthly vessels to deliver His divine gifts and do His perfect will. He sent a “strong east wind” to divide the waters of the Red Sea and save the Israelites from slavery (Ex. 14:21-29). He flooded the earth with water to condemn sin and saved a select few with a boat (Gen. 7). Most importantly, He was born as a human Himself in the person of Jesus – saving us through His real world death and resurrection. (John 1:1-14)

God has always worked through human, earthy means to do His holy and divine work. The scriptures are no different.

¹¹ Adapted from *Gospel Class*, Mars Hill Church, p. 11.

The Word | proclaimed

How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. – Romans 10:14, 17 (NIV)

God has recorded His Word in Scripture. But He has also called His people to take those same Words (His message) and pass them on to one another and to those outside of the faith. And it is also through those who speak His Word that he does His work of convicting sin, correcting action, and stirring up faith in Jesus.

In the public life of the church we see God's Word proclaimed in a couple of important forms. In the sermon, as long as it is in line with Scripture, God speaks through the pastor to the entire community. Through it, the community is taught, guided, challenged, and forgiven week after week. Not by the pastor – no, he's just the human vessel – but by God Himself. (Rom. 10:14,17)

We also see the proclaimed Word at work in corporate confession and forgiveness of sin; something long practiced in historic Christian worship. This takes place when, having confessed their sin, the pastor speaks God's Word of forgiveness to His people.

Finally, in the corporate life of the congregation we see God's Word proclaimed in baptism and Lord's Supper. Here God's Word and promise is spoken, announcing that one is being baptized in "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19) and that we are taking and eating the very body and blood of Jesus, shed for the forgiveness of our sins. (Matt. 26:26-29)

In our private lives we see the spoken Word of God at work too. As one King of Kings member walks with another through a difficult time, and lovingly shares that Jesus is her Rock and source of Comfort, the Word of God is doing its thing. (Ps. 62) As a bunch of Christian college students gather for a Bible study and spend a few hours chatting about forgiveness found in Jesus (Acts 4:12), the Word is in the air, being heard and working in lives.

In all these things we see that God's Word is active and "doing stuff" – it is teaching, changing, and forgiving us. Through even the simple human voice, the Word of God is alive and accomplishing His will.

The Word | made flesh

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. – John 1:14 (NIV)

Lastly, we believe that the Word of God has come to us in the Second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ. This means that as Christians, we believe the fullness of God's Truth and God's Power is found in the person of Jesus and His life, death, and resurrection. (Heb. 1:1-3)

Everything that God is and that God gives is found in Jesus, who was born into our world, walked in our shoes, died in our place, showed His power over death by rising, and who is now sitting at the right hand of God the Father. (Col. 3:1)

We believe that if we want to know what God is like, we look to Jesus. If we want to see God's power, we look to Jesus. If we want to enter into a relationship with God, we look to Jesus. If we want direction, guidance, hope, peace – you name it – anything that mankind seeks from the Creator; all of it is found in Jesus Christ. (John 14:6-7; Col. 1:15-19; 2 Cor. 4:4)

The Word | bottom line

This Word is not an idea, a philosophy, or an ideology - but a person who relates to us and is for us, and calls us to follow Him. This understanding of God's Word – written, proclaimed, and made flesh – is not just some vague philosophy but is reflected in nearly every aspect of our life as a community church. For example, you'll see God's Word embedded into King of Kings community in the following ways:

- *Scriptures upheld as the ultimate authority for our private and corporate lives*
- *Scriptures taught to all ages and stages of life; featured in all educational and worship settings*
- *People gathering around, talking about, and applying God's Word to their lives*
- *Corporate confession of sin and the proclamation of forgiveness*
- *Regular celebration of the Lord's Supper and Baptism*
- *Jesus honored as the true leader of our church, and of our individual lives*
- *Jesus as the object of all worship and devotion*
- *Jesus upheld as the hero of every sermon; the ultimate subject of all study*

Digging Deeper | fifteen minute intensive

Let God's truth sink into your soul as you pause to reflect on your perspective. Writing your responses will help you slow down and consider God's truth.

- 1 Read 2 Timothy 3:16. According to this, what is one of the main purposes of God's Word in the life of the believer?

- 2 What are 3 things you can do to help give God's Word a prominent role in your everyday life apart from Sunday morning?
ex. Join a King of Kings Growth Group where I can share life with a few others while investigating and applying God's Word to my life.

1

2

3

- 3 A friend asks you this question: "How does God speak to us?" Share your answer below.

How were the 66 books chosen?

The canon of Scripture – the books considered the Word of God and therefore making up the Bible – did not simply drop out of the sky. Rather it was developed or formed over time. There was little dispute over the texts of the Old Testament, being essentially decided upon even before the arrival of Jesus. The books of the New Testament were a different story, however. As texts were written and embraced by followers of Jesus, some were recognized as the Word of God and others were not, based on several criteria. Some key criteria were:

- 1) Authorship: Was the text written by an eyewitness Apostle?
- 2) Content: Is the text's message in harmony with the historical, confirmed, and confessed message of the faith?
- 3) Traditional use: Does it have a history of being embraced within the community of faith?
- 4) Fruit: Do the confessions, beliefs, and actions of those who have embraced this text match those of Christians who have embraced other, approved texts?

In many ways, the Scriptures were self-authenticating. Those which stood out in the previously mentioned categories became widely embraced by Christian communities while others fell away. History tells us that by the late 2nd century the books of the New Testament were essentially settled and embraced by the majority of Christians. It was at the Council of Nicaea in 325 that this agreed upon 'canon' was publicly affirmed by the church.¹²

What would a rough timeline of Scripture look like?¹³

Old Testament (c. 1800 – 400BC)	Inter-testamental Period (400 yrs of silence)	Life of Jesus (c. 0 – 33AD)	New Testament (c. 45 – 95AD)	Pseudepigrapha
<p>God speaks via His prophets. Their words are recorded and venerated by God's people.</p>	<p>No new books of Scripture are given.</p> <p>The Old Testament canon is settled without any significant debates regarding certain books.</p> <p>Apocryphal "hidden" books are written as history, fiction, wisdom, and apocalyptic literature that become popular books but are never fully considered to be Scripture</p> <p>Old Testament ends with the promise of John preaching and Jesus coming to the Temple. (Mal. 3:1–4:5–6)</p>	<p>400 silent years ends with the arrival of John the Baptist and Jesus. (Matt. 3:1–17; 17:9–13; Luke 1:8–17)</p> <p>Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would inspire his disciples (John 14:26; 16:13)</p>	<p>New Testament materials are written by the Apostles and treated as Scripture by followers of Jesus. (1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Thess. 2:15; Col 4:16; Rev. 1:3)</p> <p>New Testament authors claimed other works of disciples were Scripture (2 Peter 3:15–16)</p> <p>Almost all New Testament books were accepted by the 2nd century and affirmed by the 4th century. (Council of Nicaea)</p> <p>No apocryphal books were accepted until the Catholic Council of Trent in 1546</p>	<p>After all of the eyewitness Apostles had died, books written by authors under pen names, pretending to be eyewitnesses to Jesus, write various false gospels.</p>

¹² For the most thorough analysis of how the canon came about, see *The Canon of Scripture*, by F.F. Bruce.

