



# Essentials

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## Facilitator Notes

### **What are essentials?**

The essential Christian doctrines are the things we must agree on if we are truly Christians. Essentials are the main and plain things of the Bible that you must believe if you are truly saved. If there is a choice between believing an essential or deny it in order to avoid being burned at the stake, you should be willing to die rather than recant.

We're going to look at eight essentials in the way we regard God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, human beings, salvation, eternal security, and eternity. These are eight doctrines that if you're going to become involved in Creekside Christian Fellowship, you need to be in harmony with. The essentials are things we need to be united in thought and purpose on. In the essentials we have unity.

### **What does Ephesians 4:4-6 have to say about essentials?**

Ephesians 4:4-6 - *<sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—<sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.* (NIV)

It says that there is one true understanding about the church, Holy Spirit, our Lord Jesus Christ, our faith in Christ, the baptism of Christians by the Holy Spirit, and in Father God. If there is more than one understanding of these doctrines, then they can not be essential, but these are essential... you are not really a Christian if you do not hold to the clear biblical teaching on these subjects.

### **What are non-essentials?**

There are a lot of things in the Christian life that are not essentials. They're kind of open to however you interpret them and may differ from the interpretation of others. We consider those doctrines that are subject to interpretation as non-essentials and in those there's liberty. In those we can have diversity.

### **What does Romans 14 have to say about non-essentials?**

Romans 14:1, 4, 12, 22 - *<sup>1</sup>Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters... <sup>4</sup>Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand... <sup>12</sup>So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God... <sup>22</sup>So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves.* (NIV)

Underline "disputable matters." If there is a teaching that is not crystal clear in Scripture, people are left to their own conscience before God as to how they should regard it. In non-essentials we have liberty.

### **Who are those that are weak in the faith that is addressed in Romans 14?**

From one person's perspective, a second person is weak in the faith if they disagree with the first person over a disputable matter. So we may regard anyone who disagrees with us in a disputable matter as weak in the faith.

### **Why shouldn't we judge those who are weak in the faith?**

We should not judge these matters because we do not have the complete picture as God does. All people do not have the same constraints in their life so we should not judge another assuming they have the same constraints that we do.

### **What are some examples of non-essentials?**

- Some Christians are charismatic, who practice speaking in tongues and believe that is an essential part of their walk with God. There are people who think that's appalling and they don't want anybody getting near them talking about speaking in tongues. Because we don't believe it's essential for salvation, it is one of the gifts of the Spirit that God gives to whomever He will, we say you have liberty. If God has given you that gift, that's great, as long as you don't try to tell everybody else they have to have the same gift.
- What a person believes about the order of events associated with the return of Jesus Christ in a non-essential. The fact that Christ is an essential that all Christians should agree on but the order of events associated with His return has no bearing on one's salvation.
- What a person believes about the age of the earth is a non-essential. Some Christians believe that the earth was created in 6 literal, 24-hour days. Other Christians believe that the days referred to in Genesis are epochs of time; that it took a long time for God to bring about the creation. Both perspectives are within the pale of orthodoxy because neither perspective has any bearing on one's salvation.
- Smoking is a non-essential... someone asked Rick Warren one time, "Will smoking send you to hell?" Rick replied, "No, it'll just make you smell like you've been there." Smoking is a disputable matter.

- Drinking... There are many churches where the salvation of anyone who drank was very suspect, no good Christian ever drank at all. But nowhere do the Scriptures teach that. Indeed, Scripture does teach that drinking in moderation is all right. The operative words are "in moderation". Anything that causes you to give over the control of your life to something besides God is very dangerous. And Scripture also teaches that it is a sin to cause your brother to stumble (1 Corinthians 8:12-13) so don't expect to see alcohol at any Creekside activity.

**So in essential things we have unity and in non-essentials we have liberty. Sometimes people disagree about whether a non-essential should be considered an essential or not... How does 1 Corinthians 13:2 tell us we should handle these situations?**

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

In all things we should have love. You can be theologically correct, and you can have all the things worked out in Revelation about who the beast is and who the red horse is and what the bowl is and what the trumpet is and when this happens. And you can have Daniel figured out to the nth degree, but if you are not a loving person, who cares? It doesn't matter!

- The bottom line is we have unity in the things that matter; that we allow each other liberty in the things that aren't as important, and above everything else we relate to each other in a loving way.

So let's take a brief look at the eight essentials...

