



Our Statements



# essentials]





# Welcome!

Welcome to **Essentials 1: Our Statements**. We're glad you've chosen to find out more about *Trinity church of Christ*, what we believe, and how to join our family of Christ-followers.

Our Essentials series is divided into 3 sections

**Essentials 1: Our Statements**

**Essentials 2: Our Strategy & Structure**

**Essentials 3: Our Salvation**

We believe that the Essentials classes are necessary for everyone to clearly understand who we are, what we believe, and how we work together as a family of Christ-followers. This series is designed to aid us in becoming the church God has called us to be as we get to know each other and learn the basic beliefs and values of *Trinity church of Christ* as it is put forth in God's Word. We believe that a true Christian conversion is the result of biblical study and an understanding of what the scriptures require of us. The Bible is our only guide to salvation.

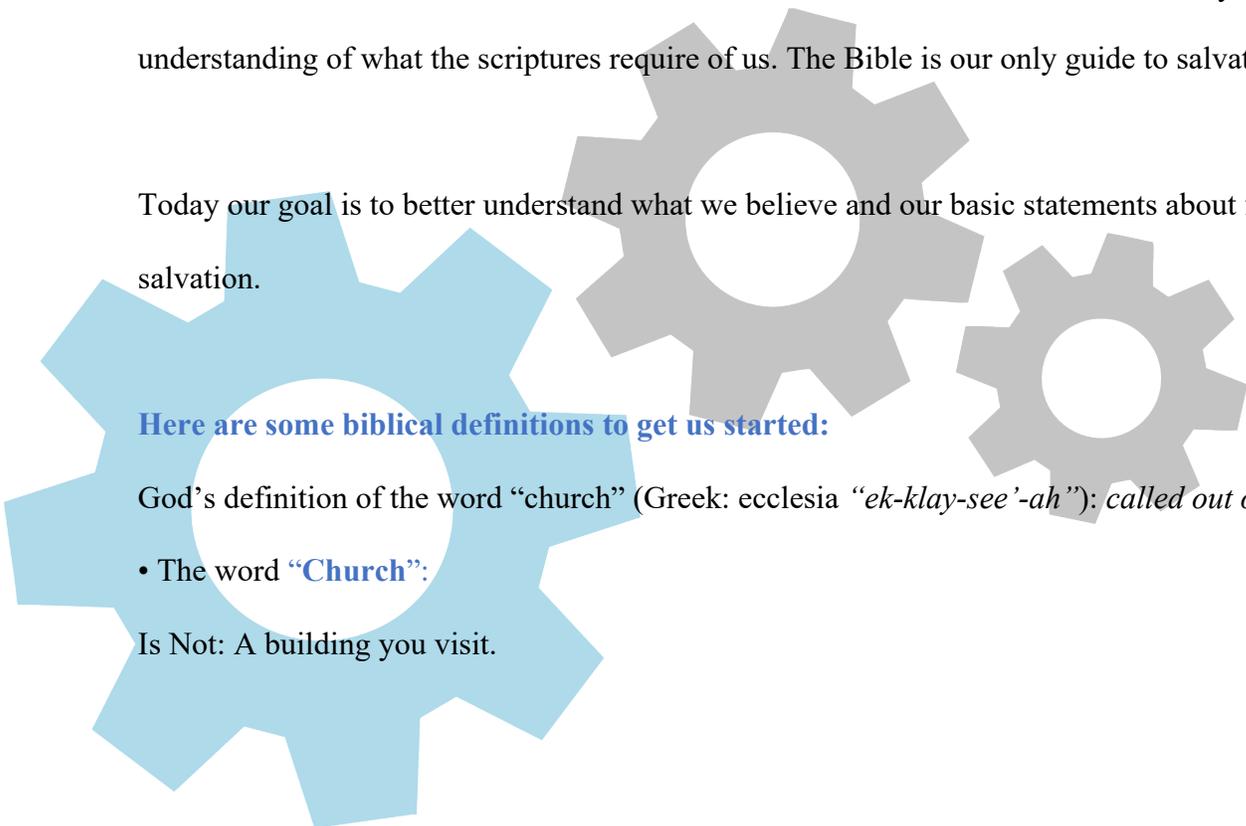
Today our goal is to better understand what we believe and our basic statements about faith and salvation.

**Here are some biblical definitions to get us started:**

God's definition of the word "church" (Greek: ecclesia "ek-klay-see'-ah"); *called out ones*

- The word "**Church**":

Is Not: A building you visit.



Is Not: A program you attend.

Is: A group of people in relationship with one another.

Is: People in the spiritual Kingdom of God all over the earth.

*“You are fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of His household.”  
~Ephesians 2:19*

- The church is a **Family**

*“Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So, Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.” ~Hebrews 2:14*

- God expects you to be a **Member** of a local church family

*“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” ~Romans 12:4-5*

- The church is not a building it is the **Body of Christ**

*“Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.”  
~Colossians 1:24*

*“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” ~Ephesians 4:15-16*

God has made us a part of His larger family when we were born again (saved). But, too, we should also be connected with a local body of believers and live in community with them, agreeing to live by specific, established, godly principles and standards.

### **A closer look at the Body, Christ’s Church:**

Since the church is the body of Christ, then His body should be growing and healthy. So how well do you think the body of Christ is doing in America? If you were a doctor diagnosing the health of the church, what might you see?

- There are over 350,000 churches in America.
- Four out of five of those churches are experiencing a decline in membership.
- 20.4% of Americans attended church weekly in 1990.
- Only 14.7% of Americans attend church weekly today.
- Fewer than 7% of the churches in America are growing.
- The population in Pasco County is approximately 525,640 (and growing).
- More than 494,000 people in Pasco County do not have a church home.

- Less than one in ten who have ever been to church say they learned something about God or Jesus the last time they attended; more than 60% say they did not gain any significant or new insights regarding faith when they last attended.