¹³ Drastically adapted from *Gospel Class*, Mars Hill Church, p. 17.

How'd I get my Bible?

Your personal Bible is actually the product of an incredible and trustworthy process – one that began with God Himself. Put into steps it would look like this:

Step #1: Revelation / inspiration.

This is the miraculous event whereby God reveals Himself and His Truth to someone and inspires them through the power of the Holy Spirit to write down what He has to say perfectly in the original manuscripts.

Step #2: Transmission.

This is the process by which the original manuscripts were carefully copied by trained scribes so that other copies could be made available for people to read.

Step #3: Translation.

The original manuscripts and the subsequent copies were penned in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Thus, in order for people of other languages to access them, translation must take place. So, teams of scholars skilled in 'hermeneutics' (the art of translation) carefully undertake the painstaking process of translating the original languages into the languages of others. Today, the Bible has been carefully translated into nearly 3000 languages.

Step #4: Publication.

For many years the Scriptures were available only to the elite and educated. That all changed when Martin Luther led the charge to mass produce the Bible in a common language in 1522. This put the Bible in the hands of the everyday Christian for the first time in church history. Today the Bible is the best-selling book of all time.

Which translation is best?

It can be tough when trying to choose a Bible that is best for you. In general most lean in either one of two directions: accuracy or readability.

Those that lean toward accuracy are most concerned with achieving a literal, word for word translation. While these translations are very true to the manuscripts they can at times feel stiff in their reading.

Those that lean toward readability are most concerned with allowing the words to flow smoothly for the reader and to reflect the current vernacular. The downside of these translations is that they take some liberty in interpretation and seek out equivalent ideas rather than literal translation.

The NASB is a very accurate, word-for-word translation. The popular NIV is a good middle ground leaning toward readability. The Message however is a paraphrase of Scripture and pays very little attention to word meanings, seeking to focus almost solely on readability. This should not be used for in-depth study.

King of Kings embraces the English Standard Version (ESV). Devoted to accuracy and word for word translation, the ESV also demonstrates a beautiful readability without compromising its allegiance to the original texts.

We highly encourage our members to have a good, word for word translation to use for study. The ESV, NASB, and NIV are available in "study" forms providing notes, helps, and room to jot down your own thoughts. While a good Bible can be expensive it is an essential investment.

How should I begin studying the Bible?

First, get yourself a great study Bible – preferably an ESV or NIV translation. “The Lutheran Study Bible” (ESV) is a great investment as you begin to explore the pages of scripture.

Second, don’t come to worship simply to watch and listen. Come ready to engage and learn. Bring a notebook to write down the scriptures you see projected on the walls, lyrics you hear in the songs we sing, and especially the things you hear in the message (or do it on your phone). Then, come back to these throughout your week. Read more about them. Talk with some other people who are intentionally following Jesus about what you are reading. Pray to God about it.

Third, after This Is Us class, consider taking one of the studies that is offered here at King of Kings. The Bible is intended to be read in community, not just by yourself. Even what you read alone, God intends to use to invite you back into relationships with Him and other people. Find some people with whom you can dig into God’s word who you enjoy being around, but who also challenge you to think and to grow.

Another option: consider a simple reading plan that tackles just a few, select books at a time. Accompanying your Bible reading with a commentary can help you better understand the historical setting and language nuances of the Scriptures. A good commentary series for the New Testament books is N.T. Wright’s series entitled “New Testament for Everyone.” We suggest the following, easy to remember reading plans:

Get your G.E.D. | *the beginning of God’s Story...and yours*

- **Genesis** (God creates and pursues His people)
- **Exodus** (God saves and establishes His people)
- **Daniel** (God with His people in terrible times)

Open the J.A.R. | *the new chapter of God’s Story...and yours*

- **John** (An eyewitness account of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection)
- **Acts** (A history of the 1st Century Church)
- **Romans** (Basic, Christian theology)

Practice C.P.R. | *a primer on Jesus-following, prayer and worship*

- **Colossians** (Jesus at the center of life)
- **Psalms** (A real life primer on honest prayer and worship)
- **Revelation** (The ultimate victory of God’s kingdom erupts in worship and praise)

Use your G.P.S. | *a primer on the full life Jesus gives*

- **Galatians** (Jesus is freedom)
- **Philippians** (Jesus is joy)
- **Song of Songs** (The beauty of committed love expressed in sex)

While personal reading is vital to your relationship with Jesus, doing so in a Growth Group is just as important. Don’t neglect investigating and struggling with God’s Word with others who are seeking Jesus too. Take some time to find out how to get connected to a King of Kings Growth Group...or even how to start one.

...I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Eph. 3:16-17

Slow Down and Pray

God finds delight in us. We are designed so that we too might delight in Him. This is such a priority for Him that he carves out time to emphasize it weekly. He gives us the Sabbath. He commands that we detach from our busy-ness of everyday life and find refreshment for our souls and rest for our bodies. We celebrate our relationship. This weekly rhythm of carved out time not only lets us enjoy God, but it brings better perspective to life itself. It is vital to seal this day off from our to-do list. Instead of living by our to-do list, we can enjoy our “have become” list—who we have become in Christ.

A daily rhythm of carving out time with God is important as well. Jesus practiced early morning times with His Father. This doesn't mean that Jesus didn't see His Father's presence every minute of the day. But this carved out time was different. It removed some of the distractions of life's busy-ness and gave undivided attention to God and His delight! It gave time to listen to what He had to say. Today we have the same opportunity. But it is vital that we carve out time to make that happen.

Apply this to yourself. How can you carve out a little bit of time each day? Would you start with 10 minutes? Or 15 minutes? Maybe 30 minutes? How can you make this such a rewarding experience that it becomes some of the best moments of your day? Discovering Time with God!

