

What We Believe

SCRIPTURE

We believe the Bible is God's infallible and authoritative word that was written by human authors under the supernatural guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

At Restoration Church, we hold Scripture to be God's inspired, inerrant word that is sufficient for all matters of faith and Christian living. A person who takes his or her Christian faith seriously will want to give serious attention to the Bible in its entirety. It is a matter of life-long commitment to understand properly what God has said to us as a church and to us as individuals. In addition to hearing the Bible preached weekly, we must spend time daily feasting upon the Word of God. Our view of Scripture must translate into a deep dedication to know God's Word and to live it out.

We believe the Bible is inspired by God. The 10 commandments are the first Word and set the pattern for all the rest of Scripture (Exodus 20:1, Exodus 31:18, Exodus 34:27). First, the moment the commandments were written, they were authoritative. In the same way, the rest of Scripture was authoritative the moment it was written. It was not authoritative because the Church later decided it to be. It is not the Church that forms the Word, but the Word that forms the Church. Second, God commissioned Moses to write and considered Moses' words to have the same authority as His own. The first stone tablets were written by the finger of God (Exodus 31:18). After this, the people begged for Moses, rather than God, to communicate with them because they were too afraid. After the golden calf incident, God told Moses to cut two new stones like the first and that He would write on them as before (Exodus 34:1). However, this time He also tells Moses to write what He says (Exodus 34:27). The implication is that there is no difference in the authority of what God commanded Moses to write, and what God had formerly written Himself. In the same way, God commissioned all the authors of the rest of Scripture and considers their words to have the same authority as if He had written with His own finger.

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God from the testimony of Scripture itself. Jesus considered the Old Testament, His Bible, to be God's Word (Matthew 4:4, Matthew 22:41-44). Since we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, then we must believe His witness concerning Scripture. The writers of the New Testament also considered the Old Testament and their own writings to be authoritative (1 Corinthians 2:12-13, Romans 3:1-2, 2 Peter 1:20-21, 2 Peter 3:15-16). Considering the testimony of Scripture to support that the Bible is the Word of God may seem circular. However, we also have the inward witness of the Holy Spirit to know that the Bible is God's Word (John 16:12-15, Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12). The inward witness of the Holy Spirit is just as necessary to recognize the Bible as the Word of God, as that inward witness is to recognize that Jesus is the Son of God. This is not a matter of imparting new information, but of enlightening darkened minds.

We believe that the Bible is inerrant (without error). The very words of the original texts of the 66 books of the Bible are free from error, not just in matters of faith and practice, but also in all aspects (Galatians 3:16, Matthew 22:32). The character of God informs the way we approach His Word. It is the product of an all-powerful, all-knowing God who is free from error (Psalm 12:6, Psalm 18:30, Psalm 19:7, Proverbs 30:5-6, John 17:17).

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We believe that the Bible is sufficient for all matters of faith and practice, or Christian living (2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:3). Experience is severely limited as a basis for determining truth because it is changeable, ambiguous, and is subject to self-deception. Thus, we should seek to interpret our experience in the light of God's Word, rather than interpreting God's Word in light of our experience.

We believe that the Bible is a covenant document. God made a covenant with Israel that resembled covenants made in the surrounding culture. A covenant bound together two unrelated parties in a new relationship, a relationship that required certain duties and was guarded by a witness. So, a covenant is actually a three-way agreement (two parties and a witness), as opposed to a contract, which is a two-way agreement (two parties, but no witness). In God's covenant with His people, He is both one of the parties and the witness. All covenants have a document that described the parties involved and the terms of the arrangement. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the covenant document that governs our covenant relationship with God. In it, He tells us who He is, who we are, and how we are to live in relationship with Him and inherit His promises.

