

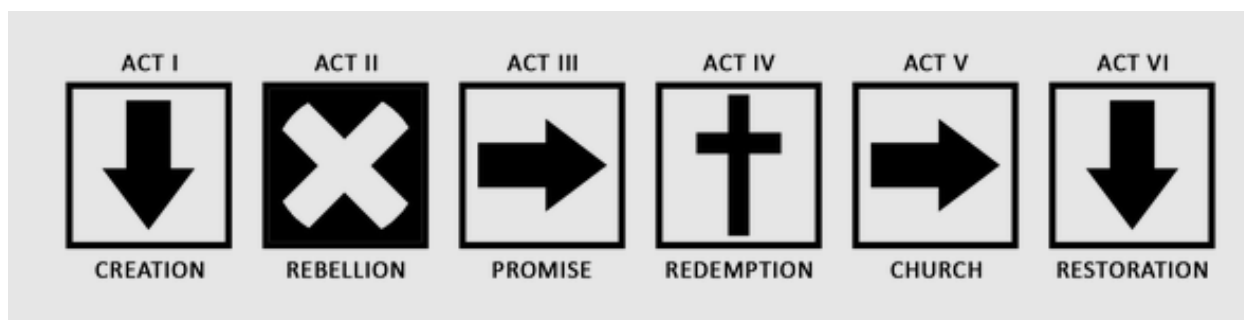


**THAT PROFESSION OF THY FAITH,
THOUGH**

memegenerator.net



Part One: The Story



Act I: Creation

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

-Genesis 1:1

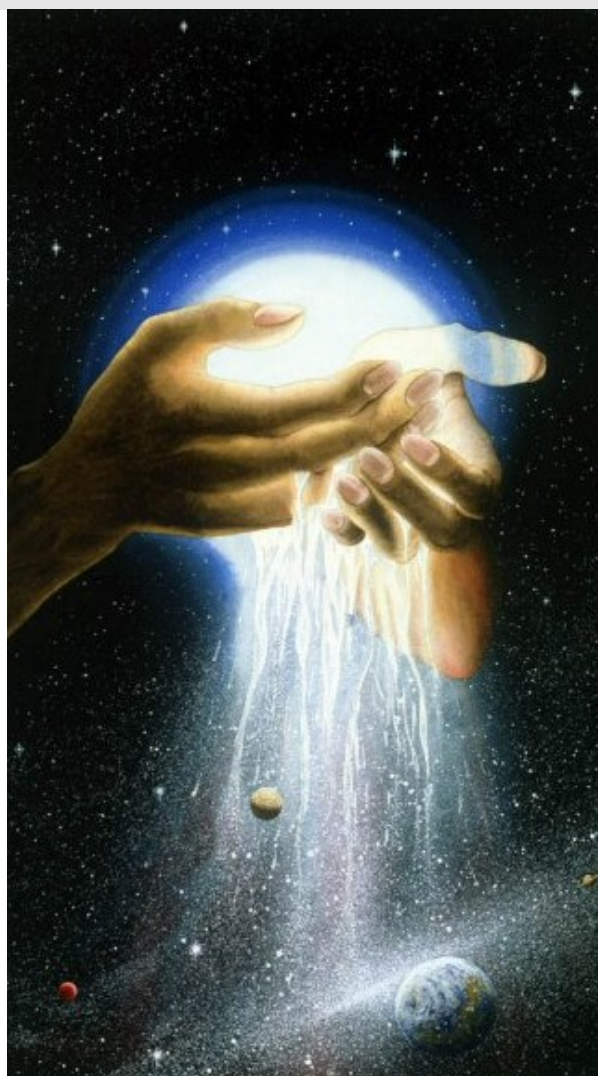
This Story begins where all good stories start: in the beginning.

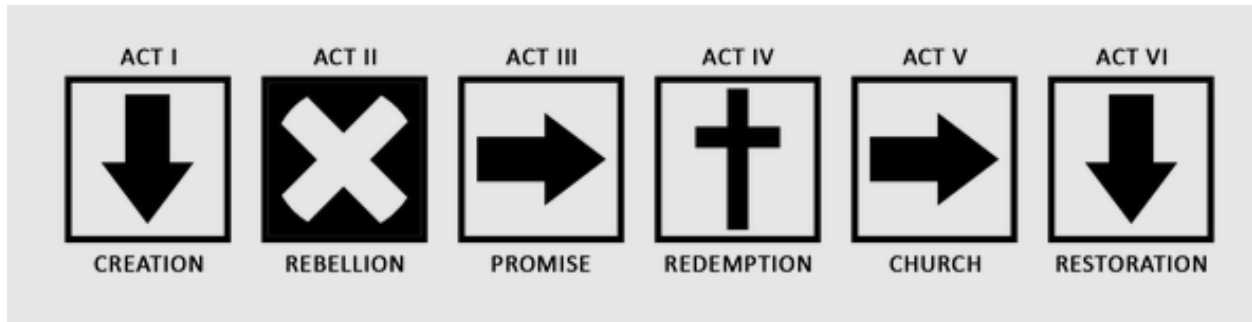
And the beginning of this Story tells the beginning of everything. It tells us how God created the universe and everything in it. And he made it all very good.

Including life.

Including us.

That's where the Story starts: God created a good world, and God created us in his image. What that really means is that we get to have a relationship with God. That's a huge part of what being in his image is all about—being in relationship with God.





Act II: Rebellion

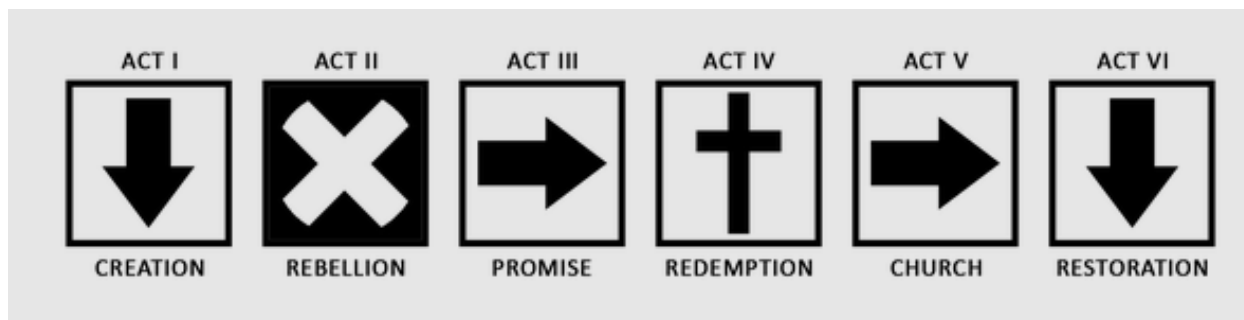
"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."

-Genesis 3:6-7

Unfortunately, creation's perfect beginning didn't last very long, and neither did our perfect relationship with God. As Genesis 3 tells us, human beings rebelled against God. We fell into sin, and our sin messed up our relationship with God.

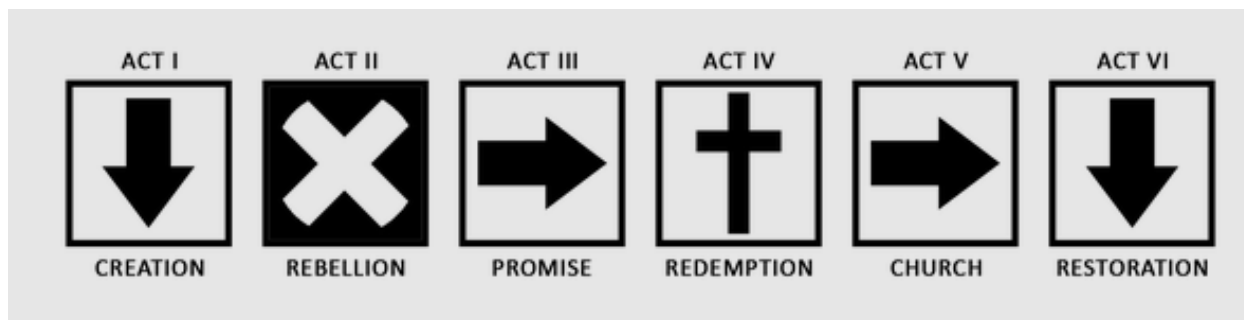
Suddenly, we have a problem.