How to have alone time with God

- Choose a time and put it in your schedule the day before. Write it down.
- Choose a place without distractions. Perhaps music would help.
- Slow down. Relax.
- Before reading ask God what he wants to say to you today.
- Read the verse and other verses around it as you please.
- Reflect on anything that seems to impress itself in your life.
- These personal impressions of God's truth is God speaking to you. It will feel personal and specific.
- An option is to write some thoughts in the journal pages provided. It's helpful to date your entries.
- Take a set amount of time to pray after your reading.
- Sometimes it helps to pray out loud or in a whisper.
- A prayer outline is given in our weekly “Prayers of the People,” and is attached.

Pathway to Powerful Prayer

Pray with Praise

“Our Father, Who art in heaven. Hallowed by Thy name.”

This section includes Luther’s Introduction and First Petition. Here we come to Him as His children. We praise God for who He is and the glory of His attributes. We praise Him as one God in three Persons and what He has done for us.

Thank God for calling us His children and giving access to His throne of grace. Luke 11:13

Praise God the Father for what He has done for us. Ephesians 1:3-6

Praise Jesus for his exalted position. Colossians 1:15-17

Praise the Spirit for the fruit He produces in our lives. Galatians 5:22-25

Praise God for who we are in Christ (see a full list of our identities to give thanks for at the end of this section)

Mind of Christ... *1 Corinthians 2:16*

Belong to God... *1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

Access to the Father... *Ephesians 2:18*

Built up in Christ... *Colossians 2:6-7*

Pray for Priorities

“Thy kingdom Come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

This section includes both the Second and Third Petition. Here we pray for His spiritual priorities: Knowing and doing His will. Being made anew in the likeness of Christ. Intercession for the spiritual needs of others. Growth of His kingdom.

May your kingdom be advanced by your Holy Spirit being in full control. 1 Corinthians 2:12

May your kingdom be advanced in our marriages or in our single life:

Love as Christ loved... Ephesians 5:25-28

May your kingdom be advanced in our relationships with children or parents:

Honor one another... Ephesians 6:1-4

May your kingdom be advanced in our friendships:

Live a life of love... Ephesians 5:2

May your kingdom be advanced in our lives as we understand and do Your will... 1 John 5:14-15

May your kingdom be advanced in our city through our witness... Acts 1:8

May your kingdom be advanced through our influence in our workplace... 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

May Your kingdom be advanced in our local congregation, or Synod or global church... Ephesians 6:19

Pray for Provision

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

Fourth Petition. This section includes prayers for physical blessing: Provision. Health. Trust in Him to provide. Intercession for the physical needs of others.

We ask for faith to trust You for all our financial needs... Philippians 4:19

We ask for help if we have overspent and are in too much debt... Philippians 4:12-13

We ask for those who live under the threat of worry... Matthew 6:33-34

*We ask for financial provision of our church... 2 Corinthians 9:6-8
We ask for financial provision of missions we support... Colossians 4:3*

We ask for those who have lost jobs... Matthew 7:7

We ask for healing for those we know who are sick... James 5:14-15

We ask for wise investment of our time... Psalm 90:12

Pray for Pardon

“Forgive us our sins as we forgive the sins of others.”

Fifth Petition. This section includes prayers for forgiveness and reconciliation: Confession of our sin. Surrendering bitterness and retaliation we might hold against those who sin against us. Spiritual power to receive His grace and give His grace. Broken relationships reconciled.

We pray Your forgiveness of corporate sin... 2 Chronicles 7:14

Bitterness of unforgiveness... Matthew 5:43-44

Thoughts of envy or jealousy... Galatians 5:26

Quickness to judge others harshly... Matthew 7:1

Fantasies of lust... Matthew 5:28-29

Rage of unholy anger... 1 Corinthians 13:5

Pursuit of materialism... 1 Timothy 6:10

Attitudes of “getting even”... Matthew 5:38-39

Lack of compassion for the needy... James 1:27

Indifference toward those who need to hear the Gospel... Ephesians 5:15

Help us identify areas in our lives that we are “stuck” in sinful patterns and need to confess. We confess those sins to you now... John 8:36

Help us identify people whom we are holding a grudge against and are bitter toward. Help us release the debt we are holding against that person. We name some of the people now... Ephesians 4:32

Help us live in freedom of forgiveness, no longer under condemnation or burdened by guilt for which You have forgiven. Help us forgive ourselves... Romans 5:1

Help us share the grace of God by sharing with others the message of reconciliation and forgiveness in Christ. We mention them now... 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

Digging Deeper | fifteen minute intensive

Let God's truth sink into your soul as you pause to reflect on your perspective. Writing your responses will help you slow down and consider God's truth.

1. Read John 16:23, 24. Jesus invites us to ask for anything in His name. What is that "anything" you are asking for today? Ask, then, believing that God wants to give His very best answer - and that is God working in that situation!

2. Read Philippians 4:6. Make a list of anxieties to be released, petitions to be asked and thanksgivings to be offered in praise!

3. Use the Lord's Prayer outline to pray at least a few minutes in each of the five sections. Soon you will be praying for longer and longer time periods without distraction.

Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights... – James 1:16-17a (NIV)

God owns everything. For real.

There is a great myth at work in the world – particularly in 21st Century American culture. It is a myth that hinges on ideas such as power, control and independence. It is the myth that all I have –money, possessions, and talents; and whether they're bought, traded, or received as gifts – belongs wholly to me. And quite frankly, it's an easy and understandable myth to buy into. After all, it was my hard work that brought in the dollars that purchased the car and it was my years of practice that honed my different skills, wasn't it? Yes, it was. But even so, that doesn't mean you really, truly, own a thing.

If we look at our “stuff” through the lens of Scripture (which, as Christians, is a pretty good idea) we get a drastically different view of things. At a basic level we see that all things find their origin in God as Creator, and that all things continue to exist and burst forth to this day according to His power and His planning. (Gen. 1:1; Deut. 8:17-18)

Throughout Scripture we also see God reminding us time and time again that every single thing ultimately has His name written on it; that is, it all belongs to Him. The psalms put it plainly when they say, “The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it...” (Ps. 24:1; NIV)

With this understanding, we can see that there really is no such thing as being an “owner” at all. Instead, we need to see ourselves as “stewards” – someone who manages and protects the property of someone else. And while all people, right now, are living as stewards of God's property, not all practice **Christian stewardship**: understanding that everything (including one's self and one's talents) belongs to God and actively seeking to manage it all according to His will.

