

JESUS. MISSION. COMMUNITY.

AGAPE 101





The Church: Agape is a Church

The visible local church is an intentional gathering of believers, God's people saved by God's power; **bound** by commitment in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as His body and **sent** on God's mission; **observing** the Lord's Supper and the Baptism of Christ; **governed** by Christ and his Word; its scriptural offices being Pastors and Deacons; and utilizing the spiritual gifts given to it through the resurrection of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.



Baptism

In following the example of Christ,^[1] baptism is an act of obedience following a believer's faith and identification with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.^[2] It is a pledge to Christ out of a redeemed heart through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.^[3] Baptism serves as a means of initiation into the church of Jesus Christ as a public identification with Christ and his body.^[4]

Who Can Be Baptized?

Anyone may be baptized following repentance of sin and a confession of faith in Jesus Christ.^[5] Scripture does not restrict the age of a baptismal candidate but is clear that each baptismal candidate understands their sin, their need for salvation, and for baptism.

Who Can Baptize a Person?

There is no mandate on who should conduct the baptism. Jesus, however, commands His disciples to make disciples and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.^[6] This indicates that one must be a disciple of Jesus to baptize in the presence of the body of believers.

When Should a Person be Baptized?

Baptism is to be conducted in the presence of the church and by those within the church for the flourishing of the body of Christ and the new life of the believer. In Acts 2:37-47 it is clear those who were brought into the life of the church contribute to its flourishing. This passage also reminds us that we are to be baptized in conjunction with repentance and belief and should be baptized as soon after a profession of faith as possible.^[7]

How Should a Person Be Baptized?

The baptismal candidate should be fully immersed in the water, following the example of Christ, which represents being delivered from the wrath of God.^[8] Done in the presence of his new community, this initiates the believer into the life of the church and serves as a public proclamation of Jesus' saving work by His resurrection.^[9]

^[1] Mt 3:13-17; 28:19-20; Mk 1:9-11. ^[2] Romans 6:3-5. ^[3] 1 Peter 3:21. ^[4] 1 Cor 12:13; Ephesians 4:5. ^[5] Acts 8:12-17; 36-38; 10:34-27; 16:14-15, 30-34. ^[6] Matthew 28:18-20. ^[7] Matthew 3:13-17; 28:19-20; Acts 2:37-41; Rom 6:3-4. ^[8] Acts 8:38, Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12 Mark 10:38-39. ^[9] Acts 2:37-47; 1 Peter 3:21.

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is ordained by Jesus^[1] and is a critical aspect of what it means to be his church. Jesus instructed his disciples, "do this" without any ambiguity or figurative language.^[2] Therefore, we understand the Lord's Supper to be an ordinance of the Lord. The Lord's Supper spiritually desired result is remembrance and nourishment. Jesus says, "do this in remembrance of me"^[3] to keep his work and person central to the life and worship of the church. We also believe that Jesus is spiritually present at the Lord's Table. We encounter him at the Table and he nourishes our souls.^[4]

Who Can Take the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a meal for the gathered church. It is a family meal that gives identity and definition to the new covenant people of God. To take communion in isolation or outside the context of the gathered body is to ignore the intent of Scripture.^[5] The Lord's Supper is for believers, by the sacred use of bread and wine, preceded by self-examination, to commemorate together Christ's death and resurrection.

We cannot emphasize enough the sacred seriousness of the Lord's Supper. It must be taken in a 'worthy manner,' through self-examination, judging ourselves, and discerning the body. The physical, mental, and spiritual act of taking the Lord's Supper is formative for the body of Christ and shapes our community around the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. We currently take the Lord's Supper weekly at the conclusion of the service. When we take the Lord's Supper everyone comes forward to receive the bread and the juice. Once seated we take the Supper together at the same time signifying our unity and equal dependence on the grace of Jesus Christ. ***In summary:***

We, the community of believers rooted in the historic Baptist tradition, declare our faith regarding the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, commonly known as Communion. While our views align primarily with the spiritual presence understanding, we honor and respect diverse perspectives within the broader Christian community.