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GOD

We believe there is one God, eternally existent in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Bible speaks of one God, but attributes the characteristics of God to three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God the Father created all things and planned the redemption of His people from all eternity (Genesis 3:14-15, Ephesians 1:3-12). God the Son (Jesus) accomplished that redemption on the cross (Romans 3:21-24, Galatians 3:13-14). God the Spirit (The Holy Spirit) applies the benefits of that eternal redemption to all believers (John 3:5-8, Titus 3:4-7). The doctrine of the Trinity is a way of describing this biblical revelation of the nature of God. It states that God is one in essence, but that He exists in three Persons who are equal, eternal, inseparable, and interdependent. Persons actually fails to accurately describe God because it can give the impression of three separate individuals. A more precise view is that God is one being with three personal self-distinctions.

Why should we accept the word Trinity as a way to describe God when it isn't in the Bible? Heretical groups came on the early Church scene and denied either the deity of Christ or that of the Holy Spirit. This drove Christians to search the Scriptures to come up with a formal way to describe the Bible's teaching on the nature of God. The doctrine of the Tri-unity was the result. Tertullian, an early Church father, was the first to use the term Trinity in 215 AD. The concept of the Trinity is sometimes viewed as negative since it is difficult for us to grasp. Instead, we should view it as something wonderful. Because it means not only that we have a God who is greater and more mysterious than our imaginings, but also that we have a God who seeks a personal relationship with us through the redemption of the Son and the presence of the Spirit. Because He is a Trinity, God Himself exists in community. When God created humanity in His image, He created us as relational beings, created to love each other and our Creator.

The Bible teaches that we have one God (Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 43:10, 1 Corinthians 8:4-6, Ephesians 4:4-6). At the same time, that one God is revealed progressively throughout Scripture as three Persons:

- God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are active in Creation (Genesis 1:1-2, Colossians 1:16-17)
- Isaiah prophesies that the one born of the virgin would also be Immanuel, God with us (Isaiah 7:14) and later calls the Messiah Mighty God and Eternal Father (Isaiah 9:6)
- The New Testament calls the Father God (John 6:27, John 20:17, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Galatians 1:1, Ephesians 4:6, Philippians 2:11, 1 Peter 1:2)
- The New Testament explicitly declares Jesus Christ to be God (John 1:1, John 20:28, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 1:8)
- The New Testament writers recognize the Holy Spirit as God (Acts 5:3-4, 1 Corinthians 2:10-11, 1 Corinthians 6:19, John 3:5-6, Titus 3:5)
- The New Testament writers speak of the presence and work of the Father, Son, and Spirit in one breath (Matthew 28:19, Mark 1:10-11, Luke 10:21, 2 Corinthians 13:14, 1 Peter 1:2)

So, how should we address God in prayer? Since God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are Persons, we should speak of Them as such (for example, the Holy Spirit is He and not It). Though we may certainly address any member of the Trinity in prayer, it may be helpful to follow the guidance of

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Scripture. Jesus addressed God as Father in His model prayer for His disciples (Matthew 6:9-13). He told them to pray to the Father in His name once He was no longer on this earth (John 16:22-24). Since we have God's Spirit dwelling in us, it is by His power that we cry out to God in prayer and seek His will (Romans 8:15-16, Romans 8:26-27). Thus, in addressing God in prayer it can be helpful to think of praying to God the Father, in the name of Jesus, and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

What We Believe

JESUS

We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ; in His virgin birth; in His sinless life; in His miracles; in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood; in His bodily resurrection; in His ascension to the right hand of the Father; and in His personal return in power and glory.

Crucial to our understanding of the Trinity is the Bible's presentation of Jesus Christ as fully man (Matthew 8:23-24, Matthew 21:18, John 11:32-36) and fully God (John 1:1-3, John 10:30, John 17:4-5, Titus 2:13). Jesus was in possession of both divine and human natures, unified in one person. The two natures of Jesus coexisted in union without confusion or change, separation or division. Jesus Christ had to possess both natures in order to be our Lord and Savior. Because He was fully divine, Jesus is able to be the perfect and eternal sacrifice for the complete atonement of our sins. Jesus is also our permanent high priest, allowing us to be eternally reconciled to God (Hebrews 7:23-28). Because He was fully human, Jesus was able to be our proper substitute on the cross to experience the wrath of God, and He is able to be a comfort and example for our daily living (Hebrews 2:14-18).