Act II: Rebellion (Notes)





THE BROKEN RELATIONSHIP

Act III: Promise

*"And I will put enmity
between you and the woman
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel."*

-Genesis 3:15

It was a pretty big problem. Especially since we couldn't fix it on our own. Only God could. So how did he do it?

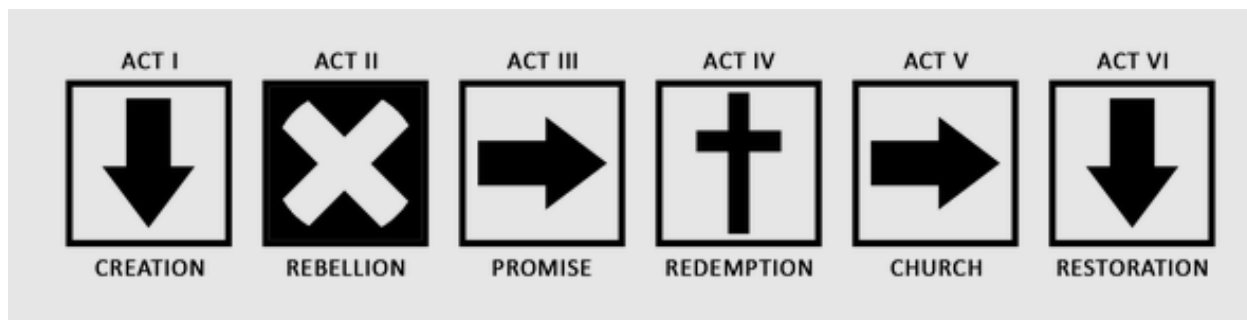
He made a promise.

God promised to send a savior. A savior who could stand in the gap that we'd made between ourselves and God. A savior who could fix our broken relationship. A savior who would be able to make things perfect again.

God made that promise to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 and again to Abram in Genesis 12 and again and again and again throughout the rest of the Old Testament. In scripture, God tells us how he slowly developed that promise through his chosen people, Israel.

THE C O O L S

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Act IV: Redemption

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, and the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

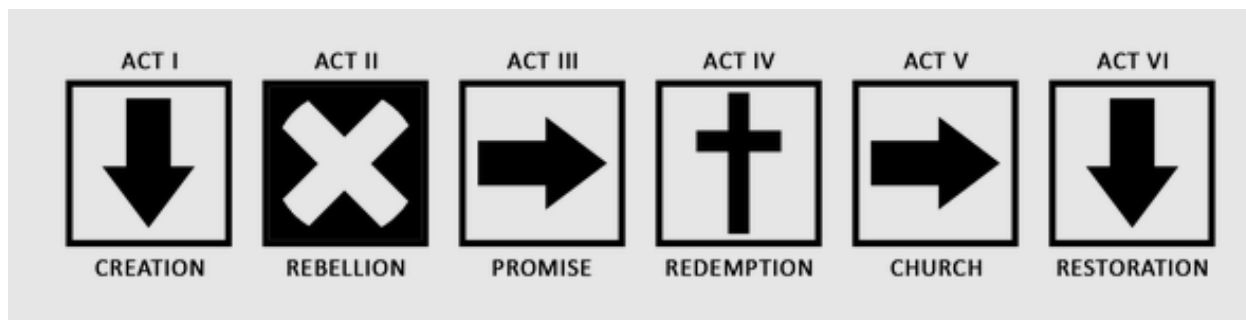
-John 1:14

God's savior had come.

Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of God's promise to his people. He was the Messiah who would heal our relationship with God. He was the one who would redeem us and give us new life. He had come to live among us, so we could live with God once again.

Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus bridged the gap between us and God, saved us from our sins, and restored our relationship with God.





Act V: Church

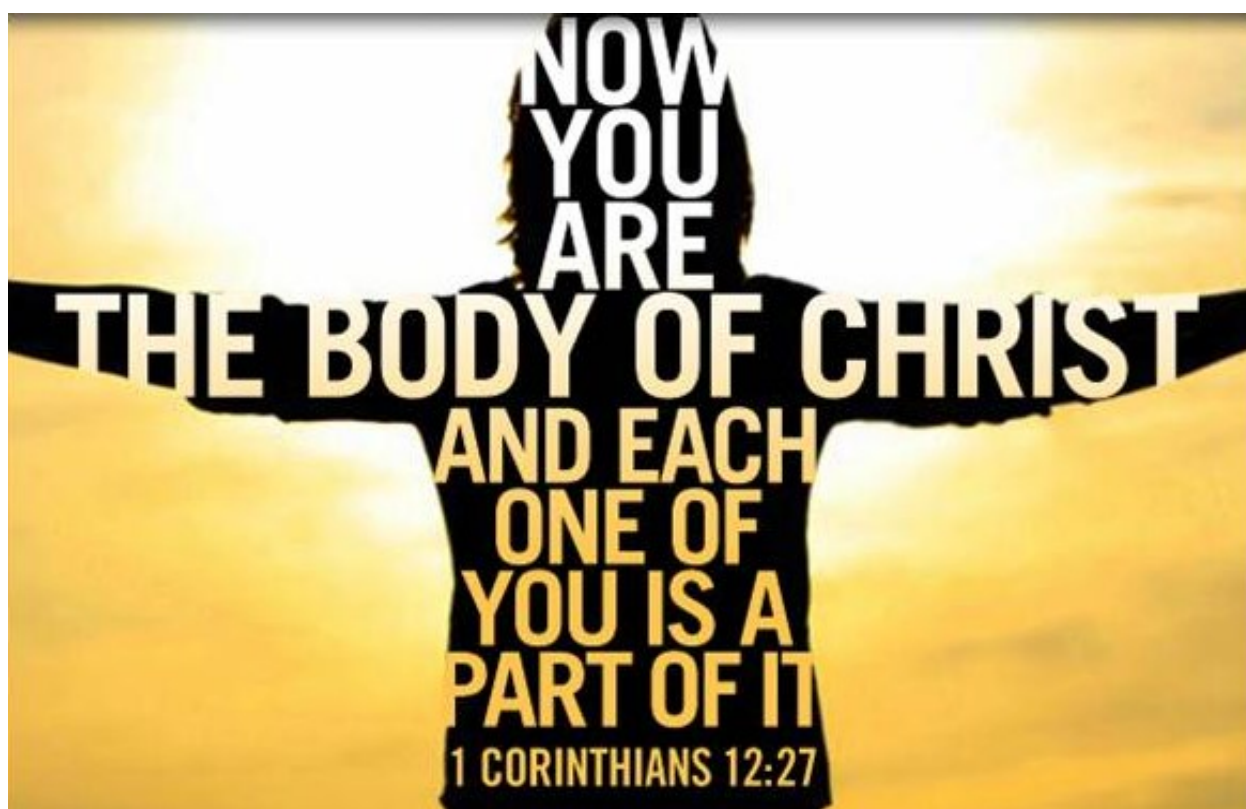
"This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus."

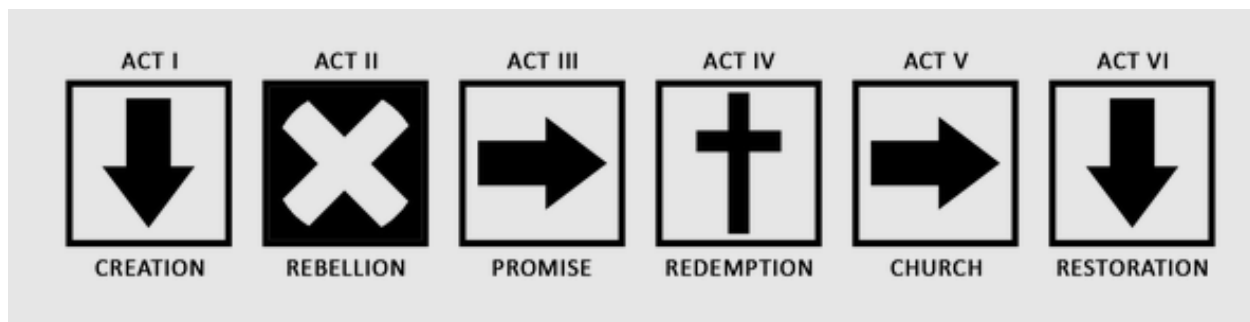
-Ephesians 3:6

Once we're saved by Christ, we join God's chosen people. You might say that we become members of Israel too. Or another word the Bible uses for God's chosen people is probably more familiar to us: the Church.