**Based on those statistics, what is your diagnosis of church health in America?**

**This is not what Jesus intended for His church.**

*“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” ~ Matthew 16:18*

A healthy church will not be overcome by the gates of hell. In fact, a healthy church will be on the move, accomplishing His mission. Nothing will be able to stop it.

Is it possible that many churches have strayed from the purpose Jesus gave them?

Christ’s Church, His body, has a purpose. It has a mission to accomplish. The purpose Jesus gave His church is to **Make Disciples**.

*“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.” ~ Matthew 4:19*

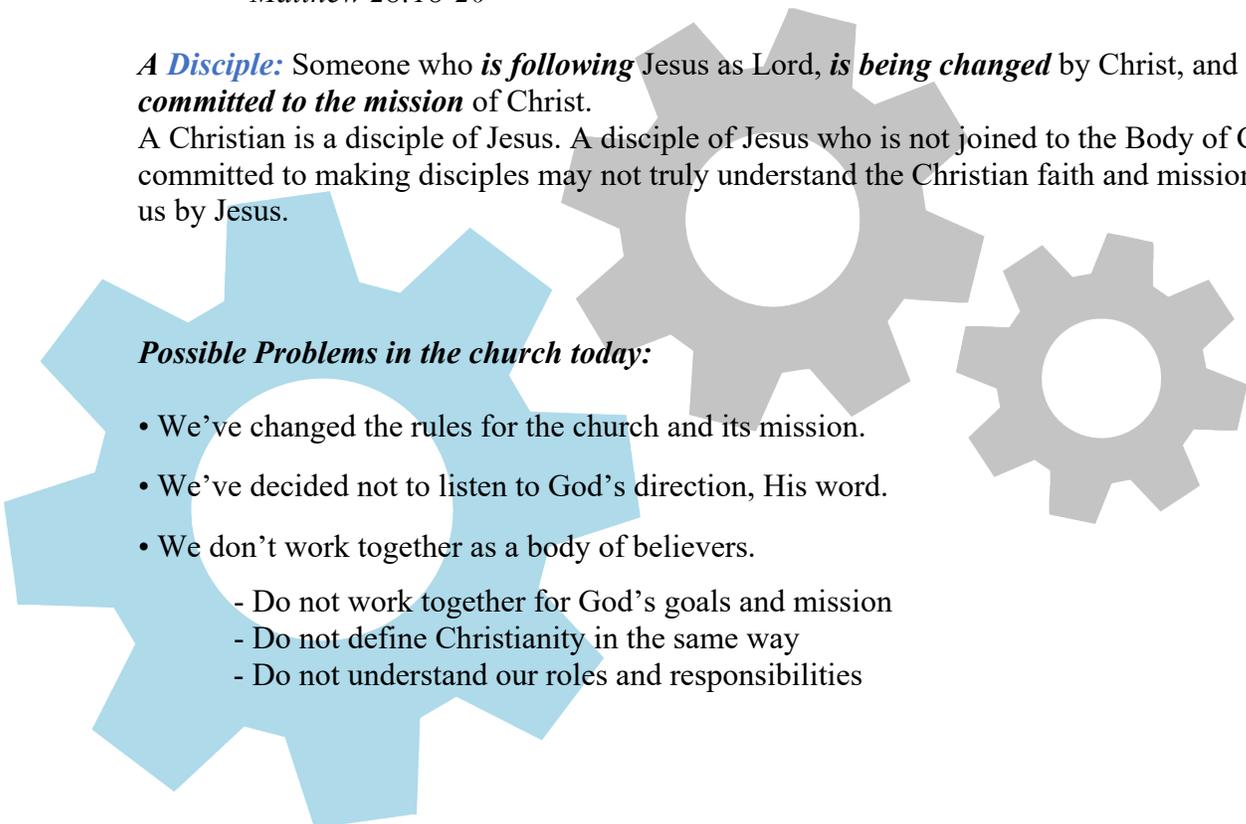
*“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” ~Matthew 28:18-20*

**A Disciple:** Someone who *is following* Jesus as Lord, *is being changed* by Christ, and *is committed to the mission* of Christ.

A Christian is a disciple of Jesus. A disciple of Jesus who is not joined to the Body of Christ and committed to making disciples may not truly understand the Christian faith and mission given to us by Jesus.

**Possible Problems in the church today:**

- We’ve changed the rules for the church and its mission.
- We’ve decided not to listen to God’s direction, His word.
- We don’t work together as a body of believers.
  - Do not work together for God’s goals and mission
  - Do not define Christianity in the same way
  - Do not understand our roles and responsibilities



- Do not support the ministries of the church  
As a result, the body of Christ is very unhealthy in America today.

Jesus prayed for unified, healthy believers (His Church):