Generous | with my money

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

– 2 Corinthians 9:7-8 (NIV)

Some 25 percent of Jesus' words in the Gospels are related to the topic of worldly resources and the right stewardship of them. And the reasons why are simple: money is a critical component to the health and growth of God's people; and yet, due to its role in our lives, it is inextricably connected to our hearts and therefore, a prime target for idolatry. (Matt. 6:21; 1 Tim. 6:10; Heb. 13:5)

The Scriptural framework for being good stewards of our money can be boiled down to one word: **generosity**. Specifically, God desires us to be generous with our money in living out each of the following purposes:

- Advancing the Gospel and sustaining the life of the local church (Prov. 3:9; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:12)
- Providing for the needs of family (1 Tim. 5:8)
- Serving and blessing others
- Personal enjoyment (Ecc. 9:7)

Christians have often referred to the regular and generous support of the life of the local church and her mission of sharing the Gospel as tithing. This word, which literally means “tenth”, finds its root in the regulation found in the Old Testament whereby the Israelites were to give 10 percent of their income to the church, funding the ministry of the Levites or the priests. Some scholars have argued however, that when one combined this regulation with others in the Old Testament, that it was not uncommon for God's people to give more than 25 percent of their gross income toward the life of the church. (Num. 18:21-29)

While the term “tithe” is rarely used in the New Testament, the expectation of God’s people sacrificially supporting the life and mission of the local congregation remains. In particular, while the New Testament does not outline a specific percentage for giving, Scripture does clearly tell us that our generosity in regard to the church should be: a “**first fruit**” offering (the first and best of what we earn), **cheerfully done**, **proportionate** to our income (determined in relation to what I’ve been given), and **consistent**. (Prov. 3:9; Mal. 3:10; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:5; 9:7)

What if I can’t afford to be generous?

Say what? If you truly cannot afford to give any portion of your income back to God it simply means you are giving too much to yourself. You likely need to reorganize your spending habits and make use of a budget. King of Kings regularly offers Financial Peace University which helps followers of Jesus reprioritize their life money around God and debt-free living.

If you are in an unusual personal situation, (struggling single mom, sudden loss of work, etc.) then you should seek the church for support and advice.

Giving at King of Kings | two primary ways

Those who call King of Kings their home are called to invest in this ministry and the mission God is doing here, through their tithes and offerings. Tithes support the community life of God’s church. Offerings expand the mission life of God’s church.

- **Tithe:** A tithe is your regular, consistent, and proportionate gift to God’s work. It is a percentage of what God has given you financially. Typically, a tithe is given on a Sunday morning during worship. At King of Kings these gifts go to the General Fund, providing for staff and programs, supporting our community life ministry such as Youth Ministry, Children’s Ministry, etc.
- **How to Give your tithe:**
 - By cash/check in the offering envelopes found in the chairs in the worship center
 - Through online giving at kingofkingsomaha.org – choose Give in the upper right corner
 - By texting the \$ amount to 402.396.4144
 - Through the King of Kings mobile app

**There are many other ways to “live generous” at King of Kings Church in helping to expand the message and love of Jesus. For example, throughout the year, a “Love Offering” is highlighted that goes to a specific local mission or internal ministry.*

Generous | with my talents

[He] gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up... – Ephesians 4:11-12 (NIV)

God has gifted us with more than just money. Indeed he has given each of us unique talents and skills; skills that God not only intends for us to employ in building a full and wonderful life but also in furthering His mission and building up the church.

Natural gifts

All people are born with natural gifts, talents, inclinations and abilities. These range from the very practical (knack for cooking) to the brilliant (ability to compose a symphony) and are all a gift from God, equipping people for life in His world and in various vocations.

These natural gifts also have a place in God's church. Called to live together as God's children and seeking to serve the world, each of our gifts has a part to play. Just as we aim to give a portion of our financial blessings to the work of God, so too our natural gifts are offered up in service to His mission.

Spiritual gifts¹⁴

The Bible tells us that God also gives special gifts to His baptized children through the power of the Holy Spirit and that He also repurposes our natural gifts for use in the church; these are often referred to as "spiritual gifts." The Bible is clear that every follower of Jesus has at least one spiritual gift and that some may have many.

And while they are given and empowered by the Holy Spirit, these gifts are not to be viewed as magical but instead as practical, everyday tools to be used in service of the church. The purpose of these gifts is clear: to equip the local church for the task of spreading the Gospel and growing in their faith. (1 Cor. 12:11, 18; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Peter 4:10)

Six separate lists of gifts appear in the New Testament. (1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28-30; Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11; 1 Peter 4:11) And while there is much debate as to just how God manifests and uses these gifts, we at King of Kings believe that God is actively handing them out and that each of us should seek to discover which have been given to us and then work with the church to see to it that our gifts are being employed in the family of God.

Below is a list of the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament:

Administration	Tongues
Apostle	Knowledge
Discernment	Leadership
Encouragement	Mercy
Evangelist	Miracles
Faith	Pastor
Giving	Prophet/Prophecy
Healing	Serving
Helping	Teaching

How can I discover my spiritual gifts?¹⁵

- Seek the counsel of church leaders and mature Christians.
 - Acts 13:1-4; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6
 - Call the church office and speak with Tammy.
- Begin serving in various areas to discover what seems like a good fit for you.
 - Rom. 12:1; Isa. 6:8

¹⁴ See the Addendum for a description of each of the gifts; provided by Mars Hill Church, *Gospel Class*.

¹⁵ Mars Hill Church; *Gospel Class*, p. 82.

- Think through your areas of burden and joy, as those may be areas that God is leading you for a ministry opportunity.
- Seek to recall ways God is already using you to bear fruit for Him, since that may be an indication of your gift(s).
- Here are some on-line assessments that could help you in discovering your spiritual gifts:
 - Recommended, Focused on the Five Chief Gifts, Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd, and Teacher (cost \$10 but comes with an in depth explanation of the combination of your gifts) www.theforgottenways.org/apest/
 - Free survey focused on the Five Gifts www.fivefoldsurvey.com
 - Free survey that covers all the spiritual gifts mentioned in the bible www.kodachrome.org/spiritgift.

Stewardship | bottom line

This understanding of stewardship is not just an idea but is reflected in nearly every aspect of our life as a community church. For example, you'll see it embedded into King of Kings in the following ways:

- *A frequent emphasis on stewardship and overall generosity in:*
 - *Life Lessons*
 - *Children and youth ministries*
- *A regular call to serve both inside King of Kings and in our wider community*
- *A high expectation of service and generosity from King of Kings' membership*
- *Frequent opportunities to be generous financially*
 - *Offering taken in all worship settings*
 - *Including: children and youth ministries*
 - *Giving campaigns*
 - *Multiple means of giving*
- *Programming geared toward building good stewardship*
 - *Financial Peace University*

Digging Deeper | fifteen minute intensive

Let God's truth sink into your soul as you pause to reflect on your perspective. Writing your responses will help you slow down and consider God's truth.