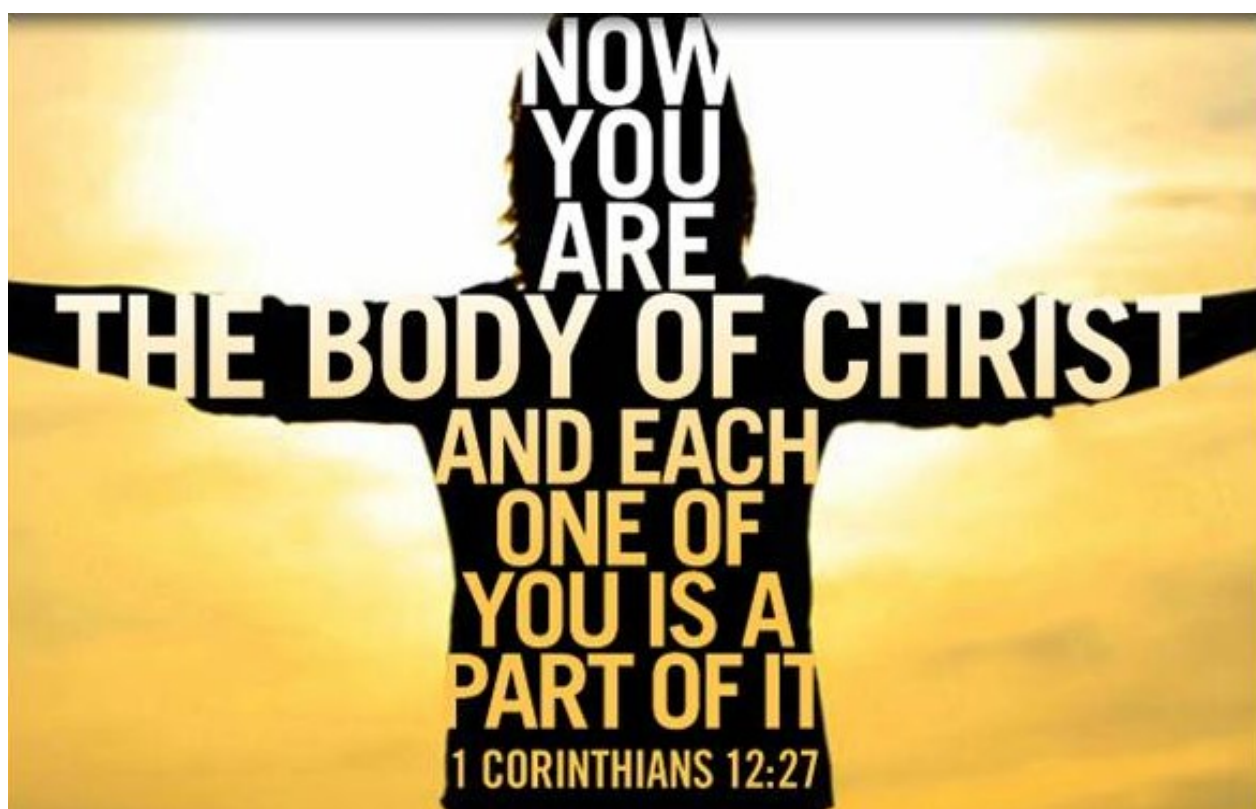
And as God's chosen people, as his Church, we're called to carry the Story into the rest of the world. We live as Christ's hands and feet by sharing the Story of what God has done and by living it out.

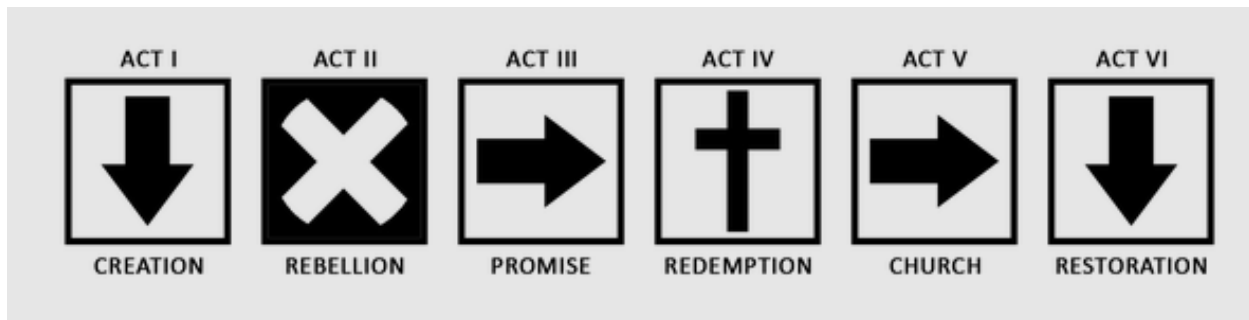
And through all of that, we become transformed, new people.





Act V: Church (Notes)





Act VI: Restoration

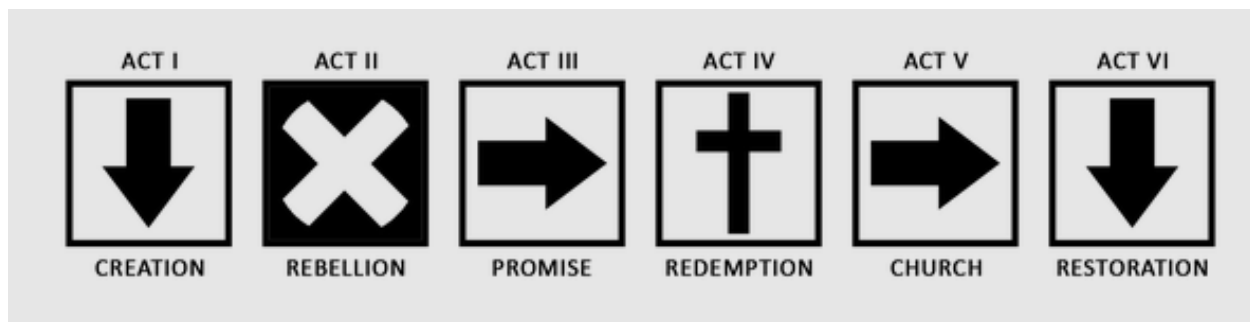
"Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death" or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'"

-Revelation 21:1-4

Eventually all of creation will be transformed. Just as we've been renewed, redeemed, and recreated as God's people, everything else will be restored to the way God meant it to be too. God will cleanse his creation, and make it the way it was supposed to be from the beginning.

That's how the story ends. It ends like it began: with a good world and a perfect relationship with God.





Act VI: Restoration (Notes)





But who's the author?

Hold on. Let's pause for a moment. We've been talking about this Story, right? And it's basically been the Story of God and all the things he's done in the world he created. But we've got a problem. That makes it sound like God is just a character in this Story. I mean, he is, but he's also more than that. You see, God isn't just a character in this Story; he's also the author. And that brings up a few questions. For instance, what exactly do we know about God? How much can we know about him? Who is he? After all, if he's the author of the Story of the entire history of the world, it might be important to know a few things about him.

Well, first things first. We're about to dig into those questions a bit. But before we do, we need to remember something: *No human being is ever going to fully understand God.* Not you. Not me. Not anybody. After all, this is God we're talking about. He created the entire universe, including stuff we don't even know anything about yet, so there's no way that we're going to know everything about him. It's simply impossible for us. When it comes to the limits of human knowledge, God is way out of our league.

That said, though, we can still know some things about God. In fact, that's part of why he wrote his Story for us, so that we might know more about him, so that we might come to love and trust him, so that we might be able to have a relationship with him once again.

And so, without further adieu, here's some of what we know about God:

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- 1) **God is Triune**—As Christians, we believe that God is a Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But we don't believe in three gods; we believe in one God who is made up of three persons. Now, let's just be honest for a second, that's kind of hard to understand. But it's kind of like the picture at the top of the page. The word "God" has three letters. It has a "G" and an "O" and a "D." And each of those letters are different from each other. They look different. They make different sounds. They each play a different part in the word "God." And yet they're unified, because they're all part of the same word. And we need all three letters in order to understand that word, "God." If any of them are missing, everything changes. Same thing if we change them around. Then the word doesn't mean the same thing. It's the same thing with God. The three persons of the Trinity are different from each other in some ways—the Father is distinct from the Son who is distinct from the Holy Spirit who is distinct from the Father. They're different from each other. They each do different things in the world and in our lives: The Father is our creator and sustainer. The Son is our savior and redeemer. And the Holy Spirit is our teacher and guide. And yet they're unified. They're one. And we need all three of them to understand God. If we try to take any of them away or change who they are, we lose sight of who God really is. Or let's think of it this way.
- 2) **God is Relational**—Another way to understand the Trinity is to compare God to a family. Let's say there's a father, a mother, and a son. They're three individual people. They're distinct from each other and different in some ways. They have their own gifts and talents. But they're still part of one family. There's unity there. And they have relationships with each other. They're in a community with each other, and they share in each other's lives. They share love and time and activities together. It's the same with God. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all in perfect relationship with each other. This is what we mean when we say that God is love. We mean that the persons of the Trinity have a relationship of perfect love with each other.