Being divine, Jesus could not sin, because God can't change His nature (John 5:19, John 5:30). We might wonder, then, how He can truly identify with us in our struggles and temptations as the book of Hebrews promises (Hebrews 2:18). Because He was human, Jesus couldn't conquer temptation without a struggle. We all struggle with temptation. When the struggle becomes powerful enough, it overcomes us and we eventually give in. Unlike all of us, Jesus had to keep resisting temptation until He had overcome the temptation. So, His temptations were more terrible than we can ever experience. The promise of Hebrews 2:18 should then bring us comfort; "for in that He Himself has suffered being tempted. He is able to aid those who are tempted".

Therefore, the essential attribute of Jesus, as we have already discussed, is that Jesus was both fully God and fully man. God was His Father, and Mary was His mother. However, there are also additional important attributes of Jesus. The mother of Jesus, Mary, was a virgin as the Scripture records. In order for her to conceive it had to be supernatural (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:18-25). Jesus lived His life without sin (Hebrews 4:14-16). If He would have sinned in any way His blood would not have qualified to be poured on the mercy seat in heaven. There cannot be any forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood (Leviticus 17:11, Hebrews 9:22). Jesus' death was for the sins of the entire world (2 Corinthians 5:15, 1 John 2:2). Jesus was raised from the dead (Matthew 28:6, Mark 16:6, Luke 24:5, John 20:14-16, 1 Corinthians 15:3-6). This signified His supreme victory and triumph over death and hell. Death is the natural result of our separation from God through sin. Physical death is a shadow of spiritual death. Jesus now reigns as the immortal, invisible King who will one day return and establish His rule on earth at the appointed time (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus possesses all of the attributes of God. He is omnipresent (Matthew 28:20), omnipotent (Matthew 28:18), omniscient (John 16:30), eternal (John 1:1-2), holy (Acts 3:14), and creator (Colossians 1:15-17). Jesus is the only way to experience a plentiful and fulfilling natural life (John 10:10). Jesus is the only way to God the Father and is the only means of salvation (John 10:9, John 14:6).

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THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the ministry of Holy Spirit to glorify Christ, to convict men of sin, righteousness, and judgment and to empower the believer.

As we saw with the Trinity, God reveals the person of the Holy Spirit progressively throughout Scripture. Wherever He appears, the Holy Spirit creates and inhabits the temple of God. The temple is the place where God dwells and shows forth His glory. The very first temple created was the universe, and so the Holy Spirit first appeared at creation. When the Spirit hovered over the waters (Genesis 1:2), He was creating a natural revelation of the supernatural glory of heaven. Heaven and earth were established as a holy palace of the Creator King. The Holy Spirit continues to appear throughout the Old Testament. During the ministry of Moses, the people of God built the tabernacle and the Holy Spirit came and filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35). Illustrating that this was the place where God dwelled and showed forth His glory. During the reign of Solomon, a stationary temple was built, and the Spirit of God came and filled that temple in the same way (2 Chronicles 5:11-6:2, 2 Chronicles 7:1-3). When Israel was exiled for continually breaking God's law, Solomon's temple was destroyed. The prophets looked forward to the restoration of God's people. Along with that restoration came the promise of a magnificent temple where the Spirit would come to dwell in an unprecedented way (Ezekiel 39:27-29, Ezekiel 43:1-9), and would be poured into the hearts of all God's people (Ezekiel 36:26-27, Joel 2:28-29). But when the exiles finally returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple, the Spirit did not inhabit it as it had before.