- 1 Read through the list of spiritual gifts included in the Addendum. Which do you feel you may be gifted with? Why?

Which gift feels the *least* like you? Why?

Tell me more about the spiritual gifts:

Administration

Contributes: Efficiency

Place in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:28

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Colossians 1:17

Defined: The gift of administration is the God-given ability to give direction and to make decisions on behalf of others that result in efficient operation and accomplishment of goals. Often the mark of an administrator is the ability to accomplish things in a "fitting and orderly way" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

General makeup: Administrators often have a keen eye for detail. They may also possess the natural talents of organization, observing and using details, problem solving, and reasoning.

Do you have this gift?

1. Do you find it easy to make decisions?
2. When you give advice to someone, do you seem to emphasize more in the area of "how" it should be done rather than "why"?
3. Do you find yourself frequently thinking of decisions that need to be made in giving overall direction to a group or organization?
4. Do you like to oversee the distribution of resources?
5. Are you organized and efficient?

Apostle

Contributes: New ministries

Place in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Hebrews 3:1

Defined: An apostle is someone who has a mixture of gifts that enables him or her to proclaim the gospel with boldness and plant new churches (Acts 13:3–4). This gift also includes the capacity to minister cross-culturally (Acts 10:34–35; Ephesians 3:7–8).

General makeup: These people often have a number of gifts, such as; evangelism, teaching, leadership, faith, and exhortation and are motivated by difficult new tasks.

Do you have this gift?

1. Can you start a ministry or program from nothing by raising leaders, money, etc.?
2. Are you burdened for lost people?
3. Do you love the church?
4. Are you able to work well in chaos and uncertainty?
5. Are you unashamed of the gospel?
6. Are you a gifted leader that people naturally follow?

Discernment

Contributes: Spiritual clarity

Place in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:10

Defined: The spiritual gift of discernment is the ability to give an immediate evaluation of what was spoken and the person who said it, as to whether it is of God or Satan.

General makeup: This person will have a solid understanding of God's Word and a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. They easily detect insincerity and wrong motives in others. They tend to be perceptive, sensitive to moral issues, and personally steadfast.

Do you have this gift?

1. Have you felt a special responsibility to protect the truth of God's Word by exposing that which is wrong?
2. Have you often made an evaluation of someone or something that was said that others did not see, but yet proved to be correct?
3. Do you sense often that what is being said is produced by the devil rather than God, and has your judgment been correct?

Encouragement

Contributes: Affirmation

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: 2 Corinthians 2:16–17

Defined: The gift of encouragement involves motivating, encouraging, and consoling others so they mature in their walk with Christ.

General makeup: Christians with this gift have unusual sensitivity for and are attracted to those who are discouraged or struggling. People tend to pursue them for counsel. These people also tend to have a high degree of patience and optimism. They may also have the talent of singular relationships and prefer working with an individual or small group.

Do you have this gift?

1. Do people seek you out for advice and encouragement?
2. Do you enjoy walking with someone through difficulties?
3. Are you attracted to those who are hurting and needy?
4. Do you enjoy working closely with people who have personal and emotional problems?
5. Would you rather speak personally with someone about their problems rather than sending them to someone else for help?
6. Do you find it easy to express joy in the presence of those who are suffering?

Evangelist

Contributes: Converts

Place in Scripture: Ephesians 4:11

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Luke 19:10

Defined: The gift of evangelism is the ability and desire to boldly and clearly communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16–17; 1 Cor.15:1–4).

General makeup: Evangelists often care passionately about lost people and have a strong desire to see them come to faith. They feel compassion for the lost and seek to earnestly understand their questions and doubts. An evangelist often prefers being with people in the world rather than in meetings, an office or dealing with paperwork.

Do you have this gift?

1. Do you enjoy being with non-Christians and sharing the gospel?
2. Are you able to effectively communicate to non-Christians?
3. Does the conversion of a soul bring you profound joy?
4. Do you feel frustrated when you have not shared your faith for a long time?
5. Do you enjoy teaching others how to share their faith?
6. Do you find it easy to direct a conversation toward the topic of Jesus Christ?
7. Have you been fruitful in witnessing and seeing people become Christians?

Faith

Contributes: Confidence

Place in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:9

Defined: The gift of faith is the ability to envision what needs to be done and to trust God to accomplish it even though it seems impossible to most people.

General makeup: Those with the gift of faith have a strong sense that God is going to accomplish something important through them or their ministry whether others see it as significant or not. They trust God in difficult, even impossible situations, when others are ready to give up. These people are often visionaries who dream big dream, pray big prayers and attempt big things for the Savior.

Do you have this gift?

1. Do you view obstacles as opportunities?
2. Do you trust God for the impossible?
3. Do you have the ability to believe God for things other believers do not?
4. Do you find yourself feeling opposed to anyone who expresses that something cannot be done or accomplished?
5. Do you find other believers coming to you when they face a seemingly overwhelming trial or task?
6. Have you seen God accomplish things in your life that others said could not be done but which you believed He could do?
7. Do you have an effective prayer ministry with many wonderful answers to prayers that were impossible from the human point of view?

Giving

Contributes: Resources

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Matthew 7:7–12; 20:28

Defined: The gift of giving is the ability to give eagerly, wisely, generously, and sacrificially to meet the needs of others.

General makeup: Regardless of the amount, people with this gift genuinely view their treasures, talents, and time as on loan from God, and not their own. They are often moved to meet the needs of others. They enjoy giving of themselves and what they have. Even if they do not possess the resources to help, they earnestly pray for those needs to be met.

Do you have this gift?

1. Do you tend to see the needs of others more than other people you know?
2. Do you enjoy giving your time, talent and treasure to others?
3. Do you see giving to a worthwhile project as an exciting honor and privilege?
4. When you give some money to someone, do you find that you did not expect any appreciation in return?
5. Do you sense a great deal of joy in giving?
6. Do you find yourself looking for opportunities to give your money in response to needs?

Healing

Contributes: Wholeness

Place in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:9; 12:30

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Numerous healing miracles such as Luke 8:40-48 and John 9.

