

## **PARKCHURCH | Doctrinal Statement**

### **(1) The Triune God**

*(Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Isaiah 40:26; Matthew 10:29-30; Colossians 1:16-17; Job 37:6-13; Psalm 147:15-18; Mark 4:39-41; Psalm 33:10-11; Amos 3:6; Lamentations 3:37-38; Proverbs 21:1; Proverbs 16:33)*

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love and in his holiness. He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration. Immortal and eternal, he perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning, sustains and sovereignly rules over all things, and providentially brings about his eternal good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation, to the praise of his glorious grace.

### **(2) Revelation**

*(Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Psalm 12:6; Psalm 119; Matthew 24:35; Matthew 22:29; 1 Corinthians 2:12-16; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21)*

God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in the created order, and has supremely revealed himself to fallen human beings in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word. Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by his Spirit has graciously disclosed himself in human words: we believe that God has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are both record and means of his saving work in the world. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error in the original writings, complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. We confess that both our finitude and our sinfulness preclude the possibility of knowing God's truth exhaustively, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God's revealed truth truly. The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and do the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel.

### **(3) Creation of Humanity**

*(Genesis 1-3; Ephesians 5:15-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7; Ephesians 4:25-32; Colossians 3:18-4:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12)*

We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in his own image. Adam and Eve belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and devoted fellowship with their Maker. Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church, and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. The distinctive leadership role within the church given to qualified men is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments.

### **(4) The Fall**

*(Romans 5:1-19; Romans 1:18-3:20; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:21; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 8:7-8; Romans 8:20)*

We believe that Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original blessedness—for himself and all his progeny—by falling into sin through Satan's temptation. As a result, all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (e.g., physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, spiritually) and condemned finally and irrevocably to death—apart from God's own gracious intervention. This alienation has not been limited to the realm of humanity, but has infected the creation itself, as it too has been subjected to futility. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to himself.

### **(5) The Plan of God**

*(Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:3-14; Isaiah 46:9-10; Romans 9:11-18; John 10:25-29; John 3:16)*

We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation, and to this end foreknew them and chose them. We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace have faith in Jesus, and that he will one day glorify them—all to the praise of his glorious grace. It is, therefore, all of God's gracious and sovereign action to foreknow, predestine, call, justify, and glorify His people by His Spirit, even giving saving faith to those whom he has chosen. In love God commands and implores all people to

repent and believe, having set his saving love on those he has chosen and having ordained Christ to be their Redeemer. And it may truly be said, that all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

## **(6) The Gospel**

*(1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Romans 1:15-17; Ephesians 2:3-6; Mark 1:14-15)*

We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ—God’s very wisdom. Utter folly to the world, even though it is the power of God to those who are being saved, this good news is Christological, centering on the cross and resurrection: the gospel is not proclaimed if Christ is not proclaimed, and the authentic Christ has not been proclaimed if his death and resurrection are not central (the message is “Christ died for our sins . . . [and] was raised”). This good news is biblical (his death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), theological and salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), historical (if the saving events did not happen, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and we are to be pitied more than all others), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual persons are saved).

## **(7) The Redemption of Christ**

*(Isaiah 53; Romans 3:21-26; John 1:1-18; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18; John 1:29; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9; Colossians 2:13-14; Revelation 5)*

We believe that, moved by love for and in obedience to his Father, the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh, fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures. The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. As the mediatorial King, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God’s sovereignty, and is our High Priest and righteous Advocate. We believe that by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in him we might become the righteousness of God: on the cross he canceled sin, propitiated God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. By his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death and defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all his people; by his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. Because God chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, no human being can ever boast before him—Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

## **(8) The Justification of Sinners**

*(Romans 4:3-8; Romans 3:26; Galatians 2:16-17; Titus 3:5-7; Philippians 3:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:1; Psalm 51)*

We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God’s justice on our behalf. By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. Inasmuch as Christ was given by the Father for us, and his obedience and punishment were accepted in place of our own, freely and not for anything in us, this justification is solely of free grace, in order that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. We believe that a zeal for personal and public obedience flows from this free justification.