The incarnation brought the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophetic hope. At the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended to earth for the first time since before the exile, because Jesus was the greatest temple of God (Mark 1:9-11). The Gospel of John tells us that Jesus dwelled, or literally tabernacled among us and embodied the glory of God (John 1:14, John 2:19). Jesus was the place where God dwelled and showed forth His glory to His people in a new way. After His death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit upon His followers. This fulfilled the promise of the prophets that God would pour out His Spirit in an unprecedented way upon His people (Joel 2:28-29, Acts 2:1-21). Just as the Holy Spirit inhabited the temple of God in the Old Testament, He now inhabits the people of God. He dwells in the people of God and shows forth his glory. This is the creation of the Church. We, both individually and corporately, are the temple of God and the dwelling place of His Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Since the Holy Spirit creates and inhabits the temple of God, and since we are that temple, the Spirit is the primary force throughout the process of our salvation. The Holy Spirit regenerates believers so that we may turn from our sin, exercise faith in Christ, and receive the gift of salvation (John 3:5-8, Titus 3:5-7). In order to do this, the Holy Spirit leads us into truth, illuminating our minds and hearts to understand God's Word (John 14:26, 1 John 2:20, John 2:27, Ephesians 1:17-18), and He produces obedience in us (1 Peter 1:1-2).

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SALVATION

We believe salvation is a free gift and is received by grace through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Anyone can be restored to relationship as an heir of God, through repenting, believing, and receiving Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

The truth of salvation is also revealed progressively throughout the Bible. God created us to be in relationship with Him, but from very early on that relationship was broken by sin. God punished Adam and Eve for their sin by sending them out of the Garden of Eden to toil in labor, but He did not punish them eternally as they deserved. Rather, He promised that a seed of the woman would render a deathblow to Satan and to sin and death, though not before receiving mortal wounds (Genesis 3:15). The seed of the woman is, of course, Jesus Christ. God's forgiveness of Adam and Eve, and of every Old Testament believer after that, made necessary the ultimate sacrifice of Christ. The only way God could forgive sin yet remain true to His holy character was to send Jesus to pay the punishment that all His people from the beginning to the end of time deserve for their sin (Romans 3:25-26). The redemptive work of Christ is the center of all history. God's people of all time have their salvation secured in the same way, by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Old Testament believers looked ahead through the shadows to that sacrifice while we look back on it with clarity.

The Bible speaks of our salvation as something that is past, present, and future. We have been saved (Romans 8:24, Ephesians 2:5, Ephesians 2:8). We are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18, 2 Corinthians 2:15, Philippians 2:12-13). We will be saved (Romans 5:10, Romans 3:11, 1 Peter 1:13, Hebrews 1:14). It is helpful to think of salvation as encompassing regeneration (past), justification and sanctification (present), and glorification (future). The salvation of our souls includes each of these works of God and more. Salvation is much more than simply the moment that we profess faith in Christ.

Regeneration – Salvation is dependent upon the work of God who must give us new life before we can repent from our sin and exercise faith in Christ. Jesus told Nicodemus, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:5-6). Jesus describes the kind of change that must happen to a person in order for him or her to enter the kingdom of God. It is a change that is effected by the Holy Spirit. Because we are in bondage to sin and Satan, we can no more will to be saved than a dead person can will to rise to life or a blind person can will to see (Jeremiah 17:9, John 3:5-6, John 6:44, Romans 3:10-12, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 2:1-3). We need the work of the Holy Spirit to restore our hearts from the pollution of sin and to give us a new inclination towards God. We then respond to the Spirit's working in our hearts by exercising faith in Christ. In this way, we receive salvation by God's grace through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:6-14, Ephesians 2:4-10).