Defined: The gift of healing is the ability to bring healing to others. It may include both natural and supernatural means, since both are gifts from God.

General Makeup: People with this gift demonstrate God's healing power to others. They often bring restoration to the sick and diseased. They may use this gift as a way to verify God's message to an individual or as an opportunity to communicate a Biblical truth. They always see it as a way to glorify God. They may administer this gift through praying, touching, or speaking.

Do you have this gift?

1. Have you seen people healed through your prayers, words, or work?
2. Do you have a passion for ministering to people who are ill or diseased, either physically or mentally?
3. Do you enjoy praying for sick people?
4. Do you work in a "healing" profession?
5. Do you look for opportunities to minister to those who are suffering?

Helping

Contributes: Relief

Place in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:28

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Luke 7:16

Defined: The gift of helps is the remarkable ability to work alongside another and help that person complete the task God has given them.

General makeup: These people tend to demonstrate a servant attitude, loyalty, attention to detail, and responsiveness to the initiatives of others. They function well in positions of detail and assistant leadership. People with this gift often prefer to work behind the scenes and are encouraged to see other people succeed because of their help.

Do you have this gift?

1. Do you enjoy helping others become more effective in their work?
2. Do you prefer to labor behind the scenes?
3. When someone is doing a job poorly is your first instinct to help them, or criticize?
4. Do you prefer to work in a supportive rather than leadership capacity?
5. When you hear of someone with needs do you offer your services if possible?
6. Do you feel a burden to relieve others of their tasks so they are free to do their most important work?
7. When someone asks for your help, do you have difficulty saying no?
8. Do you look for opportunities to serve others?
9. Are you humble?

Hospitality

Contributes: Acceptance

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:13

Defined: The spiritual gift of hospitality is the ability to entertain and welcome guests in your home with great joy and effectiveness.

General makeup: These people tend to have an "open home" where others are welcome to visit. This gift is often combined with the natural talent of cooking and provides a natural ministry in a loving home environment.

Do you have this gift?

1. Do you enjoy having people in your home?
2. Do you enjoy serving behind the scenes?
3. Is your home the kind that most people feel comfortable in and drop by to visit unannounced?
4. Do feel that something is really missing in your life when you cannot have guests into your home?
5. When you think of your home do you view it from the perspective of guests who will visit?
6. Do you consider your home as a place of ministry?
7. Do you like to connect people together for friendships?

Intercession

Contributes: Protection

Place in Scripture: Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:12

Shown in Jesus' ministry: John 17

Defined: The divine enablement to consistently pray on behalf of and for others, seeing frequent and specific results.

General Makeup: People with this gift see prayer as their greatest work, and do it. They are compelled to pray on behalf of others, often without realizing why. They have a spiritual awareness of the spiritual battles being waged and readily participate in the form of prayer. They are convinced that God moves in direct response to prayer.

Do you have this gift?

1. Have you seen prayers answered as a direct result of your prayers?
2. Have people told you about answers they experienced through your prayers?
3. Do you feel a burden for prayer?
4. Do you regularly spend time in prayer?
5. Do you wake up at night with a compulsion to pray?
6. Are you ever led to pray with little to no knowledge of the item or person that has been brought to mind?

Interpreting Tongues

Contributes: Understanding

Place in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:10; 12:28; 1 Corinthians 14

Defined: The divine ability to translate the message of one who speaks in tongues so that others may be edified.

General Makeup: This gift is the necessary supplement to the gift of tongues. People with this gift interpret what someone who is speaking in tongues is saying so that the message may be understood by all. It is closely associated with prophecy (1 Corinthians 14).

Do you have this gift?

1. Have you ever received an understanding of what someone speaking in tongues is saying?
2. Have others around you verified your interpretation?
3. Have you ever understood an unlearned language and communicated that understanding to the Church?

(Word of) Knowledge

Contributes: Awareness

Place in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Luke 2:47

Defined: The Word of Knowledge is the ability to seek out, remember, synthesize, and make effective use of a variety of information on a number of diverse subjects.

General makeup: These people enjoy studying a wide variety of information and ideas. They also enjoy sharing that information with others, though they are often weak at implementing plans they create.

Do you have this gift?

1. Have you found that you have a good memory that retains and compiles lots of information?
2. Have others frequently pointed out your ability to know and understand God's Word?
3. Do people often come to you with difficult problems and questions from the Bible, seeking your insight?
4. In studying God's Word, have you found new insights and understandings of difficult subjects to be simple for you?
5. Are you able to synthesize information with ease?

Leadership

Contributes: Direction

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Matthew 4:19; 2 Corinthians 2:14

Defined: The spiritual gift of leadership is found in people who have a clear, significant vision from God and are able to communicate it publicly or privately in such a way that they influence others to pursue that vision.

General makeup: These people tend to gravitate toward the "point position" in a ministry. Others tend to have trust and confidence in their abilities. They best serve others by leading them. They tend to operate with a strong sense of destiny.

Do you have this gift?

1. Do others have confidence in your ability to lead?
2. Do you enjoy being the "final voice" or the one with the overall responsibility for the direction and success of a group or organization?
3. When a difficult situation arises, do others look to you for input and leadership?
4. Do you usually take leadership in a group where none exists?
5. Do you find leadership enjoyable rather than frustrating and difficult?
6. Do others look at you to make the major decisions for a group or organization?

Mercy

Contributes: Care

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:8

Defined: The gift of mercy is the capacity to feel and express unusual compassion and sympathy for those in difficult or crisis situations and to provide them with the necessary help and support to see them through these times.

General makeup: They have the ability to “walk in another’s shoes” and to feel the pain and burdens they carry. They desire to make a difference in the lives of hurting people for Christ without being judgmental. They run the risk of being hurt and used. They may have a difficult time evaluating the intentions of others.

Do you have this gift?

1. Do you enjoy visiting people who are sick or disabled?
2. Do you often think of ways to minister to those who are suffering physically?
3. Do you sense a great deal of compassion for people having personal and emotional problems?
4. Would you enjoy a regular ministry to those who are suffering physically?
5. Do you find that when visiting those who are suffering physically that it brings you joy rather than depressing you?

Miracles

Contributes: God’s Power

Place in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:10; 12:28

Shown in Jesus’ Ministry: Numerous places including John 6

Defined: The special ability God gives to some to serve as a human intermediary through whom He performs acts of supernatural power for the benefit of His people.

General Makeup: People with this gift bring glory to God, validating and authenticating the ministry through supernatural intervention. They bring the ministry and message of Jesus in displays of power, but readily claim God to be the source of such power. The danger in this gift is that it can be readily abused and lead to arrogance and false teaching.