## **(9) The Power of the Holy Spirit**

*(Galatians 3:5; Galatians 5:16-18; Ephesians 5:18-21; Ephesians 1:11-14 1 Corinthians 12-14; John 16:4-15; Romans 12; Joel 2:28-32; Numbers 11:29)*

We believe that this salvation, attested in all Scripture and secured by Jesus Christ, is applied to his people by the Holy Spirit. Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and, as the “other” Paraclete, is present with and in believers. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith, baptizing them into union with the Lord Jesus, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. By the Spirit’s agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God’s family; they participate in the divine nature and receive his sovereignly distributed gifts. The Holy Spirit is himself the down payment of the promised inheritance, and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

## **(10) The Kingdom of God**

*(Isaiah 58:6-14; Mark 1:15; Matthew 18; Luke 17:20-22; Romans 14:17; 1 Corinthians 4:19-21; Revelation 12:10)*

We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God through union with Christ by faith and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit enter the kingdom of God and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins, the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God, and the prospect of the glory yet to be revealed. Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace. Living as salt in a world that is decaying and

light in a world that is dark, believers should neither withdraw into seclusion from the world, nor become indistinguishable from it: rather, we are to do good to the city, for all the glory and honor of the nations is to be offered up to the living God. Recognizing whose created order this is, and because we are citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God. The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation. The kingdom of God is an invasive power that plunders Satan's dark kingdom and regenerates and renovates through repentance and faith in the lives of individuals rescued from that kingdom. It therefore inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.

### **(11) God's New People**

*(Isaiah 56:1-8; Isaiah 54:1-3; Galatians 3-4; 1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 2:11-22; Ephesians 4:1-16; 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:4-12; 1 John 3:11-24)*

We believe that God's new covenant people have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem; they are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies. This universal church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only Head; thus each "local church" is, in fact, the church, the household of God, the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth. The church is the body of Christ, the apple of his eye, graven on his hands, and he has pledged himself to her forever. The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, and, above all, by her love for God, and by her members' love for one another and for the world. Crucially, this gospel we cherish has both personal and corporate dimensions, neither of which may properly be overlooked. Christ Jesus is our peace: he has not only brought about peace with God, but also peace between alienated peoples. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. The church serves as a sign of God's future new world when its members live for the service of one another and their neighbors, rather than for self-focus. The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world.

### **(12) Baptism and the Eucharist**

*(Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Peter 3:21-22; Colossians 2:11-15; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-23; 1 Corinthians 11:23-27)*

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself. The former is connected with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal. Together they are simultaneously God's pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of his return and of the consummation of all things.

### **(13) The Restoration of All Things**

*(Isaiah 65:17-25; Isaiah 66:18-24; Revelation 21; Romans 8:18-25; Matthew 10:28; 2 Peter 2:4-22; Hebrews 10:26-31)*

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all and his people will be enthralled by the immediacy of his ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of his glorious grace.

### **Apostle's Creed (AD 180 [390])**

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 again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. AMEN.

### **Nicene Creed (AD 325, rev. 381)**

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is,  
seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven;  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.  
With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. AMEN

From: *What Could Be More Practical and Loving Than Studying the Bible?* by Collin Hansen, Editorial Director for The Gospel Coalition

We divide our energies and activities between doing and thinking. Some of us would rather think, and some of us would rather do. Some of us would rather study the Bible in our small groups and churches. Some of us would rather love one another, enjoy fellowship, and reach out to neighbors with the good news of Jesus Christ. Since we don't always understand how God has gifted others in different ways, we tend to judge one another for inclining in one direction or another. We blame those fat and lazy Christians for sitting around debating theology while the world falls apart. Or we blame those shallow and weak Christians for ignoring theology while the world falls apart.

