



CROSSCULTURE

STATEMENT OF FAITH



PART 2



INTRODUCTION

“In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity”

This is a phrase written by the German Lutheran theologian Rupertus Meldenius around the year 1627. It has also been adopted by the Churches of Christ denomination and is at the heart of [CrossCulture’s Statement of Faith](#)^[1].

We believe it captures the essentials that unite us as a church family. It is important that we study these essential doctrines together, so that we can be clear on what we believe and why we believe it. In this second part of our series, we are covering statements number 6 to 10 in our Statement of Faith.

Of course, the Statement of Faith is not an exhaustive list of Christian doctrine. However, we believe that alignment on these particular essentials will further our vision of ‘Knowing Christ, Growing in Christ and Proclaiming Christ’ for the glory of God.

We hope that your Life Groups find these studies not only challenging, but also enriching. We encourage you to test each of these statements with the Scripture and sharpen each other in your thinking around these deep truths.

We trust that as your mind is stretched and humbled by a big God, it will overflow into praise and love for our creator, saviour and redeemer.

^[1] Our statement of faith is available online: crossculture.net.au/beliefs

Study 1

GOD CREATED AND SUSTAINS

From our Statement of Faith:

6. God created and sustains the universe and everything in it.

1. Think about your most awe-inspiring experience of creation. Share with your Life Group what it was and how that made you feel.

Glorious Creation and Glorious Creator

There is so much in the world that inspires awe. Panoramic mountain ranges, raging oceans, star-lit night skies, transcendent sunsets – the list goes on. There is a certain glory in the world and it's easy to be carried away by its grandeur.

The very first verse of the Bible introduces God as creator when nothing existed in the beginning except God (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit). Out of nothingness, God spoke the world into existence. Behind all the glory and wonder of creation stands a glorious and wonderful creator.

Read Genesis 1:1

2. Why does the Bible introduce or begin with God as creator? How does this impact you personally?

The Supremacy of Christ

While all three persons of the Trinity were involved in creation, the book of Colossians focuses especially on the deity and supremacy of Jesus in all things, including creation.

Read Colossians 1:16-17

3. What do these verses tell us about Jesus and creation?

4. What are some things that fall under the categories of 'all things'?
 - a. in heaven and on earth
 - b. visible and invisible
 - c. thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities

All Things under Jesus

The claim of Colossians 1:16-17 is absolutely astounding. In two short verses, the phrase 'all things' is repeated four times. If that is not enough to catch our attention,

Paul unpacked it – things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. When he said ‘all things’, he really meant all things!

From the smallest quark that holds protons and neutrons together in an atom to the ever-expanding galaxies. From human kingdoms and empires to spiritual powers and principalities. Everything we see, touch, hear, feel, think, imagine and experience. Everything unseen such as time, emotions, music, ideas and concepts. All was created by God. All exists through and for Jesus, who holds it all together.

5. What are the implications that all things were created through and for Jesus, and are held together by Jesus? Refer to the categories in question 4 to help. What response does this evoke in you?

Getting Personal

6. How would you answer the existential questions of ‘who am I’ and ‘why am I here’? How can Genesis 1:1 and Collosians 1:16-17 help us?

7. How can the reality of God as creator and sustainer shape how a person responds to life's joys, sorrows and everything in between?

8. What areas in your life need to be adjusted to better reflect the reality of God as creator and sustainer?

Prayer and Praise

As a Life Group, spend time praying together to thank God for creating and sustaining all things, including our lives. Ask him for a greater sense of awe and wonder in his power and glory. Sing or listen to the hymn 'How great Thou art' together.

Oh Lord my God when I in awesome wonder

Consider all the works Thy hand hath made

I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder

Thy power throughout the universe displayed

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee

How great Thou art, how great Thou art

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee

How great Thou art, how great Thou art

Study 2

MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE

From our Statement of Faith:

7. God created human beings in His own image, equal before God and distinct as male and female. God designed marriage to be a covenantal, lifelong union between a man and a woman that reflects the relationship between Christ and His Church.

