



SCC Core Beliefs

How can I know truth about God?

Summary Statement:

We can know truth about God in two ways. First, we believe that the order, vastness and beauty of God's creation reflect His nature. Second, we believe that God has made Himself known to us through the Bible, which is His word, written by human authors whom He guided.

Full Statement:

Truth about any subject seems to be more and more elusive lately. The idea that "truth is relative" has become a popular philosophy of life in our day and age. The modern attitude of "it may be true for you, but not for me..." has left many people wondering whether the search for truth is a worthwhile endeavor. This attitude is even more apparent when it comes to the search for truth about God. With so many ideas about God floating around, some people are tempted to throw up their hands in frustration and give up the search. To many, God isn't just an "unknown," He's unknowable.

So how is it that we at Southway claim to know truth about God?

We believe that God has made Himself known to us, that He has revealed Himself so that we might not only know truth about Him, but relate to Him as well. We believe that God has done this in two ways. First, God has made Himself known through what He has created. We believe that the order, vastness and beauty of creation reflect the nature of God. We believe that just as one can perceive a bit about a composer by studying an artistic masterpiece, so we can know something of God through the artistry of His creation.

We also believe that God has revealed Himself to us through the written word of the Bible. The Bible stands as unique in this world. It was written by multiple authors over a span of nearly 1500 years. These authors often lived in different places, spoke different languages, and employed different literary genres. The Bible contains within its pages everything from poetry to predictions of the future and yet, in spite of all this diversity in its creation it gives us a surprisingly unified account of how God has interacted with mankind throughout history. The Bible itself gives us an explanation of this unity by claiming to not only be the words of men, but also the words of God. We believe that God guided the human authors of the Bible in such a way that even though they wrote with their own styles and personalities, what they wrote was precisely what God desired to be written.

This being the case, we believe that the Bible is entirely true as it was originally written. We believe that there were no mistakes or errors in what the God-guided authors of the Bible wrote. We also believe that because the Bible is God's special revelation (or disclosure) of Himself to mankind, it tells us all that we need to know in order for us to properly relate to Him.

Scripture Support:¹

Romans 1:18-20; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21

Who is God, and what is He like?

Summary Statement:

Our God exists as three persons in one being. He is completely perfect and exists eternally, without beginning or end. He is the sovereign Creator who has made all things for His own purposes.

Full Statement:

Since God has made Himself known through the Bible, we need to ask, "What does the Bible teach us about God?"

We believe that one of the most crucial things the Bible reveals to us about the nature of God is that although God exists as one being, He also exists as three persons. In simple terms, this means that God is three "whos" and one "what." We believe that God exists eternally in the three persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. While all three persons are equally God, they are not to be confused with one another. The Father is not the same person as the Son or the Spirit, nor is the Son the same person as The Father or the Spirit, nor the Spirit the same as the Son or The Father. Although there is no adequate metaphor or picture for this concept in human experience, it is one of the most central truths about His nature that God has revealed to us.

We also believe that the Bible reveals to us a God who is completely perfect in His nature. There is no area in which God lacks total perfection. This means that although we can say creation reflects His nature, it does so only in a diminished fashion. God is above and beyond His creation. He is perfectly just, always and only doing that which is good and right. He is perfectly knowledgeable, knowing all things which are possible to know. He is supremely powerful, being able to do whatever He desires to do. He exists eternally, without any boundaries. He has no beginning and no end, and while He transcends His creation, His Spirit is present at all times, everywhere.

We believe that the Bible portrays God as the sovereign Creator, or the One who makes all things for His own purposes. The Bible begins by telling us that: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." This means that when we relate to God, we must do so as a creature relates to its Creator.

Scripture Support:

Genesis 1:1-2; Acts 5:3-4; John 10:30; Romans 3:25-26; Isaiah 46:8-11; Job 42:2; Revelation 1:8; Genesis 1:1-3:24

Who is man, and how does he relate to God?