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- 2) **God is Relational, Continued**—And just like in a family, the persons of the Trinity share in each other's work. They're unified as one being, but they're also unified in purpose. And so while we might talk about God the Father as the creator, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit were also involved. In the same way God the Father and God the Holy Spirit were involved in our redemption, and God the Father and God the Son are still present with us through the Holy Spirit.
- 3) **God is Personal**—But God isn't just in a relationship within himself. He's in a relationship with us. Theologians like to say that God is *personal*. What that means is that he's not just far off somewhere in heaven. Instead, he's present with us all the time, and he's personally involved and invested in our lives. That's actually why we talk about our need to obey God. We don't view God as some cosmic rule-maker up there in the sky. The reason we say it's important to obey God is because we're in a relationship with him, and we want to show him that we love him and care about him. So we live the way he asks us to live because it personally affects how we relate to God.
- 4) **God is Holy**—And here's the reason why our lives affect our relationship with God. You see, God is holy. That means that there's no sin in God. In fact, God is pretty much the exact opposite of sin. And that makes it pretty hard for God co-exist with sin, to be in the same space as sin. It's kind of like when someone with a bad peanut allergy walks into a room where someone just opened a jar of peanut butter. They can't co-exist in the same space. Something's got to give. That's why God asks us not to have any sin either. That's why he asks us to be holy too, so that we can be in a relationship with him, so that he can invite us into his presence, so that he can invite us into his community, and so that we can share in his love and his care and his world and his Story. Anyone see a problem here, though? Anyone see a hang-up in this whole wonderful equation? Well, that's what we're going to talk about in Part Two of this packet. Before we do that, though, we need to take a brief look at some tools for better understanding this Story.

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Understanding the Story

Okay, so we know the Story, and we know the author...but the Bible isn't always the easiest book to understand, so how are we supposed to read it? Well, that's where your *hermeneutic* comes in. Put simply, a hermeneutic is a process or approach for interpreting scripture. It's kind of like a toolbox with different tools that you can use to "work on" different passages in the Bible.

Now, the problem is that there are a lot of different hermeneutics out there with different kinds of "tools," and depending on which hermeneutic you use and how you use it, you could end up reading certain passages in the Bible in very different ways. For instance, part of why Christians disagree on how to read Genesis 1-3 is because they're using different hermeneutics to interpret those chapters.

Lucky for us in the Reformed tradition (more on that later), we have what's called a **Reformed Hermeneutic**, and it's got some pretty good tools for interpreting scripture. In the Reformed tradition, whenever we go to read a passage of the Bible, we should always keep five tools handy as we read:

- 1) **The Holy Spirit Element**—It's important for us to remember that the same Holy Spirit who inspired the writers of the Bible in the first place is the one who is also working in our hearts and minds to help us interpret what we're reading. In other words, we basically have the author of the Bible, God himself, helping us understand what he's written.
- 2) **The Grammatical Element**—The Bible wasn't written in any of the languages that people speak today. It was written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. So, unless you're reading the Bible in its original languages, you're already reading an interpretation of scripture. That's because the translator had to make choices on how to translate words that could have more than one meaning. This is important to keep in the back of our minds as we read the Bible, especially when translation choices could change the meaning of a text.

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Understanding the Story, Continued

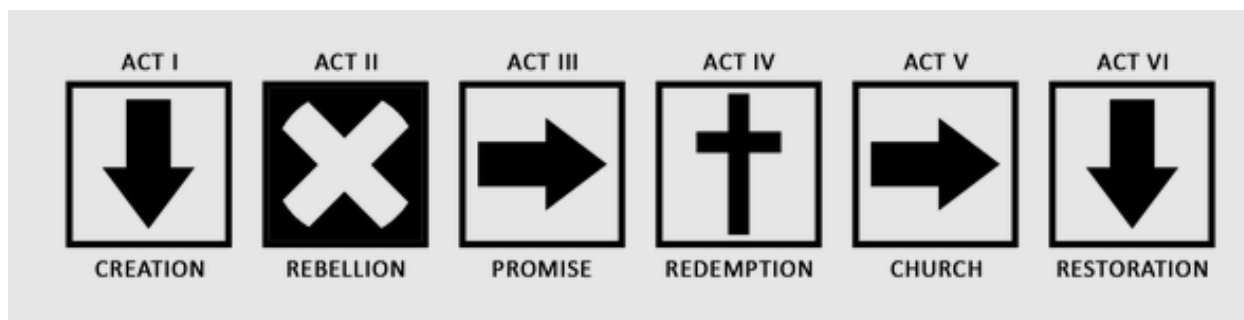
- 3) **The Literary Element**—The Bible isn't all written in the same way. For instance, 1 & 2 Kings are history. The Psalms are worship songs. Luke is a Gospel. Ephesians is a letter. In other words, the Bible contains different genres of writing. Just like you shouldn't read a novel the same way you read a poem or a biography like an essay, you can't read the books of the Bible like they're all the same either. Similarly, just like we write and speak with different tones, vocabulary, and styles when we're addressing different people or trying to communicate different things, the authors of the Bible wrote in different ways for different occasions too. So we need to pay attention to the literary aspects of the passages we're reading. We need to try to figure out the genre, the audience, and why the author is writing a certain way.
- 4) **The Historical Element**—Basically, even though we believe the Bible still speaks to us today, it wasn't written in our time, place, or culture. That means there's a lot of stuff that the authors of the Bible knew about life back then that we don't understand. Likewise, there's a lot about life today that we know about that they could never have even imagined. So it's important to keep that "historical gap" in mind and do our best to understand what the authors of scripture meant "back then" so that we can understand what it means for us today.
- 5) **The Theological Element**—Now, we've already admitted that the books of the Bible are different in some ways from each other. But we also believe that they're connected; that's why they're all part of the same book. So even though we need to read different passages differently, we don't read them *independently*. We still read everything in the Bible as contributing to same overall theological truths. In other words, they're all part of the same Story that we've been talking about.



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Part Two: Being Christian

For starters, let's review...



Salvation Explained

Okay, so God wants us to be holy, but we can't do that on our own. So the Story the Bible tells us is how Jesus Christ redeemed us, how he saved us.

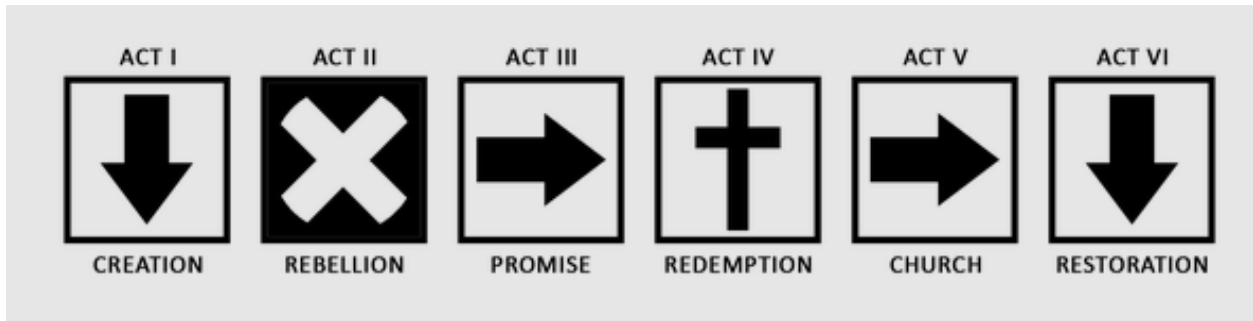
But what exactly does it mean to be "saved"?

Well, there's two sides to that coin, two parts to salvation, and they're called "Justification" and "Sanctification."