It is incredible that across 510 million square kilometres of the earth's surface area, there are around 7.8 billion people that share one thing in common – humanity. In this study, we will explore the doctrine of humanity and what it means for us today.

1. What does it mean to be human?

Humanity and Creation

Read Psalm 8 – a beautiful invitation into the wonder of God's creation and our place within it.

2. How does Psalm 8 make you feel?

The Bible defines humanity by reference to its creator. Being human means being made uniquely in God's image. Read Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:18-25.

3. How do both male and female equally yet distinctively bear the image of God?

4. What do you learn about the nature of human relationships and their purpose?

Humanity and Christ

Read Colossians 1:15-20 and 2 Corinthians 3:18.

5. Through sin, the image of God in humanity has been corrupted, but not altogether lost. How does Jesus restore God's image within us?

Read Ephesians 5:22-33, where the Apostle Paul showed us that human marriage is a shadow of a far greater reality.

6. How does this passage challenge society's views on what marriage is and its purpose?

Humanity and You

7. Reflect on your major life commitments or goals in 2022. How do they align with God's purpose for us as human?
8. Since everyone is made in God's image (although corrupted), how should it affect our relationships with non-Christians?

Study 3

CORRUPTED BY SIN

From our Statement of Faith:

*8. All human beings have been corrupted by their sin
and are subject to God's judgment.*

Introduction

The Bible as a whole is about God creating us for a perfect relationship with him. But since humanity rebelled against God, sin dominates the Bible's narrative – from the sin of Adam to our own sinfulness today. Scholar Millard Erickson defines sin as 'failure to live up to what God expects of us in act, thought, and being'.

God, however, works to restore our relationship back to him. As we try to overcome sin in our lives as Christians, we will look at the nature of sin and its impact on all human beings.

*But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed
by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived
gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

(James 1:14-15)

5. Why is it so difficult for people in today's culture to discuss, understand and accept sin (Romans 1:18-25)?

Application

6. What are the parallels between the temptation that Eve faced (Genesis 3) and the temptations in your life? How does the gospel help you overcome them (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)?

7. What are the subtle sins that you and your Christian community turn a blind eye to? How will you overcome one of those sins individually and as a Life Group?

Prayer

As a Life Group, break into groups (two to three people of the same gender) and confess your sins before God as 1 John 1:9 asks us to.

Study 4

SAVED BY JESUS

From our Statement of Faith:

9. Salvation is by grace through faith alone in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through His perfect life, substitutionary death and bodily resurrection, all who believe in Him are forgiven their sins, declared righteous and granted eternal life.

While statement 2¹ speaks of the **person** of Jesus (who he is), statement 9 focuses on the **work** of Christ. It tells us how we can be rescued, which follows from statement 8² that shows why we need rescuing and what we need rescuing from.

The work of Christ is at the core of Christianity, which is the difference between what the Bible teaches and every other religious system. It is about God's grace (instead of our good works) and what Jesus has done (instead of what we do).

1. What aspect of Jesus' work of salvation is most precious to you? Why?

¹ Statement 2 – God is one and exists eternally in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

² Statement 8 – All human beings have been corrupted by their sin and are subject to God's judgment.

2. What does it mean that we are saved 'by grace through faith alone' (Ephesians 2:8-9 and Romans 4:5)?

3. What are the ways where Jesus is our substitute?

What I could not or did not do	What Jesus did	Scripture
Resist every temptation of Satan	Resisted and defeated Satan	Luke 4:1-13 Hebrews 2:14

4. What is the key achievement of the work of Jesus (Romans 3:20-26)?

5. What is the meaning of the death of Jesus as a propitiation for our sins (Romans 3:25, 1 John 4:9-10 and 2 Corinthians 5:21)?