Justification – When we are given new hearts and freely respond to the truth of the Gospel in faith, God justifies us. Justification is an act by which God pronounces the sinner righteous, putting him or her in a permanently right relationship with Himself (Romans 3:23-24). God declares us not guilty by crediting the perfect obedience of Christ to our account (Romans 4:5). So, when we identify with Christ the law is fulfilled perfectly in us (Romans 8:3-4). With justification, an exchange takes place. Jesus took our sin and its punishment upon Himself at the cross. We are now clothed with His righteousness. We believe that Jesus will return one day to bring final judgment and that God will judge those who have believed in

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Him on the merits of Christ rather than on their own merits. Those who are judged on the merits of Christ will enter into everlasting life, while those who are judged on their own merits will enter into everlasting hell.

Sanctification – Although we have been saved (justification) and experience many of God’s blessings, we still struggle with sin and live in a world where Satan rules. Sanctification is the process by which we are being saved as the Holy Spirit works in us to progressively free us from sin and make us more like Christ. Thus, our salvation not only includes Christ dying for us, but also Christ living in us. While obedience merits nothing towards our salvation, it is the necessary result of the Spirit’s presence in the lives of believers (Romans 6:1-7, James 2:24-26). The miracle of the New Covenant promised by the prophets is not that God would one day lower His holy standards for our lives. Instead, His Spirit would write His law upon our hearts, rather than upon tablets of stone, so that we would love and obey him (Jeremiah 31:33, Deuteronomy 30:6, Ezekiel 36:26) As we examine our lives to see the fruit of obedience (Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Peter 1:2-11) we must keep in mind two things. First, obedience is not something we produce but something the Spirit produces in us. Second, the Christian is not someone who is better than everyone else, but someone who is better than he or she once was.

Glorification – We look forward to the time we will be saved. When Christ comes again our salvation will reach its culmination and we will be glorified with Him. This hope is founded on the resurrection of Christ and the fact that the same Spirit who raised Him from the dead now dwells in us. In Romans 8:28-30, Paul describes the progressive parts of our salvation, ending by saying, “those whom He justified, these He also glorified”. Glorification for those in Paul’s day and for us is a future event. Yet, Paul uses the past tense. He does so to stress the assurance of our hope. He is speaking as if it has already happened because it is guaranteed to come about according to God’s sovereign plan and work in our lives. As Paul says elsewhere, “being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

What We Believe

THE SPIRIT FILLED LIFE

We believe the baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience following salvation that empowers believers for life and service. We further believe His power and gifts are available to believers today.

We believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is an endowment of power, subsequent to conversion, given by God to anoint the believer for sanctification and evangelism (Acts 2:1-4, Acts 8:14-17, Acts 19:1-6). The main purpose in receiving the filling of the Holy Spirit is for power (Acts 1:4-8). However, this is power for life, obedience, and holiness. We believe that the filling of the Holy Spirit produces fruit (Galatians 5:22-23). This fruit of the Spirit helps us in our relationship with and service to others. We also believe that the filling of the Holy Spirit produces gifts. We believe that these gifts of the Spirit are still active within the Church and will remain active until the second coming of the Lord. Furthermore, we believe the development of the gifts of the Spirit should be encouraged by leadership for the benefit of the entire community of faith (1 Corinthians 12:1-7). We do not believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a requirement of salvation (Acts 19:5-6). However, we do encourage everyone to pray to receive the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the primary force in creating, inhabiting, and building up the Church (Ephesians 2:21-22). The Holy Spirit works to bring about unity in the Church and power among the individual members through the manifestation of fruit and gifts.

The fruit of the Spirit – The filling of the Holy Spirit means that we should bear fruit. Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) in the context of the freedom we have in Christ. Freedom that is meant for serving one another in love rather than indulging in sin (Galatians 5:13–18). The acts of our sinful nature have to do with broken relationships and disunity in the church (Galatians 4:19-21) and these acts are the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit. This means that the fruit of the Spirit does not refer to subjective characteristics. Instead, it is referring to specific attitudes and actions (love, patience, kindness) that build relationships and unity in the church. The extent of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives will be most evident in the way we treat the people around us.