Summary Statement:

God created man to be a people who would enjoy Him, and who in doing so would give Him glory. He created man innocent, without moral failing and able to love and obey Him. He created mankind both male and female, with the first two humans being Adam and Eve. So that they could relate to Him in obedience, recognizing His authority as Creator, He gave them a single command. Rather than obey God, they were tempted into disobedience. Through Adam's act of disobedience, all of mankind has become corrupted by sin and has fallen under God's just anger. Because of this, mankind is in need of a way to be made right with God again.

Full Statement:

What do we mean when we say that man must relate to God as a creature relates to its Creator?

We believe that being the one who created all things, God is the one who has the authority to declare the purpose for which His creation exists and establish the relationship which it has to Himself. The Bible tells us that God created mankind to be His people and to enjoy relationship with Him, and that in doing so we would glorify Him through our praise, adoration and obedience. We believe that God created man innocent, entirely without moral failing and with the ability to properly relate to God. We also believe that God made man both male and female, and made the two genders complementary to one another. We believe that God first created the man Adam, and then his wife Eve.

We believe that God gave them everything they could ever need, and endowed them with authority over all the other creatures on the earth. In the beginning, God's relationship to man was characterized by generosity, love, and fellowship. As the scriptures tell us, it was "very good." Mankind's relationship to God was to be characterized by love, enjoyment and obedience. However, in order for mankind to obey God, there had to first be a command. Because of this, God gave mankind a single instruction. The command wasn't troublesome or difficult, it was simply to be a sign of their obedience to Him. God singled out one tree in the entire world, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and commanded Adam and Eve not to eat from it. In order to show them the seriousness with which He regarded their obedience, He told them that if they ate from the tree they would surely die.

The Bible tells us that in spite of God's generosity, and all the good things He provided for Adam and Eve, they became tempted to partake of the one thing in all of creation that He had withheld from them. They deliberately disobeyed God and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Bible tells us that when Adam, the first human did this, sin entered into humanity.

What is sin? The Bible teaches us that sin is any thought, word, or action that runs contrary to the nature of God. We sin when we do, think or say that which is wrong, or when we fail to do, think or say that which is right. We believe that the Bible reveals to us that when Adam and Eve sinned, they began to die physically and a corruption entered into mankind. This corruption affects every aspect of man, from his thoughts and desires, to his physical well-being, and that it leads him to live a life of disobedience and hostility toward God.²

This life of sin has a drastic effect on our relationship with God. We believe that our sin is an affront to God's goodness. It is a violation of God's original purpose in our creation and because God is just, sin must be punished. Because of the corruption that entered into humanity all of mankind since Adam and Eve have been sinners, doing and desiring that which is contrary to the nature of God. This means that all of mankind is under God's just anger, and is in need of a way to be made right with Him again.

Scripture Support:

Genesis 1:1-3:24; Romans 5:12; Romans 3:10-18; Romans 3:23

How can man be made right with God again?

Summary Statement:

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth in order to reconcile men to God. He was both fully human and fully God, being born of the Virgin Mary. He lived the perfect life that man could not and died on a Roman cross, bearing the punishment for sins so that it might not be required of man. Those who trust Jesus to save them have His perfect obedience counted to them as if it were their own, and their sins have been fully punished on the cross. It is because of this that we are reconciled to God and declared not guilty in His sight.

Full Statement:

We believe that God, being full of kindness, grace and mercy, did not leave sinful man without a way to be made right with Him again. The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who has been forever God and with God, came to live among the people He created. He was miraculously born through the Virgin Mary and He lived a life of perfect obedience to His Father. The Bible tells us that Jesus took on a human nature in addition to His divinity. He was both fully human and fully God, without ceasing to be either. Jesus proved Himself to be God through His teachings and miracles, and He voluntarily became a substitute for sinful men in God's eyes, being put to death on a Roman Cross and enduring the punishment due to us because of our sin. God poured out His wrath upon Jesus, in order that we might not have to suffer under it.

The Bible also tells us that Jesus did not stay dead. He was physically resurrected three days after His death and He appeared to His followers. His death serves as the price of redemption for mankind while His resurrection assures us that there is victory over death for all who believe.

But what do we mean when we say “for all who believe?”