Do you have this gift?

1. Do you see “unexplainable” happenings result through your prayers, touch, or words?
2. Do others experience healing or spiritual deliverance through your efforts?
3. Has this gift been verified and validated by the Church?

Pastor

Contributes: Nurture

Place in Scripture: Ephesians 4:11

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: 1 Peter 5:1–4

Defined: The gift of pastor is associated with the office of elder (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:2) and the qualifications of bishop (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1–4; Titus 1:5–9). A pastor shepherds people and may aspire to shepherd a local flock (church) and oversee its growth by teaching the Word of God. The pastor is by nature a teacher, usually possessing the teaching gift (Ephesians 4:11).

General makeup: A love for both studying God's Word and caring for God's people are two strong characteristics of people with this gift. They are concerned for the spiritual and physical well-being of people, and find great joy in equipping them to do ministry.

Do you have this gift?

1. Do you desire to shepherd God's people?
2. Do you treasure long-term relationships?
3. Do you diligently study God's Word?
4. Can you teach?
5. Do you enjoy developing other leaders?
6. Do you enjoy mentoring others?

Prophet/Prophecy

Contributes: Conviction

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10; 12:28; 14:3

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Jesus is the Word of God through whom the Father speaks (John 1:1–2, 14; Heb. 1:1–3).

Defined: A prophet has a twofold ministry. First, a prophet foretells the future (Jeremiah 35:15a and Acts 21:10–11). This function is more "miraculous" and is often more prevalent in settings or seasons when the Church is entering a new culture and people-group. Second, a prophet foretells God's Word (Jeremiah 35:15b–19). This aspect of the prophet continues today, and often demonstrates itself in an ability to recognize sinful behavior and a driving compulsion to confront individuals, groups, and/or cultures by proclaiming God's Word without compromise. In our present day, a prophet is often called a preacher. However, inherent in the Biblical definition is also a sense of a truth-teller who does so in a spirit of encouraging and comforting (1 Corinthians 14:3).

General makeup: They will easily spot compromise, sin, & error, and desire immediate change and action for Christ. They tend to be bold, sensitive to sin, and place a very high value on biblical behavior.

Do you have this gift?

1. Do you delight in the Word of God?
2. When you see sin or errors do you feel compelled to confront them?
3. Do you tend to see more evil, sin and error than others?
4. Are you capable of detecting and refuting false teachings?
5. Are you bold for Christ?
6. Do you love people and seek their best in Christ?

Serving

Contributes: Assistance

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:7

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Matthew 20:28

Defined: The gift involves the capacity to recognize and joyfully provide assistance in meeting practical needs, thus making life a little easier for others, particularly those who cannot help themselves.

General makeup: These people generally like to work behind the scenes. They also tend to find joy in helping alleviate the burdens and responsibilities of others. This gift is usually accompanied with an attitude of humility and sacrifice, as well as an ability to perceive the needs of others.

Do you have this gift?

1. Are you drawn to those in need?
2. Do you prefer to labor behind the scenes?
3. Are you burdened to relieve the needs of others?
4. When someone asks for your help, do you have difficulty saying no?
5. Do you look for opportunities to serve others?

Teaching

Contributes: Application

Place in Scripture: Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: John 3:2; 13:14

Defined: The gift of teaching is the God-given ability to understand and communicate biblical truth in a clear and relevant manner so that there is understanding and practical application.

General makeup: Learning, researching, communicating, and illustrating truth are qualities that an individual will manifest when exercising the gift of teaching. These people enjoy studying and learning new information, and find great joy in sharing it with others.

Do you have this gift?

1. Do you enjoy intense studying and researching?
2. Do you enjoy imparting biblical truth to others?
3. Do others come to you for insight into scripture?
4. Do you love to answer questions about the Bible?
5. When you see someone confused in their understanding of the Bible do you feel a responsibility to speak to them about it?
6. Do you enjoy speaking to various sizes of groups about biblical issues you have strong convictions about?

Tongues

Contributes: Message

Place in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:10; 12:28; 1 Corinthians 14

Defined: The divine ability to speak prayer or praise in a language one has never learned, or to communicate a message from God. One form of this gift also includes the ability to speak in a language not previously learned so unbelievers can hear God's message in their own language (Acts 2).

General Makeup: People with this gift may receive a spontaneous message from God which is made known to the Church through the gift of interpretation. This language is often referred to as a prayer language. As such, it is edifying only to the speaker since it is not understandable to others. When used publicly, it should always be accompanied with someone having the gift of interpretation. It should also be used in good order, not in ways that create confusion in the Church (1 Corinthians 14). For that reason, King of Kings does not encourage the practice of this gift in public worship settings.

Do you have this gift?

1. Have you ever spoken in a language you had not been taught?
2. Do you speak in unintelligible languages during your prayer time?
3. Do you find yourself worshiping God in unknown or incomprehensible words?

(Word of) Wisdom

Contributes: Guidance

Place in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:8

Shown in Jesus' Ministry: Colossians 2:2-3

Defined: The gift of wisdom is the ability to have very practical insight into people and situations that is not obvious to the average person, combined with an understanding of what to do and how to do it. It is the ability not only to see, but also apply the deep mysteries of God.

General makeup: These people often have an ability to synthesize, the capacity to design, and a love of studying. When they speak people recognize their insight as being from God and specifically needed in that moment.

Do you have this gift?

1. When studying God's Word with others, do you find that you discover the meaning and its implications before others do?
2. Do you seem to understand things about God's Word that other believers with the same background and experience do not seem to know?
3. Are you able to apply deep biblical truth to practical daily living?
4. Does God give you profound insights into people and circumstances?

Addendum | missional church

...you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

– 1 Peter 2:9-10 (NIV)

What is the Church?