## 1. What do the following verses tell us about God?

Genesis 1:1 - *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* (NIV)

God is the Creator of the universe. Being the Creator of everything has certain connotations associated with it... since God created everything, He rules over everything. We also see from this that God existed from before the beginning of the universe. This is because God had no beginning, He has always existed.

Matthew 28:19 - *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...* (NIV)

God exists in three personalities: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal with the same essential nature and are one God, a complex unity. The Bible clearly teaches that Godhead exists in three persons and is not three separate gods as some claim.

Isaiah 46:9-10 - *Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.* (NIV)

God is outside the confines of time and so He is the only one who can tell us what is going to happen in the future. This concept is beyond our mortal minds to comprehend, but we are able to apprehend it... prophecies that come true authenticate the Word of God.

## 2. What do the following verses tell us about Jesus Christ?

Matthew 1:22-23 - *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us."* (NIV)

Jesus Christ is the Son of God which means He is the same as God, He is co-equal with the Father. The Son of God entered the world miraculously by being born of a virgin. Those who deny the virgin birth of Jesus also deny that He is God manifest in the flesh.

Hebrews 4:14-15 - *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.* (NIV)

Jesus is our Great High Priest meaning that He represents God to mankind and visa versa. In His humanity, He experienced our limitations but lived a sinless human life.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 - *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.* (NIV)

As our High Priest, Christ offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death.

Acts 1:9-11 - <sup>9</sup>After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

<sup>10</sup>They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. <sup>11</sup>"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."  
(NIV)

Jesus ascended to Heaven's glory and will return again someday to earth to reign as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords...

1 Timothy 6:14-15 - *to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords.* (NIV)

### 3. What do the following verses tell us about The Holy Spirit?

2 Corinthians 3:17 - *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.* (NIV)

The Holy Spirit is Lord, this makes Him co-equal with the Father and the Son of God.

John 16:7-13 - <sup>7</sup>But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup>When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment... <sup>13</sup>But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. (NIV)

The Holy Spirit is present in the world to make men aware of their need for Jesus Christ. Once we are believers, the Holy Spirit helps us to understand the truth about the spiritual realm which we can not see and what will happen in the future.

John 14:16-17 - *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.* (NIV)

The Holy Spirit lives in every Christian from the moment they have been born from above by God.

1 Corinthians 3:16 - *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?* (NIV)

Note that the Scripture says that the Holy Spirit will never leave believers. This promise was only given to the church for this age of grace. Before Pentecost, believers could have the presence of the Holy Spirit but His presence was not

guaranteed during this mortal life. This is why King David prayed...

Psalms 51:11 - *Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.* (NIV)

Ephesians 1:13 - *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.* (NIV)

The Holy Spirit indwells people the instant they begin trusting in Christ. His presence is sealed in us, the assurance of our salvation.

Romans 8:16 - *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.* (NIV)

Acts 1:8 - *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* (NIV)

The Holy Spirit provides the Christian with power for living the life God has in His plan for us. The Holy Spirit enables us to overcome temptation, do what is right and fulfill God's purpose for us in our lives.

Galatians 5:25 - *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.* (NIV)

As Christians, we seek to live under the control of the Holy Spirit daily. Unbelievers do not have a choice, they must follow the dictates of their un-regenerated spirit. But Believers may choose to avoid the consequences of sin by acting in obedience to the Holy Spirit, we should seek to be filled with His presence...

Ephesians 5:18 - *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.* (NIV)

### 4. What do the following verses tell us about the Bible?

2 Timothy 3:16 - *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.* (NIV)

The Bible is God's Word to us. It was written by human authors, under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit...

2 Peter 1:20-21 - *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.* (NIV)

The Bible is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because it is inspired by God, it is the truth without any mixture of error. If God truly is Almighty, He is powerful enough to accurately bring us His Word and preserve it even using His error-prone creation.

Psalm 119:160 - *All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.* (NIV)

The Bible is not the record of man's search for God as some regard it, it is truth revealed from God that people discover. Real truth is universal, it will have value forever...

Matthew 24:35 - *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.* (NIV)

Isaiah 55:11 – *“so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”* (NIV)

God's Word is powerful and it changes lives. God's Word serves the purpose for which it intended in a person's life, He uses it to convict people of their need to repent of their sin. If a person does not respond to God's Word when they are presented with it, there will be consequences that result.

### **What authority should the Bible have in our lives?**

Since the Bible is the Word of God, we should do our very best to make sure that the Bible is our final authority. God can speak to us in many ways but He is not going to contradict Himself. So the Bible should be the final authority on what God says to us. If we believe we are getting a message from God through events that are beyond coincidence, or our thoughts or through some other source; if it is truly from God, it will be consistent with what the Bible says.