- 1) **Justification** is God **declaring** us holy. We can't do this on our own, because we're not actually holy. We're sinners. But God doesn't see us that way anymore. When God looks at us, he no longer sees our mistakes. Instead, he sees his son's perfection. In other words, justification is when God takes away our sins and gives us Christ's righteousness in their place.
- 2) **Sanctification**, then, is God **making** us holy. But unlike with justification we have a part to play in our sanctification. Basically, in sanctification, God works with us through his Holy Spirit to transform us so we actually look more like how he sees us—more like his son. Another way to say that is that sanctification is how God takes away our old way of life and helps live our new way of life in Christ.

An example might help: Let's say you've committed a crime. You stole a pair of shoes, and now you're on trial. The evidence against you is rock solid. You were caught on camera. And the police found you with the shoes in your hand. Everyone knows you're guilty, and so do you, so it's no surprise when the jury comes to that verdict. But after the jury informs the court that they've found you guilty, the judge does a strange thing. She declares you innocent. That's **justification**. Being given innocence you don't deserve. And then on top of it, the judge says that she will personally work with you to help you live up to the innocence she's given you. That's **sanctification**. Pretty good stuff, huh?

For starters, let's review...



Salvation Explained (Notes)

[illegible]

Salvation Explained, Continued

So justification and sanctification are both part of our salvation and God's grace. It's kind of like this tree. It's the same tree. But it's got two trunks. Both have the same roots. Both are growing upward. Both share the same life. They're part of the same process, but they're also different. That's how our salvation works. Both justification and sanctification are rooted in Christ and his work on the cross. And both help us grow in our relationship with God. Both are part of our new life in Christ. You can't have one without the other. They're part of the same process. But they're also different.



The main point is that we can't save ourselves, because we're guilty. Only Jesus could justify us. That part is all him. But we do participate in the sanctification part. As the apostle Paul puts it in Philippians 2, we continue to work out our salvation. Once Christ has justified us, our sanctification also starts, and we join in that process, every day growing as Christians and becoming more and more God's holy people, more and more the people he meant us to be.

Being the Church

And a huge part of becoming God's people is living into and living out the Story we've been talking about.

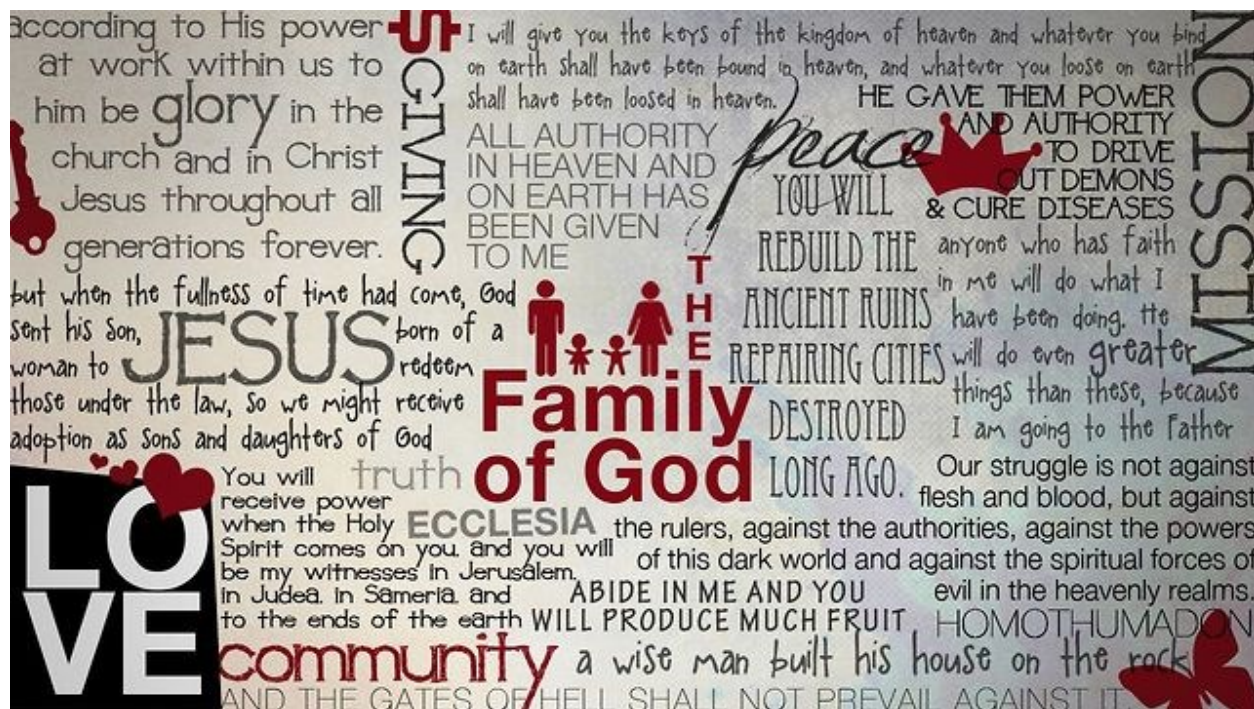
It's not our Story. We didn't write it. God did. He's the author. But he's written us into it. We're characters in the Story. And God has entrusted it to us to spread around us in all we do and say, both individually and together with our brothers and sisters in Christ. In other words...

DON'T GO TO CHURCH,

BE THE CHURCH.

Being the Church (Notes)

Part Three: Being the Church



The Family of God

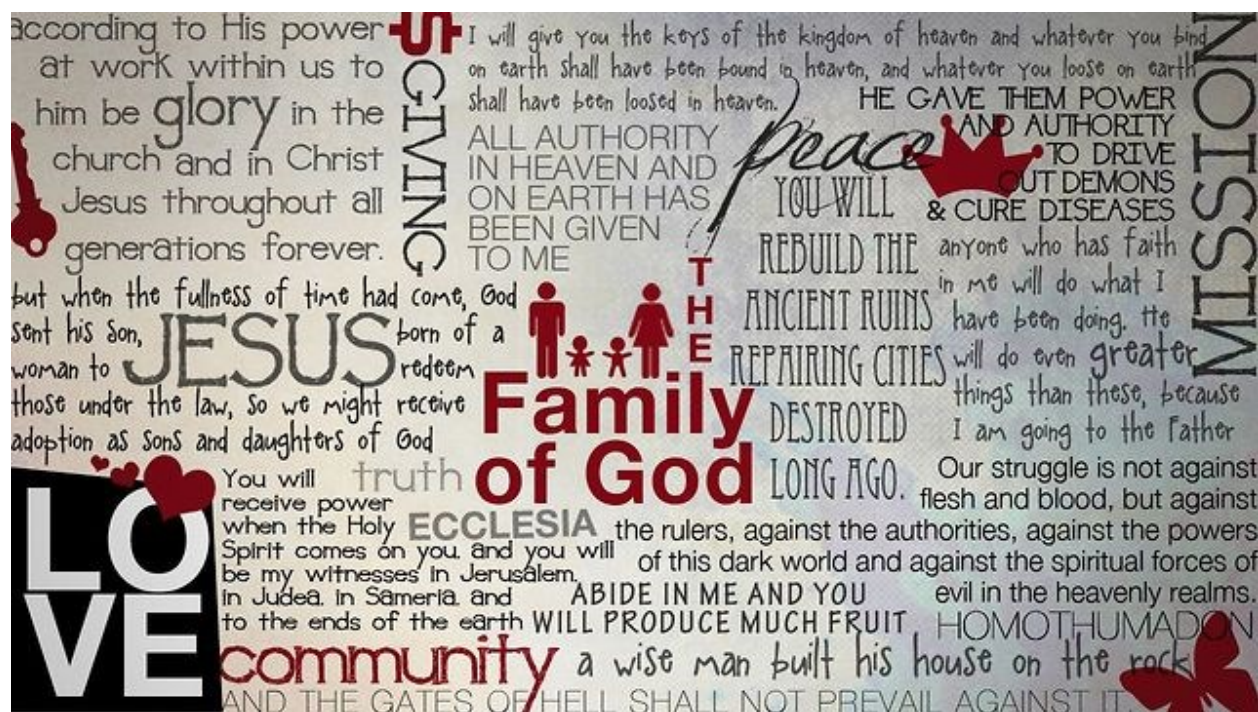
One of the ways that scripture, especially the apostle Paul, talks about how we can be the Church is by talking about the Family of God.

