

What We Believe Pt. 1

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, July 8, 2018

Main Theme – Considering the Sixteen Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God – “Part 1”

WORSHIP & PRAYER

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Upcoming Events (REGULAR)**
 - Potluck Supper – Taking Place July 29 (Post-Service)
 - Ministry Sabbatical – WM, MM & CYC on Break in August
 - Sunday & Thursday Ministries UNAFFECTED by the Sabbatical
 - Week of Prayer & Fasting – August 6–10 (Night of Prayer Aug. 9)

MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers.

-Thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord/His work

-Your giving fuels the work of Christ in and through this church

May the Lord bless you as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

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- **CHILDREN DISMISSED FOR CHILDREN’S CHURCH**
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OPENING REMARKS

As always, it is wonderful to see you. I look forward to these weekly moments of worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what God has for you today! Please have your Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes. This morning I want to open with a VIDEO.

SETTING THE STAGE

OPENING VIDEO – *This I Believe (The Creed)* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-aSmurqrzA>

KEY – This is a song that I have come to love as of late. Not only do I personally like the melody and the instrumentation, but the LYRICS speak to me. They speak deeply to the foundational beliefs—i.e., the deep body of THEOLOGY—that inform and impact our Christianity.

NOTE 1 – This song touches upon/addresses a wide range of THEOLOGICAL SUBJECTS...

- Trinitarian Nature of God
- The ‘Omnipotence’ of God
- The Role of God as Creator
- The Role of God as Father
- The Virgin Birth of Christ
- The Suffering of Jesus Christ
- The Death of Jesus Christ
- The Resurrection of Christ
- The Ascension of Christ
- The Role of Christ as Lord
- The Role of Christ as Savior
- The Pardon Offered in Him
- The Communion of the Saints
- The 2nd Coming of Christ
- The Final/Divine Judgment
- Our Future Resurrection
- The Glory of Life Eternal

NOTE 2 – This song—*This I Believe (The Creed)*—is lyrically based upon the APOSTLES' CREED...

The Apostles' Creed is a statement of faith developed around A.D. 390, functioning as a SUMMATION of the core beliefs of the Church (as originally espoused/taught by the apostles). Though the Apostles' Creed is NOT recorded in the Bible and was NOT penned by the Twelve (or Paul), it REFLECTS much of what is recorded in Scripture. Consider...

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic [i.e., universal] Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

NOTE – Again, these are the FOUNDATIONAL PILLARS of the FAITH.

THE FAITH PT. 1

KEY – The term FAITH is a wonderfully NUANCED term. Allow me to explain/expand upon this:

1) Faith may refer to an INTELLECTUAL ASSENT or ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Book of JAMES deals with this type of faith. There were many in his time who intellectually admitted that there was a God, but that admission had no impact on their lives. To this, James noted that even the demons believe in this manner, but such faith does NOT benefit them. If such a faith does not benefit/save DEMONS, it will by no means save US.

2) Faith may refer to a SAVING FAITH (i.e., Response to the Gospel)

‘Saving faith’ refers to a personal trust in/dependence upon the finished work of Christ as the ONLY means of securing pardon and eternal life. It is best thought of as a personal commitment to and reliance upon Jesus Christ. This is the type of faith that YOU exercised when you first came to the Lord.

3) Faith may refer to a GOD-CENTERED CONFIDENCE/TRUST

This type of faith—touched upon in the Book of HEBREWS and exemplified throughout Scripture—is a deep assurance in/reliance upon the ‘Person, Promises and Principles’ of God. This is the type of faith that should characterize the life of the believer – i.e., a life of abiding and ever-increasing trust.

FINALLY and MOST IMPORTANTLY for Today’s Discussion...

4) Faith may refer to the COMPLETE BODY OF BIBLICAL TEACHING

i.e., Faith may refer to the belief system and theology of Christianity. JUDE, the brother of our Lord, used ‘faith’ in this sense. Consider with me a text from the Book of Jude (i.e., a small but significant work):

Jude 3–4 (NIV)

3 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people. 4 For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

NOTE – Jude WANTED to address the topic of salvation, BUT circumstances compelled him to address the threat of false teachers—teachers who were seeking to corrupt the FAITH (i.e., body of timeless and immutable truths)

THE FAITH PT. 2

KEY – Jude challenged the Early Church to **CONTEND FOR THE FAITH** (v. 3b).

Q. What does it mean to **CONTEND** for the faith?

A. The word **CONTEND** means to ‘struggle or fight for.’ To ‘contend for the faith’ means to struggle and fight for the purity and integrity of biblical teaching against evil forces that work to corrupt and pervert sound doctrine.

NOTE – EVERY generation of believers must contend for the faith in this manner, as there will ALWAYS be perverse opposition and corrupting influences. We need believers who will contend for the faith NOW more than ever!