## **5. What do the following verses tell us about us Human Beings?**

Genesis 1:27 - *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* (NIV)

People are made in the image of God. Human beings are the only part of God's creation that has this distinction. This makes people the supreme object of God's creation...

Psalm 8:3-6 - <sup>3</sup>*When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, <sup>4</sup>what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? <sup>5</sup>You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. <sup>6</sup>You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet:* (NIV)

God created us to have a personal relationship with Him. The physical universe was created for our benefit and to provide us with a context whereby we can know Him in a way that not even the angels may experience.

## **How are people made in the image of God?**

As God is a tri-unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; we are body soul and spirit...

1 Thessalonians 5:23 - *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (NIV)

We are made to be like God in character... for example, we have an intellect with the ability to reason, we have a will to freely make choices, and we experience emotions.

## **Why do you think God created us in His image?**

God created us in His image so that we may have a personal relationship with Him.

John 17:3 - *Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.* (NIV)

God could have created us as automatons that were programmed to do only what He dictated but what kind of relationship can you have with a computer? God desired the depth or relationship with us that is only possible when we can freely choose to accept or reject Him. Life is a test to see who truly wants to be with their Creator for eternity.

Isaiah 53:6 - *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* (NIV)

Although every person has tremendous potential for good, all of us are marred by an attitude of disobedience toward God called "sin". Paul put it this way...

Romans 3:23 - *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (NIV)

Isaiah 59:1-2 - *Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.* (NIV)

The human propensity to act independent of God separates people from God and causes many problems in life. Thank God He has a Way for us to avoid the consequences of sin through Jesus Christ.

## **6. What do the following verses tell us about salvation?**

Romans 6:23 - *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (NIV)

While the payment or result of sin is spiritual death, God grants eternal life to those who recognize Jesus Christ as their Lord. Salvation is God's free gift to us but we must accept it. For a gift to be realized as a gift, it is necessary for the recipient to respond to the giver by accepting the gift.

John 1:12 - *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God:* (NIV)

Ephesians 2:8-9 - *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.* (NIV)

We can never make up for our sin by self-improvement or good works. It is not possible to earn God's favor. When we turn from our self-ruled life and turn to Jesus in faith we are saved. Eternal life begins the moment one receives Jesus Christ into his life by faith.

#### **What is the grace referred to in Ephesians 2:8?**

If we are to be saved, we are totally dependant on God's unmerited favor to intervene on our behalf. Notice that even the faith we require to trust in God for our salvation is a gift from Him.

John 14:6 - *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* (NIV)

Only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness can anyone be saved from sin's penalty. There is no other way to be saved from the penalty of sin.

#### **7. What do the following verses tell us about Eternal Security?**

John 10:27-28 - *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.* (NIV)

Because God gives us eternal life through Jesus Christ, the true believer is secure in that salvation for eternity. If you have been genuinely saved, you cannot "lose" it. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian. It is the grace and keeping power of God that gives us this security.

2 Timothy 1:12 - *I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.* (NIV)

1 Peter 1:3-5 - *<sup>3</sup>Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup>and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup>who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.* (NIV)

If God has opened our hearts to the truth about Christ, and if we have made Him our Lord by responding to God's revelation of Himself, we have an incorruptible inheritance reserved for us. This is a promise of God that can not be revoked because His character is at stake.

Hebrews 10:14 - *Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.* (NIV)

Hebrews 7:25 - *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.* (NIV)

If it is God who saved us (and it was), He has the power to keep us saved.

#### **How is it a salvation-by-works heresy to believe that you can lose your salvation?**

Salvation-by-works says that a person can earn favor with God through their good works... it follows that if your actions can gain your salvation, then through your actions you can also lose your salvation. So thank God that we are saved by His grace and not through our own having to earn His favor!

#### **8. What do the following verses tell us about eternity?**

John 5:28-29 - *"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."* (NIV)

People were created to exist forever. We will either exist eternally separated from God by sin, or eternally with God through forgiveness and salvation.

John 3:16 - *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* (NIV)

Romans 6:23 - *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (NIV)

To be eternally separated from God is spiritual death, also known as Hell. To be eternally in union with Him is eternal life. Heaven and Hell are real places of eternal existence.

Revelation 20:13-14 - *The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.* (NIV)

The lake of fire is Hell and those go there will live in torment forever...

Revelation 20:10 - *And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.* (NIV)