*“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” ~John 17:20-23*

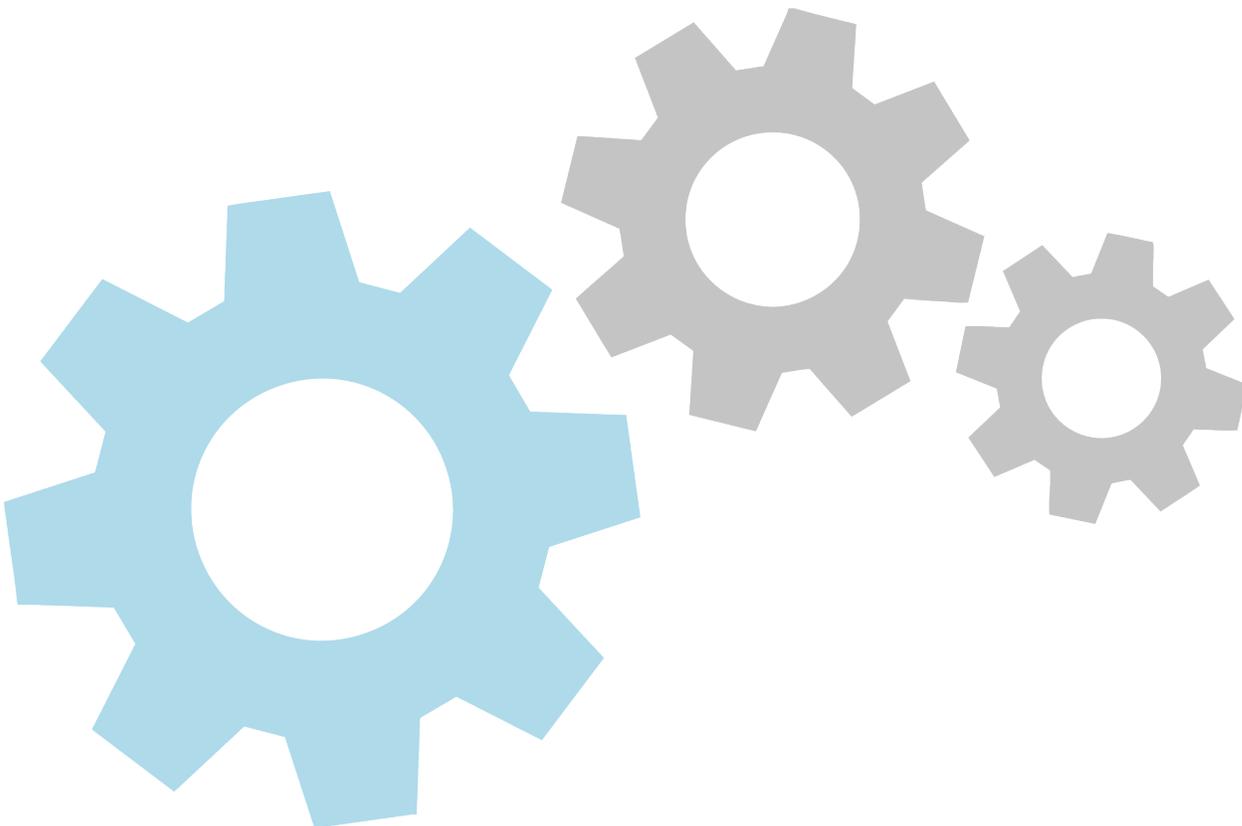
### **The body needs unity to be healthy.**

The church must work together. Jesus prayed for unity in His church, a body that was built to grow strong.

We see an example of this unified, healthy, growing church in the book of Acts.

### **What unifies *Trinity church of Christ* as a body?**

We at *Trinity church of Christ* are unified by following God’s plan for His church together, right here, in our community.

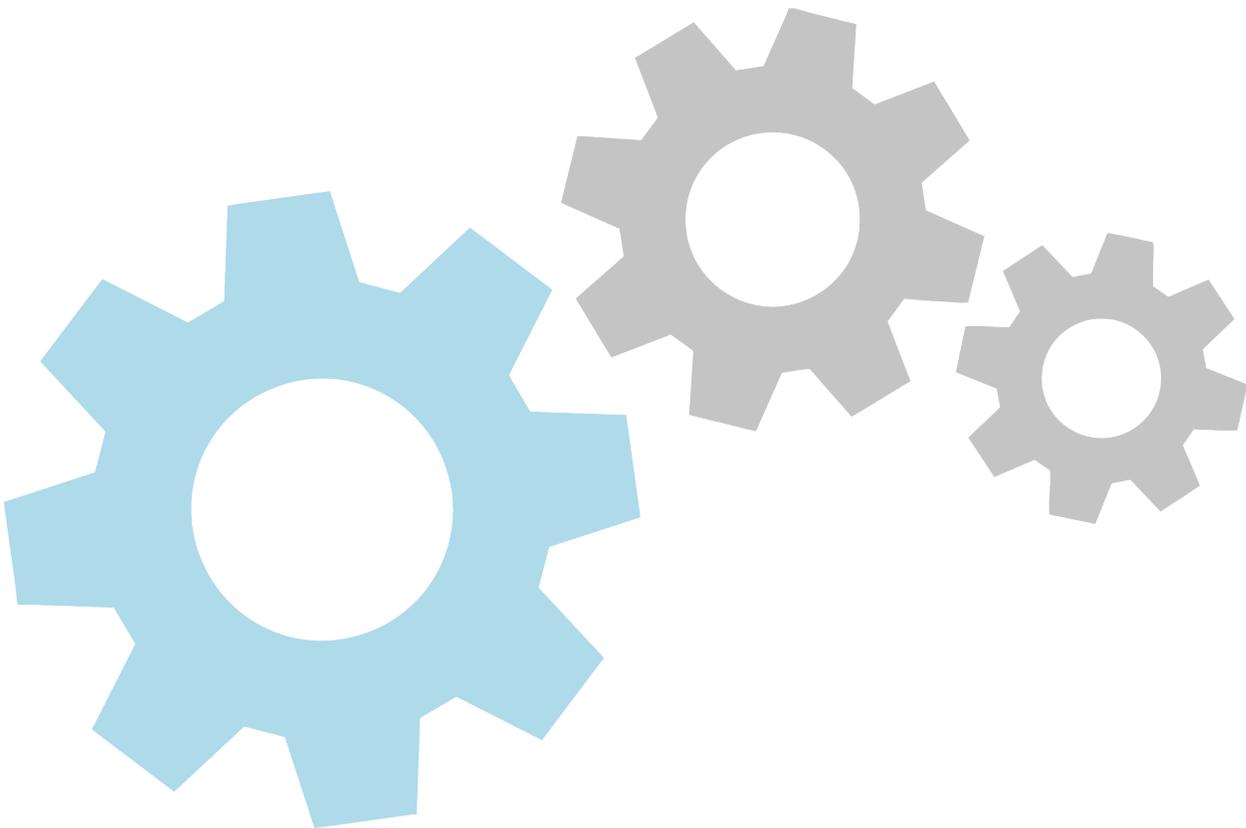


**Your notes and questions:**

Use this page for notes or write down any questions you might want to ask. You may discuss them in class or later, after the class.