1. We believe that Communion is a memorial and proclamation of the Lord Jesus Christ's death until He comes again. It is not merely a ritual, but a deep spiritual experience where believers commune with Christ and with each other.
2. We understand that the elements of bread and wine/juice symbolize the body and blood of Christ. They are not changed into His literal body and blood, nor do they contain Him in a physical sense.
3. In partaking of the bread and wine/juice, we affirm a spiritual presence of Christ during the Communion. While Christ remains in heaven at the right hand of God the Father, His Spirit is uniquely present among the believers in this sacred act.
4. This spiritual presence is not confined to the elements themselves but is profoundly experienced in the hearts and minds of the believers as they partake in faith. It's a means of grace, wherein believers are spiritually nourished, strengthened, and united more closely with Christ and one another.
5. Communion is a declaration of the Gospel. As we partake, we remember and proclaim the Lord's death, resurrection, and promised return.
6. It serves as an avenue for self-examination and reflection, prompting believers to confess and repent of sins, thereby renewing their commitment to Christ and His teachings.
7. Through Communion, the church expresses its unity in Christ. All believers, regardless of their diverse backgrounds, come together as one body in this sacred act.
8. We encourage every believer to approach the table with humility, seeking the Lord's guidance and preparing their hearts to experience His spiritual presence.

While we stand firm in our convictions regarding Communion, we recognize the value of inter-denominational dialogue and respect the varied views held by fellow believers. As we remember Christ's sacrifice and await His glorious return, may we continually strive for unity and deepen our understanding of the immeasurable love of God manifested through His Son, Jesus Christ.

^[1] 1 Corinthians 11:23 ^[2] Luke 22:19 ^[3] 1 Corinthians 11:24 ^[4] 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; John 6:53-57, 63 ^[5] 1 Corinthians 11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34 “When you come together”



FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL,
FOR IT IS THE POWER
OF GOD FOR SALVATION
TO EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES,
TO THE JEW FIRST AND
ALSO TO THE GREEK.
FOR IN IT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD
IS REVEALED FROM FAITH FOR FAITH,
AS IT IS WRITTEN,
"THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."
-ROMANS 1:16-17

The Gospel

The Nature of God: The Gospel begins with an understanding of God as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Scripture tells us that God is holy^[1], loving^[2], and just^[3]. God desires a relationship with humanity.^[4]

The Problem of Sin: The Gospel acknowledges that all humans have sinned and fallen short of God's glory.^[5] Sin is seen as rebellion against God's will and results in spiritual separation from Him. ^[6]

Jesus is the Answer: The heart of the Gospel is the belief that God provided a solution to the problem of sin through His Son, Jesus Christ. Christians believe that Jesus, who is fully God and fully human, came to Earth, lived a sinless life,^[7] and willingly sacrificed Himself on the cross as an atonement for the sins of humanity.^[8]

Resurrection and Victory: The Gospel proclaims that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, demonstrating His victory over sin and death.^[9] This event provides hope for eternal life and reconciliation with God for those who trust in Him.^[10]

Grace through Faith: The Gospel emphasizes that salvation is a gift of God's grace, not something earned through good deeds or religious rituals.^[11] It is received through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.^[12]

How People Can Respond:

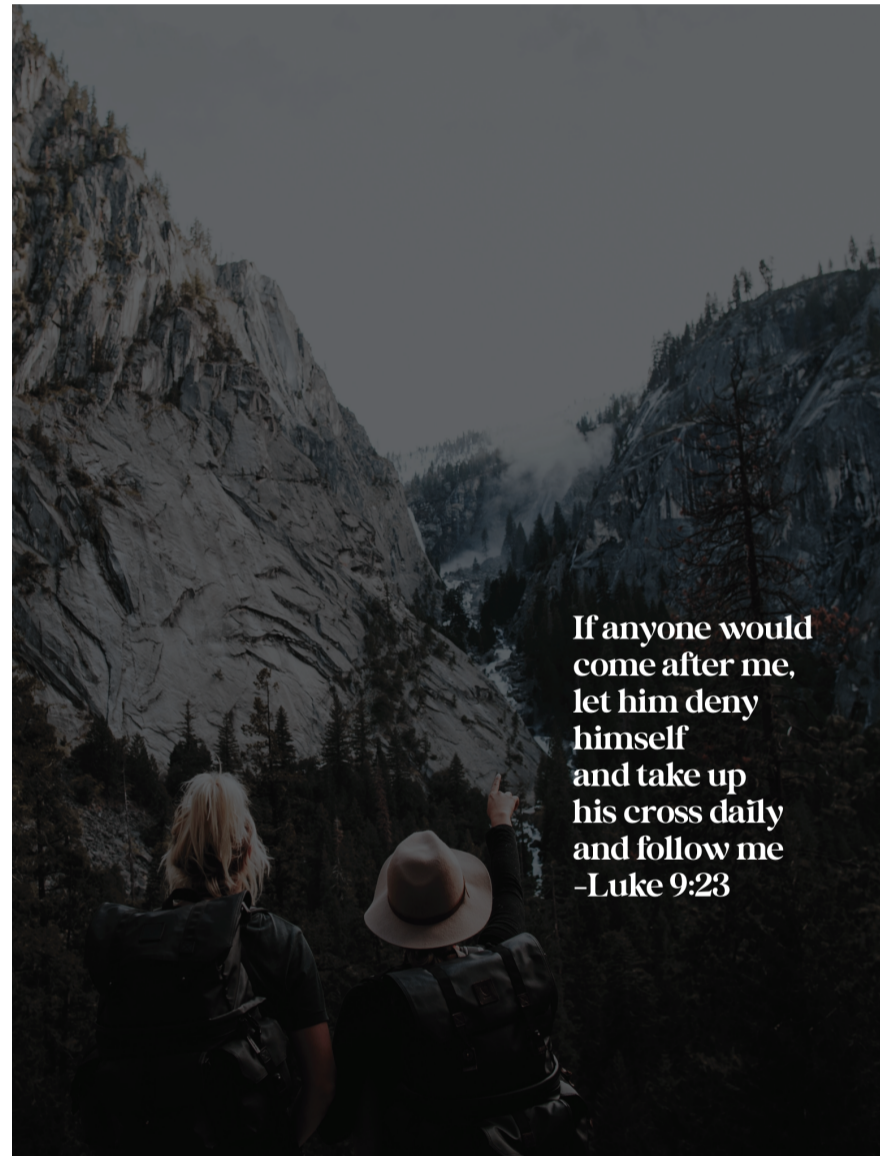
Repentance: To respond to the Gospel, individuals are called to acknowledge their sinfulness and turn away from it in a process known as repentance.^[13] This involves a change of heart and a willingness to follow God's ways.

Faith: Believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of humanity is central to the Gospel message.^[14] This faith involves trusting in His sacrificial death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.^[15]

Confession: Confessing one's faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior is an important step in responding to the Gospel.^[16] This is done through a public declaration of baptism.

Following Jesus: Responding to the Gospel is not a one-time event but a lifelong journey of following Jesus.^[17] This involves learning from His teachings, growing in faith, and seeking to live in accordance with His principles of love, compassion, and righteousness.^[18]

Community and Worship: Engaging with a local church or Christian community is essential for spiritual growth, accountability, and support in living out the Gospel.^[19]



If anyone would
come after me,
let him deny
himself
and take up
his cross daily
and follow me
-Luke 9:23

If you feel a prompting to respond to this message, to turn from sin and to the Savior, or just have questions, we would love to talk to you. Meet one of us at the connection table as you head out!

[\[1\]](#) Isaiah 6:3 [\[2\]](#) 1 John 4:8 [\[3\]](#) Psalm 89:14 [\[4\]](#) John 3:16 [\[5\]](#) Romans 3:23 [\[6\]](#) Isaiah 59:2 [\[7\]](#) Hebrews 4:15 [\[8\]](#) 1 Peter 2:24 [\[9\]](#) 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Romans 6:4. [\[10\]](#) 1 Corinthians 15:20-22. [\[11\]](#) Ephesians 2:8-9 [\[12\]](#) John 3:16, Acts 16:31 [\[13\]](#) Acts 3:19. [\[14\]](#) John 14:6. [\[15\]](#) Romans 10:9-10 [\[16\]](#) Romans 10:9. [\[17\]](#) Matthew 16:24 [\[18\]](#) Matthew 22:37-39. [\[19\]](#) Hebrews 10:24-25.