The gifts of the Spirit – The filling of the Holy Spirit means that we will also manifest the gifts of the Spirit, though in varying ways. The Greek word *charisma*, or gift, is related to the word *charis*, or grace. The gifts of the Spirit are concrete expressions of the grace of God to us. Paul speaks of the gifts synonymously with service/ministries and effects/working (1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 1 Corinthians 12:27-28). Thus, it seems that a gift of the Spirit does not have to do as much with a personal ability, as with the outworking of a ministry, or an expression of grace. In other words, the gifts of the Spirit are something we manifest, not something we possess. We manifest the gifts of the Spirit as we help others, teach, have faith, pray for healing, or offer a word of prophecy. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says, “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all”. It is easy to feel that your presence and participation are irrelevant, but Scripture teaches that each believer has been given a spiritual gift(s) to be used for the common good. Your presence and ministry in and through the church is therefore vital to our ability to be the living temple of God.

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Our position at Restoration Church is that we encourage all people to ask and pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit. However, Restoration Church does not agree with the frequent teaching that tongues are a necessary or expected initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Any debate about charismatic gifts is not an issue to divide over and so diverse views are represented in our congregation.

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ORDINANCES

We believe it is important to uphold the scriptural practices of the early church. Therefore, we hold to the practice of water baptism and the regular taking of Communion. We do not believe that either of these practices is essential for salvation, but that they serve as a demonstration of our living faith in Christ.

An ordinance is the outward sign we have by faith in our covenant relationship with God (Romans 4:11). We consider an ordinance to be a visible demonstration of an invisible reality. Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox prefer the use of the term "sacrament" because this term is associated with being a means of grace. While a sacrament is seen as a means of grace, an ordinance is a practice that merely demonstrates the participants' faith. We do not call them "sacraments" because we believe these rituals are outward expressions of faith, rather than impartations of God's grace. At Restoration Church, we recognize two ordinances (as do many Protestant churches): baptism and communion. Both ordinances were instituted by Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17, Luke 22:14-20) and are specifically for the covenant community of faith.

It is important to understand the symbolism of water baptism in order to grasp its significance. The New Testament tells us that the washing with water symbolizes the washing away of our sin (Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16). The act of literally being placed under the water symbolizes being dead and buried with Christ (Romans 6:3-7, Colossians 2:11-12). Only when we identify with Christ in His death and burial can we be raised out of the water to share in a spiritual resurrection to newness of life. There is also significant symbolism in the water itself. In the Old Testament, water often symbolized the judgment of God. For example, during the flood most of humankind was consumed by the waters of God's judgment while Noah and his family passed through. Noah and his family were not any less sinful or deserving of God's judgment than those who were consumed by God's wrath. Instead, God showed great mercy to them and saved them by His grace. In 1 Peter 3:20-22, Peter calls the flood a baptism and compares it to the baptism we experience in the Christian community. Being under the water during baptism symbolizes the fact that a person is rightly under the judgment of God and only God by His mercy and grace can bring him through that judgment and save him. This salvation, of course, is through faith in Christ, who is our ark.

The Lord's Supper or communion is an act of worship and a ceremonial meal in which we remember and renew our covenant relationship with God (vertical) and with our brothers and sisters in Christ (horizontal). Jesus instituted communion on the day the Passover Lamb was to be sacrificed (Exodus 12:14-20, Matthew 26:17-30) signifying that He would be the true Passover lamb. As the Passover celebration was to remind Israelites of their redemption from Egypt, so communion is to remind us of our redemption from death and forgiveness of sin (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). This covenant meal is our regular renewal of faith and recommitment to the Lord. This is why we should examine our hearts before partaking of communion. We often hear people speak of recommitting their lives to the Lord. We should keep in mind that this is what we do every time we take communion. As Jesus Himself said, "do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). As we partake of communion we remember His sacrifice and love for us.