**Table Discussion Question:**

*Tell about the very first time ever you remember going to church.*





## Essential Beliefs and Core Values

### What We Believe:

*"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought." ~1 Corinthians 1:10*

### In **essential beliefs**, we have **unity**.

*"There is one Body and one Spirit...there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all, who is over all and through all and in all." ~Ephesians 4:4-6*

### In **non-essential beliefs**, we have **liberty**.

*"Accept the one whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters...Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master they stand or fall...So then each of us will give an account of himself to God...so whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God." ~Romans 14:1,4,12,22*

### In all our **beliefs**, we show **love**.

*"If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing."  
~1 Corinthians 13:2*

*"Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ." ~Ephesians 4:15*

**The following beliefs are non-negotiable; things on which we as a church must agree.**

#### About God

God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He exists in three personalities: The Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. All three are biblical forms of God Himself.

*Genesis 1:1,26-27; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Corinthians 13:14*

#### About Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Jesus was born of a virgin and lived a sinless human life. He then offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after 3 days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to Heaven's glory and will return someday to reign as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

*Matthew 1:22-23; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-5; 14:10-30; Hebrews 4:14-15; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 1:3-4; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Timothy 6:14-15; Titus 2:13*

### **About the Holy Spirit**

He is present in the world to make men aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He also abides in every Christian. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. He has gifted every believer. As Christians, we seek to live under His control daily.

*2 Corinthians 3:17; John 16:7-13, 14:16-17; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:12, 3:16; Ephesians 1:13; Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:18*

### **About the Bible**

The Bible is God's inerrant Word to us. It was written by human authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because it is inspired by God, it is the truth without any measure of error. It is the sole written authority for all believers.

*2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 1:13; Psalm 12:6, 119: 105,160; Proverbs 30:5*

### **About Human Beings**

People are made in the spiritual image of God, to be like Him in character. People are the supreme object of God's Creation. Although every person has tremendous potential for good, all of us are marred by an attitude of disobedience toward God, called "sin." All people are lost in their sin and must be redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

*Genesis 1:27; Psalm 83:6; Isaiah 53:6a; Romans 3:23; Isaiah 59:1,2*

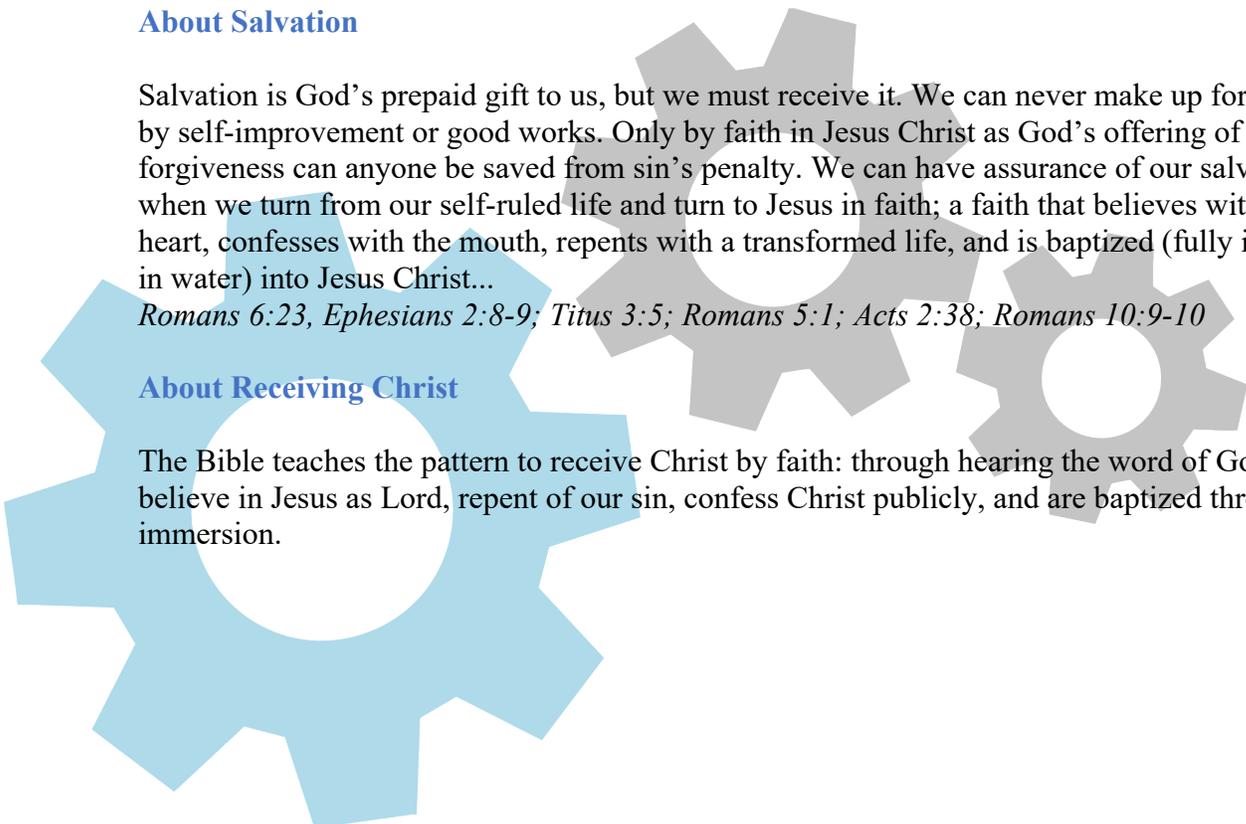
### **About Salvation**

Salvation is God's prepaid gift to us, but we must receive it. We can never make up for our sin by self-improvement or good works. Only by faith in Jesus Christ as God's offering of forgiveness can anyone be saved from sin's penalty. We can have assurance of our salvation when we turn from our self-ruled life and turn to Jesus in faith; a faith that believes with the heart, confesses with the mouth, repents with a transformed life, and is baptized (fully immersed in water) into Jesus Christ...

*Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; Romans 5:1; Acts 2:38; Romans 10:9-10*

### **About Receiving Christ**

The Bible teaches the pattern to receive Christ by faith: through hearing the word of God we believe in Jesus as Lord, repent of our sin, confess Christ publicly, and are baptized through immersion.



## About the Church

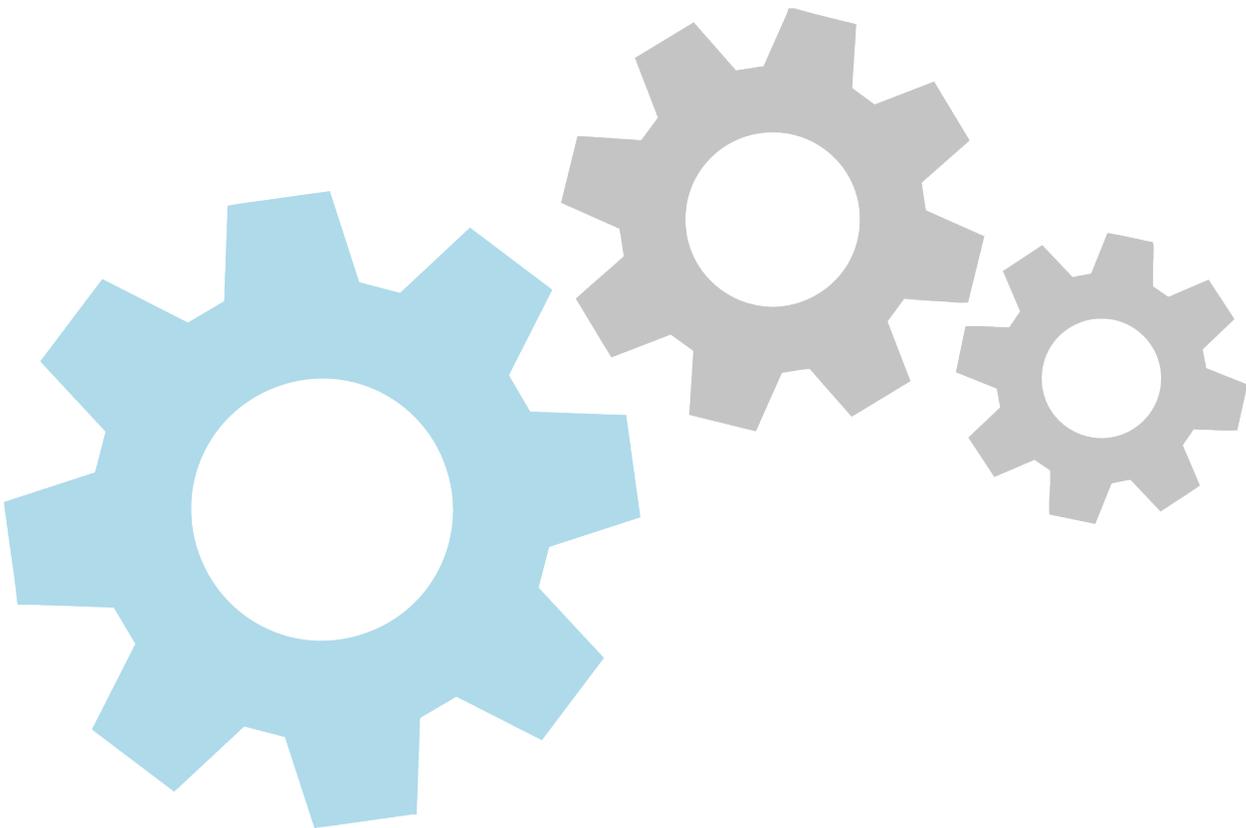
The church is the body and bride of Christ on earth; consisting of Christians everywhere.

*Matthew 16:13-18; Acts 2:14-27*

## About Church Leadership

That God has ordained that elders are to exercise spiritual, servant leadership and authority over the local congregation.

*Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 1 Peter 5:1-4*

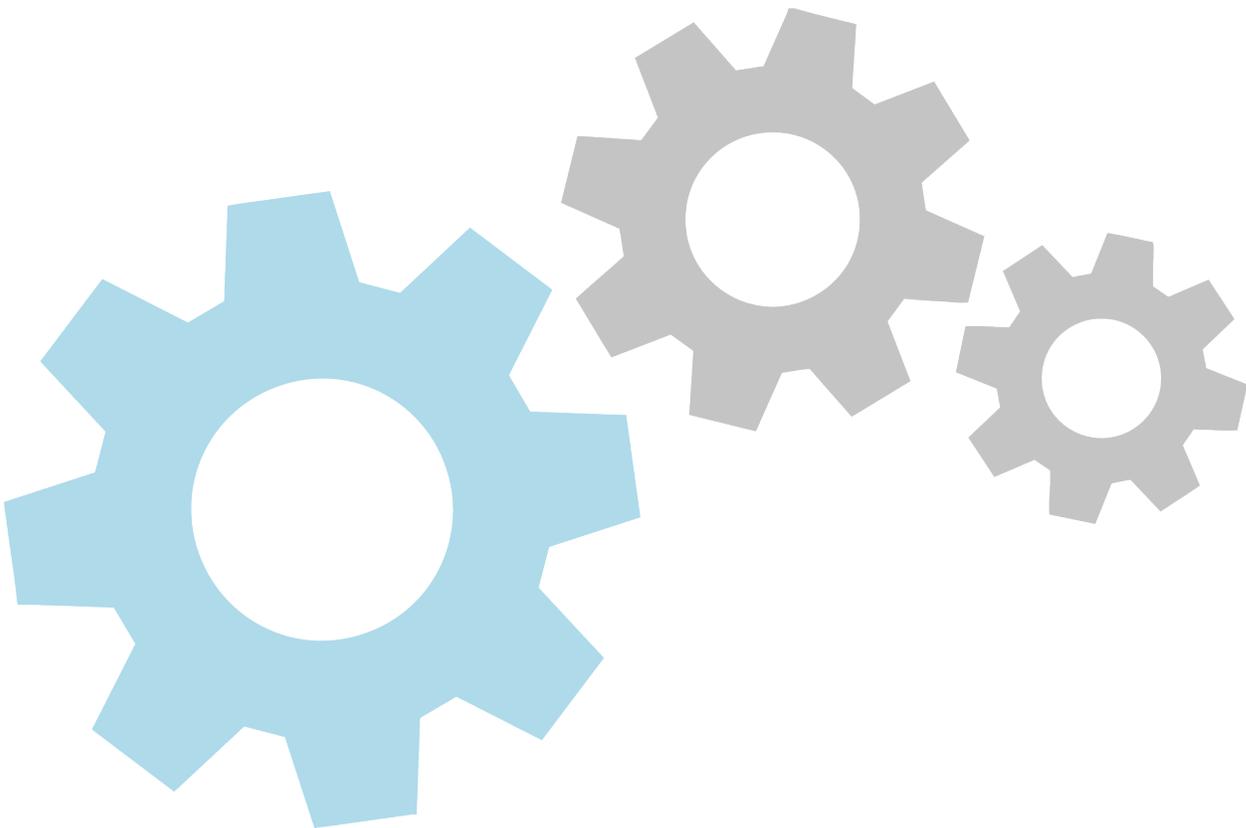


**Your notes and questions:**

Use this page for notes or write down any questions you might want to ask. You may discuss them in class or later, after the class.

**Table Discussion Question:**

*What is the first Bible story you remember being told to you?*



## Our Core Values

These statements are our *essential core values*. These reflect what is most valuable to us as a body and help us live out our *essential beliefs* in unity.

## Biblical Truth

*“All scripture was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” ~2 Timothy 3:16,17*

*Matthew 4:4; Hebrews 4:13; Revelation 22:19*

Since God’s Word is the only completely reliable and truthful authority, we accept the Bible as our manual for living. Our first question when faced with a decision is, “What does the Bible say?” We practice daily Bible reading, study, and memorization. The Bible is the basis for all we believe.

As a church, our members should seek to teach, value, speak, and live life filtered through the God-given lens of the Bible. A focus on Biblical truth happens as we value things like strategic teaching, synchronized content, engaging presentations, and real-life application.

## Inspired Worship

*“Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ~Matthew 22:37*

*“Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.” ~Matthew 4:10*

*“The Father seeks worshippers; worshipping Him in spirit and in truth.” ~John 4:23-24*

We seek authentic worship inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Worship is a lifestyle, not just a corporate religious gathering (service).

Private, personal worship is part of being a Christ-follower. Worshipping God is a practice we strive for all week long. However, **Trinity church of Christ** does meet weekly, providing community worship services for the entire family to attend.

Some expressions of our weekly **Trinity church of Christ** worship services include:

- Inspiring acappella singing of hymns and songs (*Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16*)
- Communion / Lord’s Supper (*Luke 22:19,20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26*)
- Giving (tithing is a part of worship) (*Matthew 23:23; Romans 12:7-8; 2 Corinthians 9:6-10*)
- Prayer, Teaching, and Serving (*Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 4:26; Hebrews 10:24,25*)

## Real Relationships

*“Jesus replied, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ~Matthew 22:39*

At **Trinity church of Christ**, “It’s all about relationships.” This is because Christ came so that God could have a relationship with us. In turn, His people have loving relationships with each other. Real, transparent, life-changing relationships are how disciples are made and how disciples of Jesus do life together.

*“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.”  
~John 13:35*

We value loving environments where people feel they belong. We love one another through relational experiences, committed membership, and Biblical accountability of one another. Our leaders are unified, invested, and empowered to lovingly lead relational groups in relational environments.

As Jesus Himself modeled, our members need to be a part of a small group that fosters relational growth.

*Genesis 2:18; Mark 3:14; Hebrews 10:24*

Like the New Testament Church (*Acts 2:42*), we believe our church must grow bigger and smaller at the same time.

*That’s why a part of membership at **Trinity church of Christ** is in small groups.*

See the **Trinity church of Christ** website or Sunday bulletins for more opportunities to get relationally connected...in a home group or bible study group.

<http://www.trinitycofc.com/>

## Selfless Service

*“Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” ~Matthew 20:26-28*

Jesus models selfless service for us (*John 13:1-17*). Serving others cuts through the selfishness of our culture, helps us have the heart of Christ, grows us as disciples of Jesus and enables us to share His message with the world.

Selfless service at **Trinity church of Christ** takes many forms, from missions, to the homes we live in. We see it in our weekly programs and by serving our community; practicing servant leadership, evangelism, benevolence, and spirit-gifted ministry.

The Bible teaches that every Christian is called to “full time” Christian service, regardless of his or her vocation. We practice the truth that *every believer is a minister* by encouraging every member to find a place of service and ministry. Every believer has direct access to God through prayer and Bible reading; therefore, every member is a minister. (*Romans 8:28 ff; 1 Peter 2:9*)

*“Christ loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve God the Father.” ~Revelation 1:5,6*

*“Now God gives us many kinds of special gifts...and there are different kinds of service to God (ministry). Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” ~1 Corinthians 12:4-5,27*

Serving selflessly also helps us make disciples. It is the responsibility of every Christian to share the Good News message with those whom God brings us into contact. We practice servant hearted, personal outreach...lovingly sharing Christ with people, inviting them to do life with us, which will include **Trinity church of Christ** activities and ministries.

*“His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known.” ~Ephesians 3:10*

*John 13:35, 1 John 3:16-17, Matthew 25:34-40, Hebrews 13:16, 1 Peter 3:15, 2 Corinthians 5:14, Luke 15:3-10, Matthew 9:12-13*

### **Spirit-Led Living**

Encompassing all our statements and values is our being led by the Holy Spirit of God. We want to live by God’s ever-powerful, ever-transforming presence in our lives. At **Trinity church of Christ**, we believe the only way possible to live the Christian life is by God’s power within us. So, we seek to practice a daily dependence on the Holy Spirit to guide us in doing what is right: valuing personal application of the Word, living fruit-filled lives, and participating in **Trinity church of Christ**’s many ministry opportunities.