So back to that example with you stealing shoes and the judge declaring you innocent and then mentoring you to live up to that innocence. There's one more part to that story: you're homeless. So even though you don't have to deal with the consequences of your crime, and even though you're finding out how to live as a better person, you still don't have a home. You still don't have a family. Even with all the judge has done for you, how's that going to turn out?

But what if the judge also said, in addition to declaring you innocent and personally helping you live a better life, that she was going to adopt you? What if she also welcomed you into her home, into her family? And what if she gave you a job in her family's business so you could turn your life around? That'd be even more amazing, right?

That's actually what God has done for us. Through his Son, Jesus Christ, God has adopted us all as sons and daughters into his Family. And he's given us work to do in the Family Business of being his people, his Church, in his world.

Which leads us to why...



The Family of God (Notes)

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[CHURCH] IS A VERB

Being the Church, Part Deux

Sometimes we forget that the church is people, all the people that God has adopted into his family.

Often when we use the word “church,” we’re talking about a building or a worship service or something like that. But while we might have church buildings and church services, those things aren’t the *Church*. Because the Church is the people of God. All of them. Throughout time and across the world. The Church is the family of God, all our brothers and sisters, no matter when or where they live(d).

And people do things. And because the Church is people, so does the Church.

Like we said when we were talking about Salvation, as Christians we’re supposed to become more and more the people God meant us to be. We’re supposed to live into his Story.

But how? How do we do all of that? How do we be the people of God? How do we work in the Family Business? How do we be the Church? How do we live into the Story?

[CHURCH]
IS A
VERB

Being the Church, Part Deux (Notes)

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BCRC Core Values

Our congregation has an answer to that question, “How do we be the Church?” In fact, we’ve got six answers, and we call them our **Core Values**:

- 1) **Worship**—Worship is part of how we make our relationship with God strong; we praise him. We celebrate his goodness to us. And not just on Sundays. All of our lives should be made up of acts of worship. Everything that we do should praise God, because we’re called to live as his people everywhere we are and in whatever we do. Seen that way, Sunday morning worship is like practice for the rest of the week (really, for the rest of our lives).
- 2) **Discipleship**—Jesus had disciples, men and women he taught how to love God and live as his people in this world. But God’s process of making and forming disciples didn’t end when Jesus ascended back to heaven. It continues. We are Christ’s disciples as well. And we believe that we’re supposed to keep discipling each other, walking this road of faith together, forming disciples of Christ, and growing in our faith alongside one another.
- 3) **Community**—That brings us to the next Core Value: Community. Basically, we do all of our life as the Church *together* with our other brothers and sisters in the Family of God. The reason for this “togetherness” is that being the Church and living out God’s Story—working in the Family Business— isn’t something any of us can do alone. We need all of us.

Core Values

Discipleship Evangelism
 Justice/Service Worship
 Stewardship
 Community

BCRC Core Values (Notes)

Core Values

Discipleship Evangelism
Justice/Service Worship
Stewardship
Community

BCRC Core Values, Continued

- 4) **Evangelism**—But we're not exclusive about the Church, because God isn't. We always need to be sharing the Story, always inviting others to join our Family on our Father's behalf. That's part of the work God has given us: to evangelize and tell as many people as possible about him and what he's doing in this world.
- 5) **Justice/Service**—As we talked about, a huge piece of this Story is that the world isn't the way it's supposed to be; it's not how God intended it. But God is working to fix it. We call that his justice. It's the process of God removing sin from his creation and making it right. And we're called to join that work, to serve those around us by partnering with God in spreading his justice and making the world the way it's supposed to be. That's a big part of how we tell people what God is doing in this world—we show them.
- 6) **Stewardship**—Finally, we're called to do all of those things by using the gifts God has given us. Those gifts include things like our time, talents, and money. We're supposed to be good stewards of those things, meaning that we manage them well and use them in God's kingdom, this world, and the Family Business of being the Church.

Core Values

Discipleship Evangelism
 Justice/Service Worship
 Stewardship
 Community

BCRC Core Values, Continued (Notes)

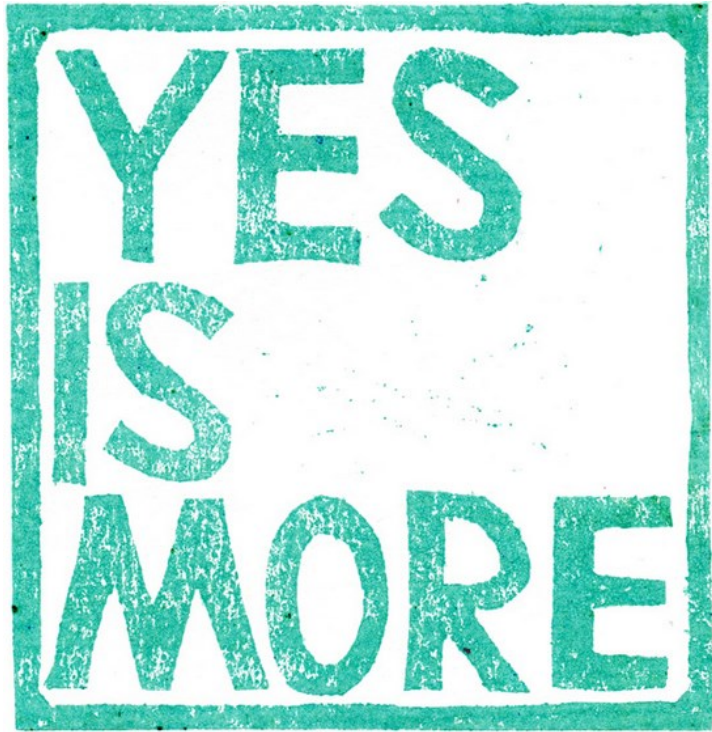
Core Values

Discipleship Evangelism
Justice/Service Worship
Stewardship
Community

Profession of Faith Explained

So, maybe by this point you're wondering what Profession of Faith has to do with all of this. Fair enough. Let's talk about how professing your faith fits in with what we've been talking about.

Basically, when you were baptized, that was God's way of saying "yes" to you. It was God saying that he wanted you in his Family, that he wanted you to be one of his children, that he wanted you to be in the Church.

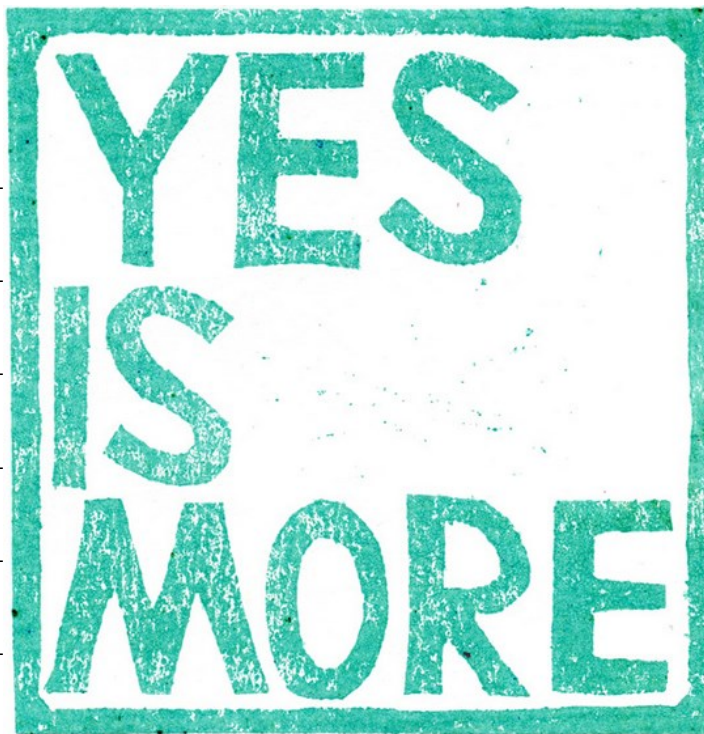


Profession of Faith, then, happens when you're ready to say "yes" back to God. It's how you tell him that you want to be in his Family, that you want to live as one of his children in the Church and be a part of the Story he's written you into.

But there's also a bit more to it as well. There are some things that come along with saying "yes" back to God. You see, like in any family, there are both responsibilities and benefits to being in God's Family. There are things we gain, and also things we have to do. So another piece of Profession of Faith is saying that you want to receive the benefits of being in God's Family (relationship with God, inclusion in his Story, forgiveness of sins, salvation, etc.) but also that you're ready to take on the responsibilities. Those responsibilities include things like the core values we just talked about, but also living according to the way of life God expects his children to live, living up to our Family name, living as people trying to put our sin to death and come to new life in Christ.