The Bible teaches that in order for men to be made right with God, they must believe in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This belief is more than just a mental agreement to the truth that Jesus was the Son of God; that He died and rose again. “Believing,” as it’s presented in the Bible, is a sincere trust that Jesus’ life, death and resurrection are sufficient to make us right with God. It is a total reliance upon Jesus to save us on the basis of what He has done. Those who believe in Jesus don’t try to earn their way back into a right standing with God, instead they trust God’s Son to reconcile them to Him.

God did not have to offer us a way to be reconciled to Him. He would have been perfectly just to punish us for our sins, but because He is full of grace He showed us a kindness we did not deserve by sending Jesus to take our place. Those who trust Jesus have His perfect obedience counted to them as if they themselves had lived a perfect life. God looks at his Son’s life instead of theirs. Also, those who trust Jesus have had their sins fully punished on the cross and God’s wrath against them fully absorbed. It is because of this that we can be reconciled to God and declared “not guilty” in His sight.

Scripture Support:

Luke 1:1-2:21; John 2:23; John 3:2; Romans 3:23-26; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Titus 2:14; Romans 6:4-5; Romans 10:9-10; John 3:16; John 3:36; Romans 4:1-5; Romans 6:23; Romans 5:1-11

What does it mean to be a Christian?

Summary Statement:

God in His grace, does more than declare us “not guilty.” He also gives us a new nature and frees us from the corruption of sin which keeps us from being able to live in obedience to Him. This new nature brings with it new desires and a new love for God. We are also placed into a new relationship with Christ. The Bible pictures us as so interwoven into Christ that we can never be separated from Him. Believers are said to collectively form “the Body of Christ,” which is the Church. The Church exists in both a universal and a local form. The Church has been given the work of making disciples of Christ and it fulfills this work by the power of God’s Holy Spirit, who indwells and empowers believers.

Full Statement:

We believe that God’s grace toward us entails more than a “not guilty” verdict. The Bible also tells us that those who trust Jesus have been freed from the corruption of sin which kept them from being able to live in obedience to God. They have been given a new nature and new life. The Bible identifies this new life as being Christ’s resurrection life, and it involves the transformation of a person at their very core. A person who has been freed from the corruption of sin has new desires and a new ability to live for God. They are changed from being hostile toward God, to loving Him.³

The Bible also tells us that those who believe in Christ have a new relationship with Him. We are told that by the power of God's Holy Spirit, believers are placed into Christ.⁴ Believers are described as being "in Christ" and as having Christ "in them." The language used in the Bible paints a picture for us of two things that are interwoven together in such a way as they can never be separated. This union is one of the many ways in which God assures believers of the security of their salvation. It is just as impossible to separate a believer from salvation as it is to separate them from their Savior.⁵

Believers are said to collectively form "the Body of Christ," which is the Church. The Bible uses this metaphor to illustrate the unity and interdependency of Christians. There are two senses in which the Church exists:

1. The Universal Church consists of all those who have ever put their trust in Christ whether past, present or future.
2. The Local Church is a localized group of believers joined together for worship, service, and teaching.

Christ is said to be the "head" of the body, and thus the one who leads and guides the Church. The Bible tells us that the Church is set apart for God's service. Before He ascended back up into heaven, Jesus told His followers to go into all the nations and to make disciples and teach them to follow His commands. One of the primary ways this is done is through the ministry of the Local Church. The ministry of the Local Church includes gathering together to worship God, teaching what He says in the Bible, and exhorting Christians to live out what they have learned.

Jesus also gave his Church two ordinances. Baptism, by which believers are outwardly identified with Jesus through immersion in water, and the Lord's Supper, in which broken bread and wine (or grape juice in the case of Southway) symbolize the body and blood of Christ, and remind us of His sacrificial death.

The Church does not serve God under its own power. The Bible tells us that God sends His Holy Spirit to indwell and empower believers. This is said to be God's seal of ownership upon believers, and it is by the work of His Spirit that God equips every believer with the gifts they require in order to fulfill the unique service to which He has called them. Also, it is through the work of the Holy Spirit that a Christian's thoughts and desires are inflamed for God, and we are told in the Bible that we should make every effort to not resist the Spirit's control over our lives. As we yield to the Spirit, we become more and more mature in our Christian lives, and we desire to reflect the life of our Savior in how we live.