2 Timothy 4:1–3

1 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

KEY – I would argue that **WE** are in the midst of such times. There are **MANY** who reject and work to corrupt sound doctrine. We are to contend for the faith. i.e., **WE** must work to faithfully proclaim and defend the truth—the deep theology—of God’s Word.

TRANSITIONS

KEY – Of course, if we are going to contend for the faith, we must first know what we believe!

How can we hope to effectively defend and/or faithfully proclaim our beliefs if we do NOT know what we believe? In order to defend and put forth sound doctrine, we must first know what our doctrine is!

Q. So what do we believe?

Q. What are the core doctrines we hold dear?

Q. What are the foundational/items elements of our theology?

NOTE – Great questions! I’m so GLAD that you asked! Nearly every mainstream Christian fellowship embraces/advocates for a **CORE** set of beliefs. Even the **ASSEMBLIES OF GOD** has a statement of core doctrines (i.e., the Sixteen Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God). As I have done every few years since my installation as Pastor, I want to teach through these pillars of our faith. I want to provide a biblical overview of the Sixteen Fundamentals – Summer Series.

SIXTEEN FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS

Since this morning is an INTRODUCTION to our core beliefs, I thought it would be wise to provide you with the full list upfront. Each of you was provided with a sheet of paper. Consider the following with me:

1. WE BELIEVE that the Scriptures are inspired by God and declare His design and plan for mankind.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NIV, 1984)

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2. WE BELIEVE that there is only One True God, who exists in the form of three Persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (commonly known as the Trinity).

Deuteronomy 6:4

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

Matthew 28:19

19 ...Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

3. WE BELIEVE in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. As God's Son, Jesus was both fully human and fully divine [unique in kind (shares God's nature) and unique in relationship (special position of Sonship & favor)].

John 1:1, 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

14 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.

Colossians 2:9

9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,

4. WE BELIEVE that man—though originally created good—willingly fell to sin, ushering evil and death (both physical and spiritual) into the world.

Genesis 1:26–27, 31a

26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

27 So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Romans 5:12

12 ...Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.

5. WE BELIEVE that every person can have restored fellowship with God through salvation. Salvation is accomplished by trusting Christ as our Lord and Savior.

John 3:16

16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

6. WE BELIEVE and practice two ordinances: (1) Water Baptism by immersion after repenting of one's sins and receiving Christ's offer of salvation, and (2) Holy Communion (the Lord's Supper) as a symbolic remembrance of Christ's suffering and death for our salvation.

Matthew 28:19–20

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

7. WE BELIEVE that the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a special experience following salvation which empowers believers for witnessing and effective service, just as it did in New Testament times.

Acts 1:8

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 2:39

39 The promise [i.e., the giving of the Spirit of God] is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

8. WE BELIEVE that the initial physical evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues, as experienced on the Day of Pentecost and referenced throughout Acts and the Epistles.

Acts 2:1–4

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

9. WE BELIEVE that sanctification initially occurs at salvation, and is not only a declaration that a believer is holy, but also a progressive life-long process of separating from evil as believers continually draw closer to God and become more Christ-like.

Romans 8:29

29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son

1 Peter 1:13b–16

13 ...Prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

Galatians 5:22–23a

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control.

10. WE BELIEVE that the church has a mission: to seek and save all who are lost in sin. We believe 'the Church' is the Body of Christ and consists of the people who, throughout time, have accepted God's offer of redemption (regardless of religious denomination) through the sacrificial death of His son Jesus Christ.

Matthew 28:18–20

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

11. WE BELIEVE that a divinely called and scripturally ordained leadership ministry serves the Church. The Bible teaches that each of us under leadership must commit ourselves to worship the Lord, reach others for Christ and build up or edify the body of believers.

Ephesians 4:11–13

11 It was he [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

12. WE BELIEVE that divine healing of the sick is a privilege for Christians today and is provided for in Christ's atonement (His sacrificial death on the cross for our sins).

Isaiah 53:4–5

4 Surely he took up our infirmities
and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.
5 But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

13. WE BELIEVE in the Blessed Hope (the Rapture of the church prior to His Second Coming). At this future moment in time, all believers who have died will rise from their graves and will meet the Lord in the air, and Christians who are alive will be caught up with them, to be with the Lord forever.
14. WE BELIEVE in the Millennial Reign of Christ. When Jesus returns with His saints at His second coming, He will begin a benevolent rule over earth which will last for a literal 1,000 years. This millennial reign will bring the salvation of national Israel and the establishment of universal peace.
15. WE BELIEVE that a final judgment will take place for those who have rejected Christ. They will be judged for their sin and consigned to eternal punishment in a punishing lake of fire.
16. WE BELIEVE in and look forward to the perfect New Heavens and a New Earth that Christ is preparing for all people, of all time, who have accepted Him. We will live and dwell with Him there forever following His millennial reign on Earth.