And those benefits and responsibilities are things we have to take seriously no matter what congregation we end up in. We certainly hope that you stay here at BCRC. But we also know that many of you will move away for a while during college. And some of you might move away permanently after college. So our hope is that you'll find a church community to be a part of wherever you go so you can continue to receive the benefits and fulfill the responsibilities of being in God's Family no matter where you live. After all, ultimately, we're all members of the same Church, and we can live as God's people anywhere we end up in the world, because we're still part of the same Family of God.

Profession of Faith Explained
(Notes)



Part Four: Being Reformed



STRONG THEOLOGICAL CONTENT, EXPLICIT CALVINISTIC LANGUAGE,
PERSUASIVE ARGUMENTATION, REPEATED REFERENCES TO SOVEREIGNTY

What's in a name?

Our church is called “Brookfield Christian Reformed Church.”

But what does that mean?

Well, it means that we're in the Reformed tradition of Protestant Christianity.

Okay, but what does *that* mean?

To answer that question, let's go back to the Protestant Reformation. In 1517, Martin Luther nailed his “Ninety-Five Theses” to a church door in Wittenberg, Germany in order to try and correct some problems that he saw in the Catholic Church at the time. Unfortunately, the Catholic authorities back then didn't take that very well, and so it wasn't long before Luther and a number of others left the church. Those who supported Luther eventually became known as “Lutherans.”

But not everyone who left the Catholic Church agreed with everything Luther said and taught. And so more than one Protestant Christian tradition developed. Ours, the Reformed Tradition, was one of them, and instead of following Luther, people in the Reformed Tradition followed a couple of other theologians, guys like John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Bucer, and more.

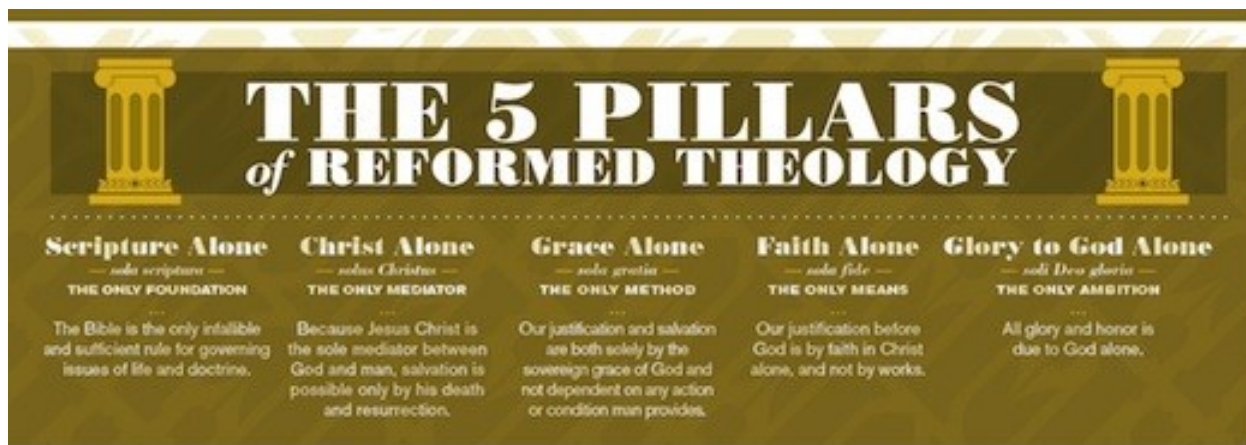
So, we're like Lutherans and some other Protestant traditions because we broke away from the Catholic Church during the Reformation. But we also have some differences with other Protestants.

But rather than talk about those differences and what we *don't* believe, let's talk about what we *do* believe, what it means to be “Reformed.”

What's in a name? (Notes)

[illegible]

The Solas



Other Important Stuff

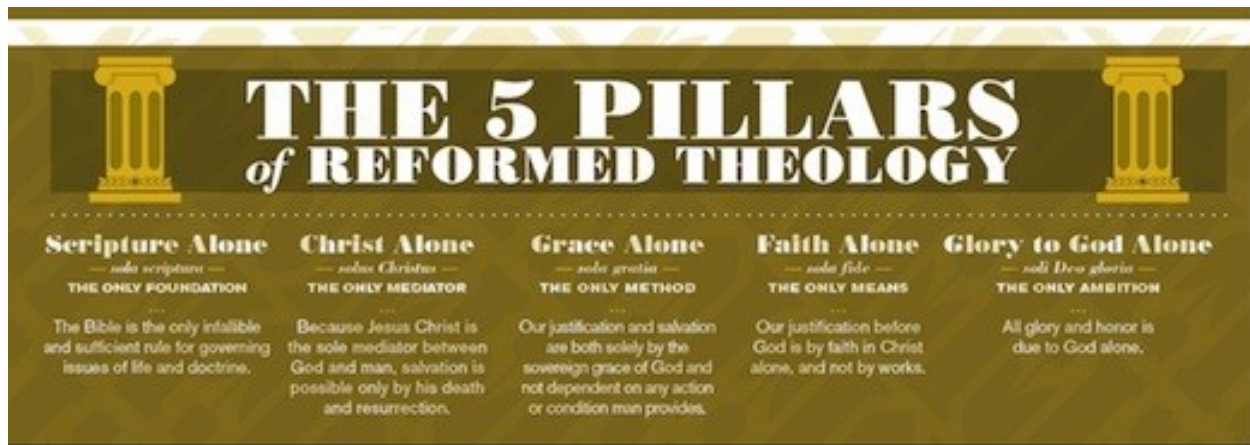
- 1) *Authority of Scripture*—As we just talked about in the solas, we believe that the Bible is our foundation for what we believe and how we live. As God's word, it's the final authority for us as Christians. That's why we work so hard to interpret the Bible well. Because it affects everything we do, say, think, and believe.

All Scripture
is God-breathed and is useful for
teaching, for reproof, for correction,
and for training in righteousness
2 Timothy 3:16

- 2) *Sovereignty of God*—The Reformed tradition also makes a very big deal out of how powerful God is. We basically say he's in control of everything. Now, that might seem like a given. After all, don't all Christians believe that? Many do, to an extent. But the way Reformed Christians read scripture, we emphasize God's rule in ways other people aren't always comfortable going along with. Some areas where we especially highlight God's sovereignty (or you might say "ultimate direction and supervision") would be in the doctrines of Creation, Providence, and Election.



The Solas



The Solas and Other Important Stuff (Notes)

***All Scripture**
is God-breathed and is useful for
teaching, for reproof, for correction,
and for training in righteousness
2 Timothy 3:16*





Other Important Stuff, Continued

- 3) *Covenant*—One of the major themes that Reformed people read in scripture is the theme of “covenant.” We’ve probably heard that word a lot in church before, but what does it actually mean? Well, remember how we talked about The Promise God made? That’s God’s covenant. It’s his Promise that he’ll send a savior to fix our broken relationship with him and draw us back to him once again. That’s God’s part of the covenant. But most covenants are two-way roads. So we have a part too. Our part of the covenant is to stop breaking our relationship with God. Unfortunately, since we’re sinful, we’ve never been able to keep our side of the covenant. And that’s where God’s grace comes in. He still keeps his side, even when we fail to keep ours. In fact, he even sent his Son to keep our side for us. It’s like grace on top of grace. And that’s actually why the theme of “covenant” is so important in scripture. Because God has always kept his covenant, his promise, his plan for how he would fix us and his creation. All the way back in Genesis 3, God promised us that he would send a Savior. And the rest of the Bible tells The Story of how he did just that, how he kept his Promise, how he rescued and Redeemed us from our Rebellion against him. In other words, all throughout history, ever since the fall into sin, God has been calling his people back to himself. He did it with people like Adam and Eve, Noah, Moses, the Israelites, David, and others. And eventually he fulfilled the Promise in Jesus Christ. And it’s through him, Jesus Christ, that we become members of God’s Church, his Family, his covenant people, along with all those who came before us.