Why do we seek to separate what God holds together? Without leading to action, knowledge merely puffs up. But if not based on knowledge, action dries up. That's why the most practical thing you can do to love God and your neighbor is study the Bible. Only there will you learn who God is, what he's done for us, and what he asks us to do in this world.

*Thouology* by Joseph Rhea, College Park Church, Indianapolis

We who passionately love doctrine know theology gets a bad rap from many in the church. It's seen as antithetical to piety, or at least distracting from the church's mission of making disciples in the world. We're accused of arrogance, arguing over trifles, and being personally cold to God and to others.

Unfortunately, sometimes we fit the description. I'm a divinity school student, and I've seen plenty of contentiousness, snobbery, and cold-heartedness among those studying to become pastors and seminary professors. I've seen plenty of it in myself as well.

Why? It can't be that theology inherently makes us this way. Theology is good. God is an infinitely beautiful, infinitely worthy subject of study. Theology helps us understand and articulate truth about God. It also helps us discern and counter erroneous teaching. Spiritual life without robust theology slips towards gullible pietism and becomes susceptible to heresy.

We don't need less theology. But we might be tempted to live under the illusion that theology alone is sufficient. Our faith is foremost a relationship with the living God. We need to complement our theology, our knowledge *about* God, with what may be called *Thouology*: direct, relational knowledge *of* God. "Thou" is necessarily relational; I cannot speak *about* "Thou" – only directly *to* my subject. "Thou" reminds me that God is a being, not just a subject of study.

The difference between theology and Thouology is the difference between reading a book on marriage and going on a date with my wife. My understanding of marriage certainly needs improvement. But experiential knowledge of my wife can only come from face-to-face time together. I'll learn more about her during this time, but I'll also experience her in a way that makes me love and cherish her more. In the same way, we must undertake knowing God on a personal level, interacting with him to truly learn him.

The Psalms show us the richness of a life steeped in Thouology:

- *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore* (Ps. 16:11).
- *One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple* (Ps. 27:4).
- *So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you* (Ps. 63:2-3).

The most beautiful descriptions of our hope for the future are also expressed in terms of direct personal relationship:

- *The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing* (Zeph. 3:17).
- *Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God* (Rev. 21:3).
- *No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads* (Rev. 22:3-4).

Even the final controlling metaphor for Christ's relationship with the church – bridegroom and bride – is a "Thou" relationship. If we want to prepare ourselves for eternity, we'll begin now by cultivating Thouology. Here are five suggestions for how we can do so.

### **1. Set yourself in the gospel.**

Guides on spirituality can be man-centered, promising that the right technique or habit will guarantee a satisfying relationship with God. But we as Christians already have access to the presence of God – entirely because of the work of Jesus imputed to us by God's grace. There is no room for pride before a God called a "consuming fire." But that same God has adopted us as his children. Preach yourself the gospel daily, reminding yourself that God has out of love already secured your relationship with him. The humility and gratitude this reflection engenders will prepare you to relate to God as "Thou."

### **2. Meditate on the whole counsel of God.**

Meditation is deliberate digestion for the purpose of spiritual nourishment. God's Word teaches us, challenges us, equips

us – essentially, it feeds us. Digesting God's Word leads us to know the God who inspired and authored it.

Theology buffs usually love the Pauline epistles. Their tight logic leads to deep study. The other genres hold truth in equal measures but different manners: messy humanity-steeped narrative, fiery-hearted prophecy, contemplative wisdom literature, and otherworldly apocalyptic all proclaim truth, all contain God equally. For us to know God fully, we must take into ourselves all the ways God has spoken himself to us.

### **3. Treat God as a person when you pray.**

Even when we pray, we sometimes feel we're merely throwing words into the air. We confess sin, express our emotions, bring needs before God, and even plead for the salvation of others without really engaging God as if he is a real being. There's no one sure technique to relating to God in "Thouological" prayer. Either we pay attention to him or we don't. Look at him, focusing on who he is. Tell yourself he's there, because he is. Interact with him, knowing that he's really listening and may even be speaking back to you.