*“I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; but apart from me you can do nothing.” ~John 15:5*

*Galatians 5:22-26; Philippians 2:13; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Peter 4:7-11*

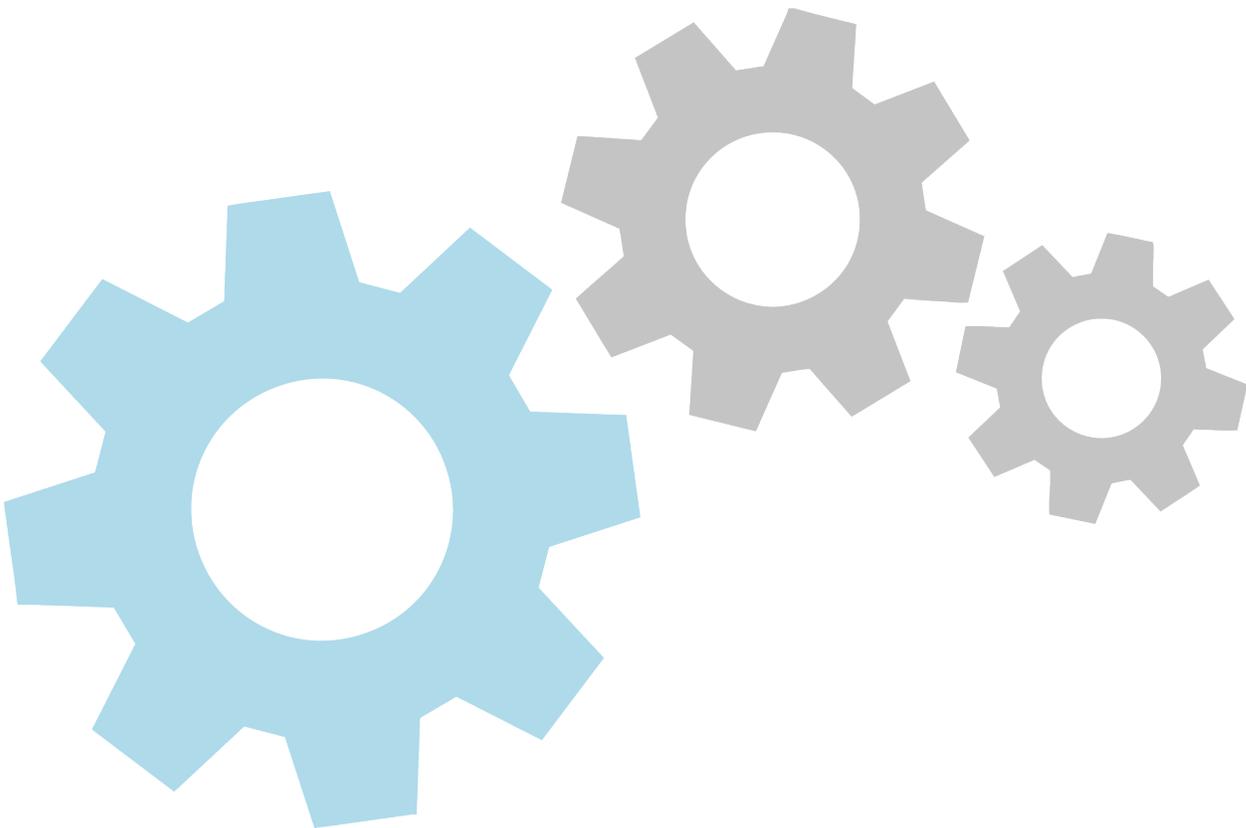


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**Table Discussion Question:**

*What brought you to **Trinity church of Christ** today?*



## Appendixes

Modern Churches of Christ have our roots in the Restoration Movement, which was a converging of Christians across denominational lines in search of a return to "pre-denominational" Christianity. Members of this movement base doctrine and practice on the Bible alone, rather than recognizing the traditional councils and denominational hierarchies that had come to define Christianity. We as members of the Churches of Christ believe that Jesus founded only one church, that the current divisions between Christians are not God's will, and that the only basis for restoring Christian unity is the Bible.

We typically prefer to be known simply as "Christians", without any further religious or denominational identification. We see ourselves as restoring the New Testament church established by Christ. Churches of Christ generally share these theological beliefs: A refusal to hold to any formalized creeds or statements of faith, preferring instead to rely on the Bible alone for doctrine and practice. Autonomous, congregational church organization without any denominational oversight. Locally governed by a plurality of elders. Baptism by immersion of consenting believers for the forgiveness of sins. Weekly observance of Communion, on Sunday, and the practice of acappella singing in worship.

### *So, what is a "Restoration" church?*

What is meant by the term restoration movement?

#### **The original church was established in 30 AD.**

- The purpose and structure of the church (The Way) was simple
- Two factors kept the early church on track