Many of us have heard it said that the “church” is not a building or programs but “people.” Indeed, Scripture tells us that the church is the community of Christians – throughout time – that God has gathered together and claimed as His family, saving them through the gift of faith in Jesus Christ. This includes the followers of God in the Old Testament who had a faith in God’s Word and promises, all of which pointed to Jesus. (Eph. 5:25)

And while all those who believe and are baptized are members of God’s *eternal family* (Eph. 2:19) each of us are also called to be connected and committed to a *local family*, or a local church, where each can learn, sacrifice, serve, and give within the body of Christ. Scripture is clear in teaching that all members of God’s *eternal family* have a part to play here in the *local family*, as together we’re called to *declare the Good News of Jesus and do the good work of God in a lost and hurting world*. (Eph. 4:12; 1 Peter 2:9-10)

Within His church – for the sake of good order, effectiveness, and accountability – God has called some men as Pastors and Elders to oversee the life of the local church; namely, the proclamation of God’s Word, the celebration of the Sacraments, the care of God’s people, and faithfulness to the mission. (Acts 6:1-6; 14:23; Titus 1:5; 1 Cor. 14:33, 40)

Pastors and Elders are men called by God and chosen for ministry by the local church according to clear biblical requirements. (1 Tim. 2:11–3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9) In later sessions we’ll discuss how this reality is lived out at King of Kings Church. But do not be mistaken: while Pastors and Elders are called to *lead* the church, all of us are called to *be* the church.

What is culture?

While you and I might be members of God’s family, we are also citizens of the world. This means that each day we live in the midst of rituals, traditions, beliefs, art, media and much more that make up our own unique cultural context.

Leslie Newbigin, a renowned theologian and missiologist, defines culture like this:

“When we speak of culture in its broadest sense, we are speaking about the sum total ways of living that shape (and also are shaped by) the continuing life of a group of human beings from generation to generation. We are speaking about the language that enables them to grasp, conceptualize, and communicate the reality of their world; about law, custom, and forms of social organization, including marriage, family, and agriculture. These things shape the life of each member of the society. They are also shaped, modified, and developed from generation to generation by the members of the society. From the point of view of the individual member they are given as part of the tradition into which he or she is born and socialized.”

It is within our own, unique cultural context that each local church is called to live and do its work of loving God and changing lives through the message of Jesus.

What’s it mean to be a missional church?

I [Paul] have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do this all for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings. – 1 Corinthians 9:22b–23 (NIV)

The church has a clear mission, given by Jesus who is our leader and Sr. Pastor: to love the Lord and to love our neighbors. (Matt. 22:37-40) Later, Jesus gave greater detail to this mission by telling the disciples, King of Kings Church/What We Believe

and therefore us, that we were to go into the world and make disciples through the power of the Gospel; *starting in our own backyard.* (Acts 1:8)

Being a missional church begins by keeping this mandate from Jesus at the forefront of our life together as God's family. In all that we say and do, we seek to love and honor God and to bless our neighbor through the sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In order to do so, the local church must be mindful – if not masters – of the local culture.

To effectively share the Gospel, engage the community, and transform lives, the local church must understand the local culture to such a degree that the message of Jesus can be fitted (not altered) to the particular people, particular place, and particular time in which they live. While the Gospel of Jesus Christ never changes (1 Cor. 15:3-8) it must be *contextualized*. For example, this means ensuring that the Gospel is spoken in a language that people can understand and that it is coupled with concepts that are simultaneously faithful to the Scriptures yet grasped by the hearers.

Missional churches are those who readily embrace the tension of communicating the message of Jesus in culturally engaging, yet faithful means. They are likewise dedicated to the hard work of deciphering a culturally relevant expression of what God has and is doing through Jesus Christ, as well as what God's Word is calling us to change, repent of, leave alone, or redeem as a community.

For King of Kings, being a missional church means that we are called to wrestle with such issues as worship style, family dynamics, the demands of school and work, sexuality, etc.¹⁶

Mission | gone wrong¹⁷

As said above, being a missional church is tough work, involving tough questions and tough choices. Inherent in it all is the risk of sinfully selling out one of two extremes: syncretism or sectarianism. Yes, these are weird words, but we should know them.

Syncretism | *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed... – Romans 12:2 (NIV)*

Syncretism is when culture is elevated above the truth of God's Word. Thus, becoming the driving authority within the church and mingling the clear teaching of Scripture with cultural beliefs and agendas. This is also known as liberal Christianity, where the desire to love our neighbor trumps loving Jesus and being obedient to God's Word.

Sectarianism | *My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. – John 17:15 (NIV)*

Sectarianism occurs when life as the church is elevated above the Gospel of Jesus and His mandate to seek and save our neighbors. Through a fear of sin, and ultimately a lack of trust in God, the church withdraws from society, creating a safe, Christian subculture – rather than actually entering into culture as a missionary – where the church wrongly thinks evil is being kept at bay. This is also known as fundamentalist Christianity, where a desire to love Jesus and be obedient to the Word incorrectly trumps the call to love our neighbors.

For missional churches, like King of Kings, the risks of syncretism and sectarianism are always present. And yet to be faithful to our mission of loving the Lord and loving our neighbor, we must live in the tension of being true to God's Word yet engaging to the culture; trusting all along in God's power and the Holy Spirit to both keep us from error and make us effective. (Eph. 3:20-21)

¹⁶ Adapted from "Gospel Class" by Mars Hill, p. 51.

¹⁷ Adapted from "Confessions of a Reformation Rev." by Mark Driscoll, p. 15-16.

At King of Kings this means that we are a community of faith that is culturally liberal, yet theologically conservative and driven by the gospel to love the Lord, our neighbors, our community, and ultimately our world.

Missional Church | bottom line

This understanding of mission is not just an idea but is reflected in nearly every aspect of our life as a community church. For example, you'll see it embedded into King of Kings in the following ways:

- *Progressive, culturally engaging music*
- *A relaxed, casual dress on most occasions*
- *Teaching series' that are biblically grounded yet fitted to the culture through topic and title*
- *Straightforward, every day, yet appropriate language*
- *Shared life in a King of Kings Growth Group that is the sacramental presence of Jesus in the world*
- *Programming geared toward the perceived needs of the local community*
 - *Life skills classes (FPU, Prepare/Enrich for Marriage, etc.)*
 - *Preschool education*
- *A liberal stance on many cultural, yet not biblically mandated issues*
 - *i.e. Tattoos, dress, media, etc.*
- *A conservative stance on all biblically mandated issues*
 - *i.e. Male headship, sexuality, etc.*

Digging Deeper | fifteen minute intensive

Let God's truth sink into your soul as you pause to reflect on your perspective. Writing your responses will help you slow down and consider God's truth.

- 1 Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-24. Here Paul is talking about the length he is willing to go to in order to share the message of Jesus. What do you think Paul means when he says, "I have become all things to all men..."?

Does this mean that it is okay to do anything in order to share the Gospel? Why / why not?

- 2 Read again Newbigin's definition of culture on page 39. In three sentences or less how would you describe the culture of Katy, Texas to a friend?

- 3 Which feature of King of Kings' mission-focused style do you like the best? Why?

Which feature do you struggle with the most? Why?