

## **The Essential Christian Doctrines**

### **I. God Exists**

- God is the “greatest conceivable being.” It is silly to claim Christianity and not believe in the existence of God. There is only one God.
- The Ontological Argument, The Kalam Cosmological Argument, The Design Argument, The Moral Argument, The Argument from Religious Experience are all great evidence.

### **II. The Nature of God**

- God is Triune (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all fully and equally divine; Three Persons, One Being). There is only one God.
- God is All-powerful, All-knowing, All-Good, Eternal, and Necessarily Existent.

### **III. Creation by God**

- God created the universe (thus the universe had a beginning).
- Naturalistic Evolution is rationally untenable.
- We are allowed to disagree as to when God created (young earth/old earth).
- Humankind is created in the image of God, and can never attain godhood.
- Human free-will is inherently responsible for the Fall.

### **IV. Christology/Incarnation**

- Jesus is the Son of God, part of the very nature of God, fully eternal and uncreated.
- Jesus is 100% Divine and 100% Human.
- Jesus has all necessary divine and human attributes.
- Jesus is morally impeccable—he never sinned.
- Virgin Birth.

### **V. The Substitutionary Atonement**

- Jesus died on the cross for our sins.
- To be a perfect sacrifice, Jesus had to be morally impeccable and infinite (divine).
- To be a perfect sacrifice, Jesus had to experience genuine humanity.

### **VI. The Resurrection**

- God the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead to validate his sacrifice.
- The resurrection was a real, bodily, tangible, historically verifiable event.
- This is the Key Proposition.

### **VII. The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit**

- The Holy Spirit literally lives inside every Christian and is omnipresent.
- The Holy Spirit guides us to truth, convicts us of sin, and protects us from possession.
- The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible.

### **VIII. Judgment/ Return of Christ**

- The Second Coming is imminent.
- Jesus is coming back to judge all people.
- We do not know when he is coming. We are told not to guess, but to be prepared.

- Heaven and Hell are real, physical everlasting destinations.
- After Judgment and our bodily resurrection, all people will go to one or the other.
- Purgatory, Annihilationism, Universalism, and three levels of heaven are false.

#### IX. The Church

- Until Jesus comes back, we've got a job to do.
- The church is the Bride of Christ.
- The church is the Body of Christ.
- The church is comprised of humans, and thus it is not perfect.
- The people of God are gifted differently.
- The church is to call the world to salvation—go make disciples.
- The church will spend time everlasting with God in perfect communion in Heaven.

#### X. Authority of Scripture

- The Bible is the Word of God.
- The Bible is our only authority—there is no other Scripture but the Bible.
- The Bible is infallible, inerrant, perfect.
- The Bible is historically accurate and has been accurately transmitted and translated.

These 10 doctrines are the pillars that hold up traditional Christianity. They are the essential components of Christendom. All other aspects of the faith fall into one or more of these doctrines. Baptism, for instance, is not specifically mentioned, but is woven through the essential doctrines of Christology, Substitutionary Atonement, Resurrection, Holy Spirit, Church, and Scripture. If any of these doctrines were abandoned, Christianity would not be Christianity.

All branches of traditional Christianity hold firmly to these essential doctrines. While some denominations may interpret the details differently, all Christians—Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants (Christian Churches, Baptists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, etc.) subscribe to these essentials. Some groups that claim to be Christian prove themselves not to be Christian either by their lack of fruit (loving lives) or by their failure to accept the above 10 pillars as true doctrine. For instance, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses often use Christian sounding language, but they do not agree with Christian doctrine. Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses both deny the full co-equal trinity. Jehovah Witnesses falsely think that Jesus is the angel Michael. Mormons falsely think that God used to be a human being and blasphemously believe that humans can become gods. Both of these groups fail to believe that Jesus is enough for our salvation. They both falsely claim that we need something in addition to Jesus for our salvation (belief in latter day prophets, additional holy books, strict obedience to a set of rules by which we partially save ourselves, etc.). While these 10 doctrines are essential to Christianity being Christianity, it is not essential that all Christians fully be able to explain every aspect of every doctrine to be saved.

#### **Essential for Salvation: "Jesus died for me."**

"Anyone who believes this simple statement has entered the sphere of Christian faith and has learned the one thing that God is concerned to teach his human creatures in order to bring them into his school for all further lessons." -Dr. Fred Sanders

We are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). Grace is an unmerited gift—only God can save us. Our response to his grace is faith. We are not saved by the good things we do. We do good things because we are saved. Christianity is unique in this.

Faith is like a three-legged table. If any of the three legs is cut off, the table falls. Grace sits atop the table. The three legs are belief (an intellectual acceptance of the truth of Christianity), trust (an emotional assurance that God will do what he said he'd do), and loving obedience (actions lived rightly).

While understanding and articulating the above 10 Essential Christian Doctrines may not be necessary for one's salvation, they are very necessary for Christendom's identity and one's discipleship. It may take years to fully grasp them all, but they are not hidden from anyone or beyond understanding. Devoting ourselves to these doctrines is essential to loving God with all our minds, just as fellowship and obedience are essential to loving God with all our hearts and strength.