

Rule of Faith

Developing a Rule of Faith like developing a rule and rhythm of life, but instead of looking at your core practices, it helps to define your core theological convictions as a community. I (JR) was asked by an evangelical community to write up a statement of faith for them. I called it the statement of faith project. I submit this as an example of what we mean when we talk about developing a rule of faith.

Scripture

Revelation is God's self-disclosure to humanity. While revelation is wider than scripture, we need the cannon to discern truth. Thus God has disclosed himself to us through special revelation, as people have been moved along and inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak, write, collect and canonize the 66 books of the Holy Scripture which point to God as the authority in all of life. The scriptures are infallible and utterly reliable in helping us discern truth and reality. They have been written to guide and enable God's people to do God's work in His world.

The Triune God

In the beginning is community. Scripture and subsequent creeds testify that before the foundation of the world, for all eternity, God has existed as Father, Son and Spirit in perfect community. While there is but one sovereign, holy, merciful and loving God, who created and sustains all things, he is neither lonely nor alone. From the beginning, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have been in an unending dance of mutual enjoyment and love for one another.

Humanity

In an overflow of God's love, he created humanity in his image, male and female he created them. Men and women were created to be in relationship with God, each other, tend creation and create culture in a way that mirrors his glory. Yet historically and in the present, we have sinned and rebelled against God. Sin is being against God and his loving reign, against life and against well-being. In desiring autonomy from God we alienated ourselves from him, each other and the created order. Our fractured selves experience shame, guilt and condemnation. We are fallen, broken and depraved, often making gods in our own image, rather than accepting that we are made in his. But the God who gave us life, summons us to new life.

The Gospel

The gospel is the work of God in Christ through the Spirit to restore humans to union with himself, communion with one another, wholeness within, and all of creation, so that we might live for the good of others and the good of all God has made. When we embrace God's grace through faith in the life, death and resurrection of Christ, he forgives our sins, makes us right with him, cleanses us of our guilt, takes our shame, purifies us, redeems us, justifies us, glorifies us, and delivers us from the grip of death and evil. He places us into his body, unites us, heals us, seals us, and empowers us to carry out his mission in the world, for the good of the world and the glory of God.

Jesus Christ

Jesus is the Son of God, God the Son, Savior and Lord of the Universe, who was born of a virgin and exists co-eternally with the Father and Spirit. He is fully God and fully human. He came to inaugurate the kingdom of God on earth and calls us to follow him in the renewal of all things. His creed is to love God and people, especially the least of these. His grace is extended to us in many ways. Through his incarnation, he is our priest and can identify with our weaknesses. Through his perfect sinless life, he demonstrates the way we ought to live, with the help of God's Spirit. Through his self-sacrificial death on the cross, he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. Through his resurrection and ascension he gives us power through the Spirit to live godly missional lives. Through his return, he gives us hope of a new heavens and a new earth.

Holy Spirit

God's Spirit gives light to all people and woos all people to God. The Spirit shares the same divinity as the Father and the Son, and is given as a gift from the Father and Son to move the church forward in mission. The Spirit produces fruit in God's people and distributes gifts to the church to build the community so that the church can faithfully proclaim the good news of Christ. He gives us the bonds of unity and places us into the body of Christ so that we might be his hands and feet and participate in the work of Jesus in this world. The Spirit tugs on those who are apart from Christ, assures us of our salvation, comforts us when we are down, guides us when we are confused and empowers us to be witnesses of God's grace through Christ in the world.

The Church

The church is the body of Christ comprised of those who believe in God and who confess and follow Jesus through the power of the Spirit. The church is to be a sign of the kingdom, pointing people to a reality that is just around the corner, a foretaste of the kingdom, where we grow to love one another as Christ loves us, and an instrument in the hands of God to bring more of heaven to earth in concrete ways. Proclaiming God's kingdom demands the denunciation of all injustice, oppression and exploitation; personally, socially and in relation to nature. The church is not an aggregate of individuals in pursuit of a personal experience of God, but a communal way of being that enables us to be and make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Eschatology

While Jesus inaugurated the kingdom of God, it has yet to be completed, so we should continue to pray that his kingdom would come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Our ultimate hope is that the triune God will bring about the new creation - the redemption of our bodies and the redemption of the world. The return of Christ is certain and no one knows the day or the hour, thus we ought to live holy lives, seeking to take the good news to all of creation. For only those who are already connected with Christ in this life can have assurance that after death, they will be present with the Lord and after final judgment be with him forever in the new heavens and new earth. What we do in this life matters, both for this life and the next, for what we do today reshapes our world today. And God will reward every good deed done in his name, as well as honor the decisions of those who reject him in this life. Hell is a reality. While God desires the salvation of all people, he will always respect the choices of those who reject him. Jesus holds the keys to death and Hades and will judge the world with truth and grace. His judgment means the ultimate end of evil, and the renewal of all things.