Scripture Support:

1 John 5:1; Romans 6:17-18, 22; Romans 8:5-10; John 6:56; John 6:37-40; John 10:27-29; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Acts 2:42-47; Colossians 1:18; Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Ephesians 1:13-14; Ephesians 4:17-30; Ephesians 5:18

What does the future hold for mankind?

Summary Statement:

The Bible tells us quite plainly that Christ has promised to return. The Bible never encourages any attempt to discern how near or how far off Christ's return might be. Instead, the Bible urges us to live our lives with the expectation that Christ could return at any moment. The Bible tells us that Jesus will return visibly and physically as both ruler and judge. Those who have accepted the reconciliation offered by God in Christ will spend eternity with Christ, while those reject the reconciliation will suffer God's wrath against their sin in Hell.

Full Statement:

The Bible tells us quite plainly that Christ has promised to return. Unfortunately, this truth has often proved to be a stumbling block to those prone to speculation. We often hear of this person or that group proclaiming that the end of the world or the second coming of Jesus will occur on a specific day, month or year. Some go to great lengths to make their predictions known. However, in spite of what we may hear in the popular media, the Bible tells us that no one knows the day or the hour in which these things will occur. The Bible never once encourages believers to attempt to discern how near or how far off Christ's return might be. Instead, the Bible urges us to live our lives with the expectation that Christ could return at any moment. As Saint Augustine wrote many centuries ago: "He who loves the coming of the Lord is not he who affirms it is far off, nor is it he who says it is near. It is he who, whether it be far or near, awaits it with sincere faith, stead-fast hope and fervent love."

The Bible tells us that Jesus will return visibly and physically as both ruler and judge. Christians are told to anticipate His return in a manner similar to a bride awaiting her bridegroom, with great expectation and joy. One of the ways we do this is by faithfully being about the tasks He has set for His Church. This means preaching the gospel, building up disciples and living upright and godly lives in this present age. Further, the Bible tells us that when Christ returns, God will reconcile creation to Himself and make new again the world which was corrupted by sin.

We are told that when Christ returns, God will pass His good and right judgment upon all mankind. The dead will be resurrected and judged along with those still alive.⁶ In this way, those He reconciled to Himself through the death and resurrection of His Son, those declared "not guilty" through faith, will enter into the eternally perfect relationship with God which they were designed to enjoy. In this relationship there will be no more sin, no more pain, no more sorrow and no more death.

However, righteous judgment will be applied to those who did not accept the reconciliation offered to them in Christ. Those who reject Him will stand condemned before God by their own sinful thoughts, words and actions. The Bible teaches that only eternal, conscious punishment and separation from God await them.⁷

Scripture Support:

Matthew 16:27; Matthew 24:30-31; Matthew 25:31-36; Mark 14:62; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 2 Timothy 4:1; Titus 2:13; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 19:11-21:4

¹ All Scripture references appear in the order of the statements they support.

² This corruption is often referred to by Christians as “the sin nature.”

³ This new life is often called by Christians the “new birth,” or “regeneration.” Thus, Christians are often referred to as being “born again.”

⁴ This onetime event in which believers are placed “in Christ” by the Holy Spirit is often called the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is not to be confused with water baptism. We also reject the idea that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit must be evidenced in a person by speaking in tongues, or other miraculous signs.

⁵ Some have claimed that an individual may lose their salvation through a particularly egregious sin or a loss of faith. Contrary to this idea, we believe that the Bible teaches that God preserves His redeemed people in such a way as they can never be lost.

⁶ While there is room for differences of opinion regarding the order of events during the “End Times,” most Christians agree that according to His promise Jesus Christ will return in glory to the earth, the dead will be raised and Christ will judge all men in righteousness.

⁷ All who have sinned against God and rejected the offer of salvation in Christ will suffer eternal separation from God. They will be consigned to Hell, a place of everlasting punishment.