The presence of the Apostles to correct error

Ongoing persecution which had a purifying effect on the church

#### **The church became corrupted from 300 to 1500 AD.**

- Constantine made Christianity one of the state religions

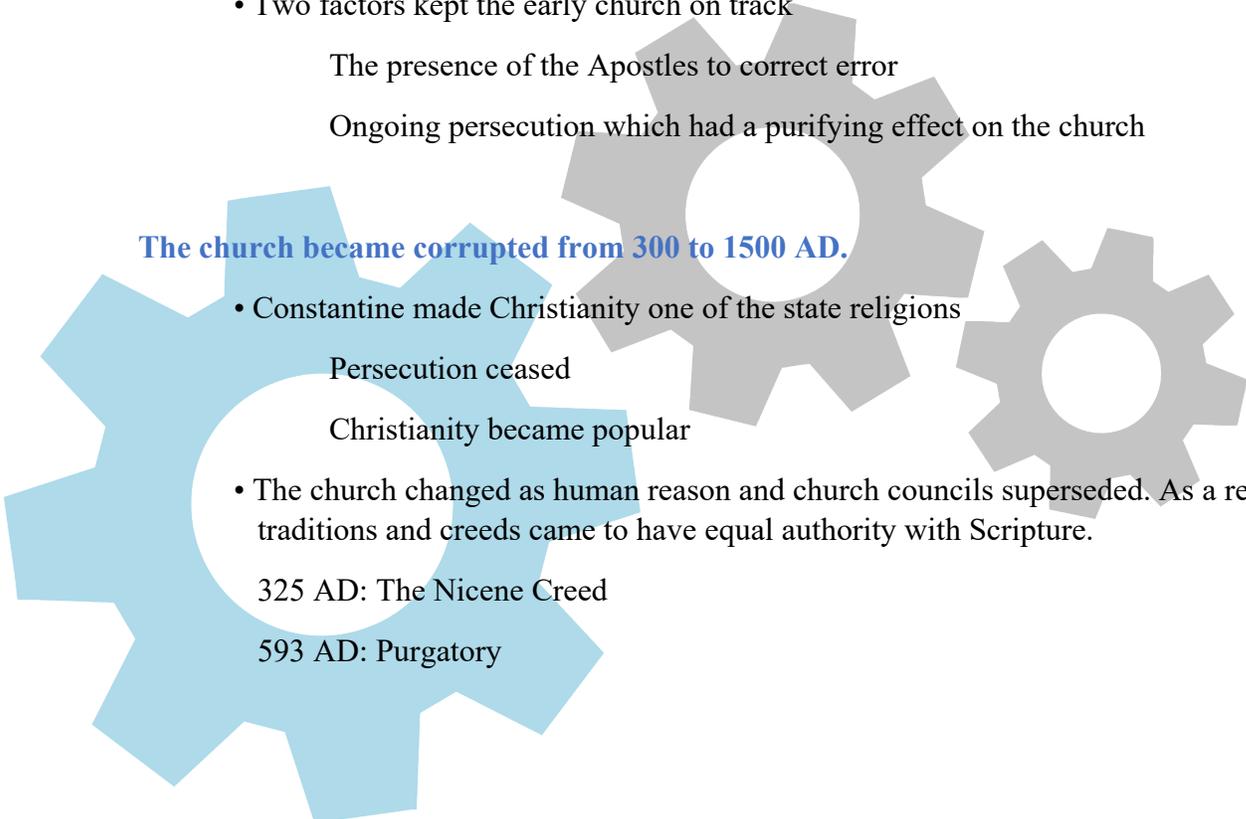
Persecution ceased

Christianity became popular

- The church changed as human reason and church councils superseded. As a result, traditions and creeds came to have equal authority with Scripture.

325 AD: The Nicene Creed

593 AD: Purgatory



660 AD: Papacy

1000 AD: Transubstantiation (saying of mass)

1015 AD: Celibacy of Priests

1054 AD: Roman Catholic & Greek Orthodox split

1311 AD: Sprinkling for Baptism

1500 AD: Selling of Indulgences

### The church reformed from 1500-1800 AD (spiritual leaders saw a need for change)

• Martin Luther	Germany	Lutheran	1530
• John Calvin	Switzerland	Calvinism	1536
• John Knox	Scotland	Presbyterian	1550
• Elizabeth 1	Great Britain	Church of Eng.	1552
• Thomas Helwys	Great Britain	Baptist	1611
• John Wesley	Great Britain	Methodist	1739

### The church was restored in 1800 AD

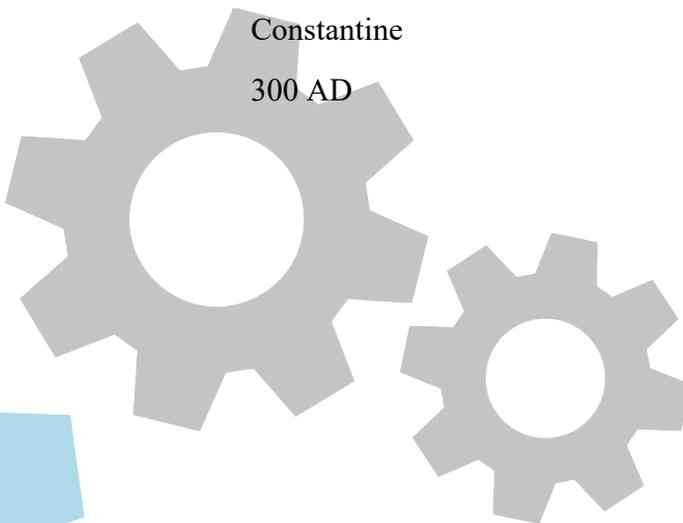
#### The Revolution

The Church Established  
30 AD

Constantine  
300 AD

#### The Corruption - 300 AD

325 AD: Creed  
593 AD: Purgatory  
660 AD: Papacy  
1000 AD: Mass  
1015 AD: Celibacy  
1311 AD: Sprinkling  
1054 AD: Catholic/Greek Split  
1500 AD: Indulgences



## **The Reformation - 1500 AD**

1500 AD: Reformation Begins

1530 AD: Lutheran

1536 AD: Presbyterian

1552 AD: Episcopal

1611 AD: Baptist

1739 AD: Methodist

## **The Restoration**

1800 AD: Church Restored:

Restoration of New Testament Christianity.

Unite all believers in Christ.

In the 1800's the Reformed Church had become a list of splits and denominations. Because of this, a group of Christian leaders including Barton W. Stone and Alexander Thomas led a movement to bring the church back to its Biblical roots as seen in the Book of Acts. Restoration churches are known for being independent, non-denominational Christian churches, which continue today in places like *Trinity church of Christ*.