### **4. Immediately digest all theological learning into praise.**

Paul concludes his renowned theological treatise in the first 11 chapters of Romans with an eruption of praise. God's sovereignty, transcendence, and mystery provoke him to worship. The student of Thouology will look up from reading a sound work of theology and praise the God it reveals. If we take what we read and speak or sing it back to God in worship, we will find ourselves more aware of God as "Thou" and with a richer understanding of the God we worship.

### **5. Discuss Thouology with others – especially those with a different theology than yours.**

Talk of theology often settles to differences: feeling out the other's viewpoint, defending our own, perhaps gently questioning theirs. But Thouology – discussing God as he is revealing himself and relating to us – can draw us together. Thouological conversations set our hearts firmly on God. They remind us that we will all someday stand as one multitude, crying out to one God, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

From: "Chapter One: Everyone is a Theologian" in *Who Needs Theology? An Invitation to the Study of God* by Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson (pgs 12-14).

An influential Christian Bible teacher and radio preacher once quipped, "Happy is the Christian who has never met a theologian!" What could he have meant? Misconceptions, stereotypes, myths and false impressions about theology abound – even within Christian communities. In fact, there seems to be a growing bias against theology and theologians in some Christian circles.

Every professional theologian knows and is frustrated by this prejudice against theology. One Sunday morning I...arrived to speak to an adult Sunday-school class on the topic "Twentieth-Century Theology" and was handed an anonymous letter addressed to me but sent to the church's address. The writer had seen an advertisement for the series of talks on the church page of the city's newspaper and had written out two pages of very intense objections to theology. Repeatedly the writer pitted prayer against theology and implied that theology is nothing but a poor substitute for a personal relationship with God!

The striking irony of the Bible teacher's aphorism and the letter-writer's diatribe is this: they are both theological in their own ways! *Theology* is any reflection on the ultimate questions of life that point toward God. Hence both the Bible teacher and the anonymous letter writer are theologians. We'll call them "anonymous theologians," because like most other people, they don't realize that's what they are.

No one who reflects on life's ultimate questions can escape theology. And anyone who reflects on life's ultimate questions – including questions about God and our relationship with God – is a theologian.

A young woman sat in my office sharing her dreams and aspirations. After taking a few courses in biblical and theological studies she had become intensely interested in exploring questions about God, salvation and Christian living. At a crucial turning point in the conversation she looked at me with some fear in her eyes and said, "You know, I think I'd like to be a theologian – if I can cut it!"

I detected that behind the fear was a misconception of *theologian* as an awesome creature who thinks deep and disturbing thoughts that very few people can understand. My response was meant to alleviate that anxiety. I said to her, "You already are a theologian!" I proceeded to explain that she might be called to make this aspect of her Christian existence – reflecting on life's ultimate questions, including God – a career, but whether she did or not was irrelevant to her being a theologian.

A misconception is growing among Christians that a great gulf exists between "ordinary Christians" and "theologians." For some that perceived gap creates fear; for others it creates suspicion and resentment. We want to close the gap by showing that everyone – especially every Christian – is a theologian and that every professional theologian is simply a Christian whose vocation is to do what all Christians do in some way: think and teach about God.

...*Theology* comes from a combination of two Greek words: *theos*, which means "God," and *logos*, which means "reason," "wisdom" or "thought." Literally, then *theology* means "God-thought" or "reasoning about God." Some dictionaries define it more formally and specifically as "the science of God," but *science* in this sense simply means "reflection on something." So at its most basic level *theology* is any thinking, reflecting or contemplating on the reality of God – even on the question of God.

The question of God is implied in all of life's ultimate questions. Whenever and wherever a person reflects on the great "Why?" questions of life, at least indirect reflection on or toward God is involved. God is the horizon of all human wondering. This means that in amazing ways even popular authors, composers, playwrights, poets and creators of pop culture function as theologians.