KEY – These statements comprise the core elements of our FAITH. They comprise the body of teaching, doctrine and theology that we are to embrace, proclaim and CONTEND for! It will be my joy—in the weeks ahead—to provide a brief but thorough overview of these Fundamental Truths, as we delve into matters of THEOLOGY!

PS – we will NOT cover them in this particular order! I will move around and group as needed...

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS PT. 1

NOTE – Before we close, I want to address one last item. Namely, it SADDENS me that many believers RECOIL at the thought of discussing doctrine or theology. So many treat DOCTRINE and THEOLOGY like a curse words in the church world.

WHY? If DOCTRINE refers to the ‘body of teachings’ we are to embrace and proclaim (i.e., the FAITH we are to CONTEND FOR), and THEOLOGY refers to ‘what we know of God, His purposes and ways’ – WHY are so many opposed to/apathetic concerning such matters?

BEFORE WE SPEND two months on theology/doctrine, I want to DEAL with this concern...

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS PT. 2

1) Many Connect Theology/Doctrine with UGLY DEBATES

Let's face it: we've all met that believer who loves to DEBATE theological issues (I said debate – NOT discuss). Some people get heated and nearly come to blows over deeply held theological beliefs (interestingly, secondary concerns)! You want to see some ire, bring up 'once saved always saved,' 'Calvinism or Arminianism,' or 'speaking in tongues' in some circles!

But theological and doctrinal discussion does NOT have to be ugly. It's ugly because of the immaturities/attitudes of people—NOT the inherent ugliness of the topics themselves! Doctrine (the teaching of God's Word) and theology (what we know of God and His ways) is an inherently BEAUTIFUL topic!

I have spent many wonderful hours talking theology (the contents/teachings of God's Word) with fellow believers. I have grown and been enriched by talking about Scripture/my viewpoints with others.

-Are there times when I've had to walk away? Yes.

-Are there people who can ruin a good thing? Yes.

But don't toss out the baby with the bathwater! In your study of theology and the discussions thereof, remember the following adage: "In Essentials Unity, In Non-Essentials Liberty, In All Things Charity."

2) Many Believe Doctrine and Theology Is TOO HARD

i.e., A DEEP study of the Word is best left to the pastor, scholar or theologian. The AVERAGE person cannot really understand God's Word and/or such knowledge is simply too hard to attain! This is WRONG on TWO LEVELS:

-God's Word is NOT just for scholars. Throughout His Word, He has revealed Himself to men and women of all levels of society and background. He is the God of the rich and the poor. He is the God of the old and the young. He is the God of the scholar and the simple! Don't tell me that a knowledge of His Word is only for one class of person. This excuse is both unbiblical and a poor veneer for laziness!

-Anything worth having will take work. You don't learn an instrument, get in shape or master a skill without ongoing discipline and investment. Will God's Word require study and diligence? YES! But is it really beyond you? NO! In a day and age when you have so many free resources at your fingertips, not to mention countless Bible studies, etc., do we really have an excuse! Stop being lazy and get to work! It is tragic that our generation is simultaneously the most biblically resourced AND biblically illiterate generation in U.S. history! We WILL answer for that!

3) Many Believe Doctrine and Theology to Be DULL

Many believe that theology is reserved for professors who pour over dusty books in darkened rooms. I CANNOT think of anything further from the truth!

Theology is the study of God and His ways. God is NOT boring. Therefore, a study of His ways should NOT/must NOT be boring! If you deem God dull or boring, I'm not sure if you and I have met the same Lord! I have always found a study of God's Word to be a life-giving thing!

5) Many Deem Doctrine & Theology IRRELEVANT for Life and Living

Nothing is more foundational for healthy living than a robust and clear understanding of WHAT God's Word teaches (i.e., the very definition of theology). To dismiss an understanding of God & His Word as irrelevant is to willingly live confused and blind in an already confused and blind world! How tragic and unnecessary.

Hosea 4:6

My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.

God's Word tells us who God is, what His purposes are, who we are and what our purposes must be. God's Word provides for us the account of our origins and our eternal destiny (with or apart from Christ). God's Word tells us how to live in this life, so that we might be prepared for the next! All of this provides the framework for my life and is anything but useless.

In my experience, the only people who believe God's Word irrelevant are those who've never read it.

Why not view the whole of God's Word—these Sixteen Fundamental Truths—as pillars upon which you can build upon! Each will impact how you live before Him and in this world.

6) Many Believe Theology is UNNECESSARY FOR A RELATIONSHIP W/ CHRIST

Have you ever heard someone say, "I don't need theology, I just need Jesus"? I have. The following VIDEO provides the PERFECT RESPONSE to this comment. Enjoy!

VIDEO – Why Can't Jesus Be Enough <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gp5BfC61pt8&t=17s>

CONCLUSIONS

We have MUCH to cover in the days/weeks ahead. Next week we will cover the 1st of the Sixteen Fundamental Truths: WE BELIEVE that the Scriptures are inspired by God and declare His design and plan for mankind. See you then!