6. Statement 9 points out the three benefits of the work of Christ. How is your life different because of these three realities?
- a. Are forgiven their sins
 - b. Declared righteous
 - c. Granted eternal life

Case Study

Fred has suffered a lot of rejection in his life. His parents always felt that his older brother was smarter and more successful than him. Several relationships have gone wrong - he's not good enough apparently. Satisfying his boss at work has been a struggle, as his performance always seems to fall short. It feels like his friends at church think that he's not the best Christian.

He has hinted to you recently that anxiety is impacting his everyday life. How would you encourage Fred from this part of our Statement of Faith? Be specific in what to say to encourage him.

Prayer

Spend time to give thanks for all the benefits of Christ's work for us.

Study 5

SANCTIFICATION - TRANSFORMED BY GOD

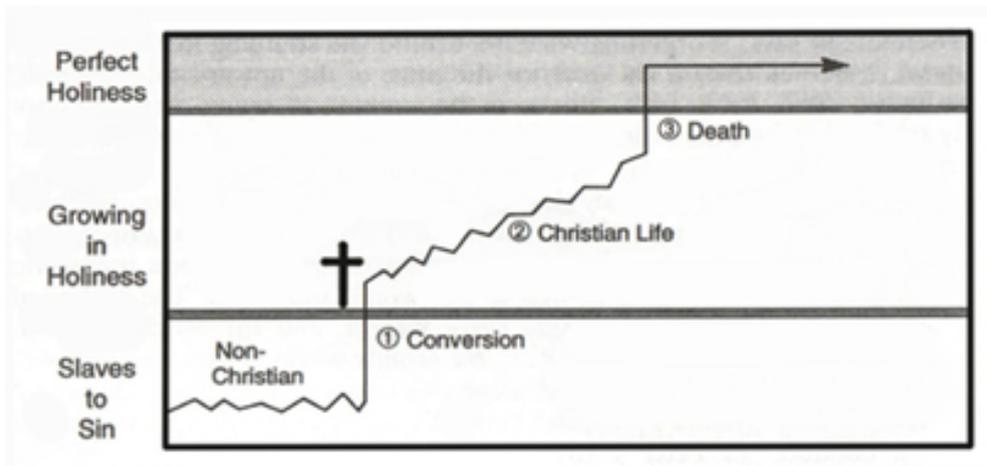
From our Statement of Faith:

*10. Those who have been saved are being transformed
by the Holy Spirit to become like Jesus Christ.*

When we become believers by putting our faith in Jesus, we are declared righteous by God through the work of Christ on the cross. This is **justification**. When we go to be with God (when we die or Jesus returns), we will be completely holy and perfect. This is **glorification**. But until then, we are going through a transformation by the Holy Spirit to become more like Jesus in our character. This is **sanctification**.

Sanctification means to be set apart to live for God and his holy purpose. We cannot return to our old way of life while staying in fellowship with God. Instead, we are going through a continuing process – from our current state to our ‘legal standing’ before God, that is, being righteous in Christ.

We cannot do this work ourselves. The Holy Spirit living in us enables this transformation in our lives with our cooperation. As Philippians 1:6 says – *“I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”*



The Process of Sanctification by Wayne Grudem

*Present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life,
and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.*

(Romans 6:13b)

1. How would you explain the differences between justification, sanctification and glorification to someone who is not yet a Christian (Ephesians 2:8-9; Phillipians 2:12 and Colossians 3:2-4)?

2. If we were justified when we put our faith in Christ and we will be glorified when we go to be with God one day, what is the point of being sanctified now (2 Corinthians 1:4 and Ephesians 4:32-5:2)?

7. How has God been challenging you to be more like Christ? How can we help one another to keep going?

Draw a flow chart of your sanctification experience

Expand the flow chart by adding people who have helped you and spiritual disciplines that you have experienced. Then, put one together as a group and encourage one another to use it.

Examples:

Helpers	Spiritual disciplines
Holy Spirit	Obedience to God
Church	Perseverance
Parents	Personal discipline
Life Group	Love for God
Discipler / Mentor	Healthy fear of God
Christian friends	Bible study
Jesus	Prayer