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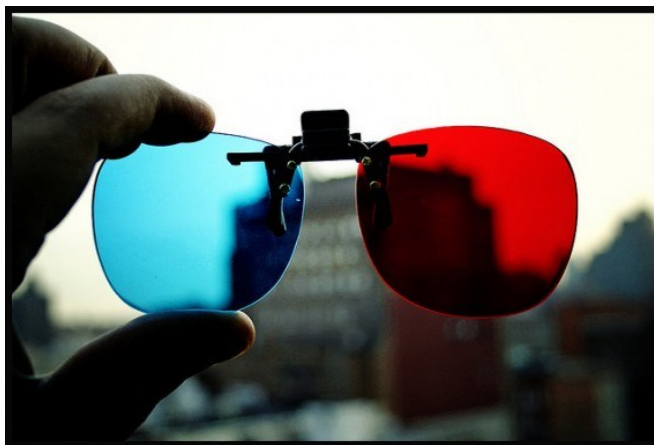
Still More Important Stuff

- 4) *The Sacraments*—But God doesn't just tell us that we're his covenant people. He also gives us the sacraments to "sign and seal" us as members of his family. In other words, the sacraments regularly remind us that we belong to God. Now, the sacraments themselves don't actually make us God's people. As we already talked about, we were welcomed as God's children through Jesus Christ. So there's nothing magical about the sacraments. Rather, the reason they're important is because they point us to what Christ has done for us. Think about it like a road sign. Road signs say things like "Milwaukee: 12 Miles" or "Downtown Milwaukee: Take 94 North." The sign isn't Milwaukee itself, right? But it does tell you something about Milwaukee. It tells you where it is. It points you to Milwaukee. That's how the sacraments work. They point us to things. Now, different Christian traditions have different sacraments. Some have more. Some have less. But in the Reformed Tradition, we have two—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. To be honest, we could probably sit here all day and talk about all the theology wrapped up in these two sacraments, but here's the basic gist:
 - a) *Baptism*—Baptism is the New Testament sequel to circumcision. Just as circumcision was a visible sign for the Israelites that God had chosen them to be his people, baptism is a visible sign for Christians that God has chosen us to be his people. It also represents our new life in Christ. Just as he went down into the grave and rose to new life, so we go down into the water to rise to new life in him.
 - b) *The Lord's Supper*—In the Lord's Supper we look back, we look forward, and we look around. We look back and remember Christ's sacrifice for us, we look forward to the heavenly banquet we will enjoy in his presence when he comes again, and we look around at each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. Therefore, we are in community (*communion*) with Christ and with each other.

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The Last Bit of Other Important Stuff

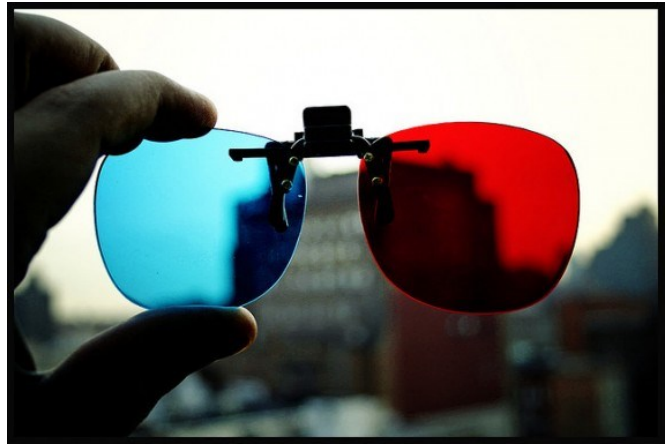
5) *Worldview*—This might seem obvious, but a “worldview” is the way that a person “views” the “world.” In other words, it’s like the lens you look through when you’re trying to bring what’s happening around you into focus and make sense of it. But there are tons of different worldviews out there. For



instance, as we’ve already talked about, there are other Christian traditions, and while we emphasize some of the things we’ve been learning about, they emphasize different things, different lenses to look through. Same thing with non-Christian worldviews. Muslims have a certain worldview based on what they believe. Hindus do too. So do Jews. Atheists also. And there are other worldviews that aren’t necessarily religious. For instance, Republicans hold one worldview. Democrats hold another. Pacifists have a worldview that doesn’t include war. Materialists have a worldview that says there’s nothing other than physical material in the universe. And on and on. There are probably as many different worldviews as there are people. The question for everyone, then, is this, “What is your primary worldview? What’s the lens that brings all the others into focus?” For Reformed Christians, the primary worldview is The Story. The Story of God’s Creation, our Rebellion, God’s Promise, Christ’s Redemption of us, our being the Church, and the coming Restoration. That’s what brings everything else in our lives into focus for us: The Story of scripture. As we said before, our worldview affects everything we do, think, say, and believe about how to live and act as Christians, but also as human beings. It affects our work. Our studying in school. Our hobbies. Our friendships. The things we enjoy. How we enjoy them. Etcetera. In fact, that’s another part of what it means to profess our faith. It’s not just saying, “I believe all this stuff.” It’s living it out every day in every area of our lives. Basically, as Reformed Christians, we put a huge emphasis on our faith as our primary worldview, and that’s the lens we believe brings everything else into focus.

The Last Bit of Other Important Stuff

(Notes)





Creeds and Confessions

Okay, we've talked a lot about what it means to be Reformed, and we've discussed a few specifics about what that means. But are there any good places to go if we're trying to go deeper or figure out what it is exactly that we believe in our tradition?

Yup. They're called our Creeds and Confessions.

Basically, the CRC has a few statements of faith that describe who we are as Christians and what we believe the Bible teaches.

- 1) The Apostles' Creed—One of the oldest statements of the Christian faith. It summarizes the apostles' teaching. Pretty much every Christian tradition, denomination, and church subscribes to it.
- 2) The Nicene Creed—Another ecumenical creed (meaning lots of different Christians use it, no matter tradition or denomination). It was written to correct certain heresies when the church was still figuring out what it believed.
- 3) The Athanasian Creed—A creed that the Western Church uses (Protestants and Catholics). It teaches about the Trinity and Jesus Christ.
- 4) The Belgic Confession—"Confession" literally means "to say together" in Latin. So this is a document that Reformed Christians "say together" about what it means to be Reformed. It was written in 1561 in the Netherlands (parts of present-day Holland, Belgium, France, and Luxemborg) in order to convince the ruling Catholic authorities that Reformed believers were still true Christians even if they weren't Catholic. It didn't work at the time, though, since its author, Guido de Bres, was martyred a few years after writing it.



Creeds and Confessions, Continued

- 5) The Heidelberg Catechism—"Catechism" comes from the Greek for "to teach," so this document is meant to help teach Reformed Christians their faith. It was published in 1563 in Heidelberg, Germany as a Sunday School curriculum of sorts to help young Christians learn what they believed. Broadly speaking, it covers the themes of Sin (why our relationship with God is broken), Salvation (how God fixed our relationship), and Service (how we thank God for saving us).
- 6) The Canons of Dort—"Canon" comes from the Greek for "ruler" or "measuring stick." So, it's the measuring stick we use to determine truth. It was written in 1619 in response to a guy named Jacobus Arminius, who had written and taught things different from Reformed theology. The Canons serve as a footnote or appendix of sorts to The Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism, because it goes deeper into certain topics.
- 7) *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*—A "testimony" testifies or tells something about who we are. It's kind of like a name badge: "Hello, my name is _____, and this is who I am." *Our World Belongs to God* was originally written in 1986, but it was updated in 2008. It's not on the same level with The Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, or Canons of Dort, but it's meant to help us apply what we believe to modern questions facing us today, questions about things like social justice, sanctity of life issues, human sexuality, marriage, education, human society, personal hobbies, technology, creation care, government, war, and the like.

finally.

If you have questions about any of what we've talked about, here are some books and resources I found helpful in putting this packet together:

- 1) The Bible (hopefully you've heard of it).
- 2) *Calvinism in the Las Vegas Airport* by Richard J. Mouw
- 3) *Deep Down Faith* by Cornelius Plantinga Jr.
- 4) Everything Timothy Keller has ever written...ever.
- 5) *Letters to a Young Calvinist* by James K. A. Smith
- 6) *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis
- 7) *Quest of Faith* by Robert De Moor
- 8) All my notes from my seminary classes (which I would gladly print out for you if you'd like to nerd out that much).
- 9) Wikipedia

Additionally, if you'd like to talk more about this stuff with me personally, let me know, and I will gladly buy you breakfast, lunch, or simply a cup of coffee (or some type of sugary coffee-related drink, depending on your preferences).

My friends, I look forward to continuing to serve with you in the Church of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

All glory be to God!

Amen.