

## Statement of faith

What's important & what's not that important? As you can see below, there are three circles of values:

a small one that is vital: the essentials

a larger one that is negotiable: the traditions

a vast one, the opinions, that is worth chatting about over a cup of coffee!

The first circle is absolutely vital. I call this essentials. The essentials form a very small circle since there are just a few key things that we must believe to be authentic Christians. Without agreement on these matters, we actually aren't even believers aligned with the Church and its' past two thousand years of history.

Beyond the essentials are traditions. Traditions, or denominational "distinctives", form a significantly larger circle and are what makes the body of Christ rich and interesting. These traditions make the church a diverse body instead of a single-cell ameba.

Finally, the largest circle by far is formed by our opinions. The longer we spend in the Christian life, the more we accumulate opinions.

Fighting between brothers and sisters in the Church is perpetuated when we forget the order of importance with the three circles of values. It happens when we make our 'traditions' into 'essentials' instead of allowing them to be negotiable. Or worse yet, it happens when we consider our 'opinions' about a topic to be an 'essential'. These dyslexic episodes must grieve the heart of God. When He has vital work for the church to be about, we have sometimes been found arguing about absolutely non-vital matters. (concepts taken from 'The Perfectly Imperfect Church' by Steve Sjogren)

### MY ESSENTIALS:

I BELIEVE that there is one God, eternally existing in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

I BELIEVE that the Bible is God's written revelation to man, and that it is verbally inspired, authoritative, and without error in the original manuscripts.

I BELIEVE in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles, death on the cross to provide for our redemption, bodily resurrection and ascension into heaven, present day ministry of intercession for us, and His second coming to earth in power and glory.

I BELIEVE in the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit, that He performs the miracle of new birth in unbelievers, indwells believers, and equips and empowers the church to do all the works of the Kingdom of God.

I BELIEVE that all men & women are created in the image of God, the Father, but because of sin, are alienated from God. Only through faith, trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, which was made possible by His atoning death on the cross and His resurrection, can true forgiveness of sin be found and that alienation from God be removed.

### MY TRADITIONS:

See under the section "my vision, mission and core values"

### MY OPINIONS:

Invite me out for a cup of coffee and we'll have a bit of fun discussing our "pet opinions"!

## About Unity in the body of Christ

There are three kinds of Churches with whom I do not share the same view of Christian Unity:

The first one is made of those Churches who spend a great deal of their life criticizing and stealing other believers for their "better" denomination. Fundamentally, for me they are "religious parasites" because instead of focusing most of their efforts to convert unbelievers, which we have plenty all over the world, and presenting a Christianity which is attractive in itself, they live on the efforts of other churches. The very people they have "converted" were already believers before, and all they did is to recycle or update them to their own system. All cults and some denomination fall in this category: they grow and thrive mostly in showing what is wrong with others.

Now, do not read me wrong: I have absolutely no problem that a Christian believes that his doctrine and church is the very best in the entire wide world, and that his enthusiastic convictions attract many other believers to his group. This is a fact of life: Many churches are born and exist only because others are slowly dying, and this process cannot always be avoided.

My problem is when such a church "grows" while refusing to seek peace and unity with other churches. If we have something we really believe is from God, our attitude should be to humbly share it with others in order for them to be blessed. We are to bless and build others, and not ourselves. If other churches are open to our ideas, we should be willing to share and teach them so they can incorporate them in their own groups, for their own sake. If they are NOT open, and if we have tried everything in our conscience to be loving, humble and at peace with them, we must bless them as such, and God will do the rest for his own servants. I believe that it is possible to disagree on some doctrinal issues with other Christians and yet still be in good term with them. If we really had had this humble and patient attitude with other believers, we not only would have fewer factions in the body of Christ, but we would learn more from each other.

The second group is made of believers who do not really want to be part of any church, and who do not offer an attractive alternative which is positive, inspiring and life changing. Usually these are the kind of independent "solo Christians" who have been hurt by church divisions of abusive leaders, and no one can teach them anything about nothing. They sometimes come across as having all the spiritual answers, as they will easily show you what is wrong with today's Church, and with this church and that ministry. They are the kind of people who will hop from conference to another seeking the higher and better spirituality that "traditional Churches" cannot offer. Unfortunately, there seems to be a growing amount of this kind in today's society, and tragically such people do not know how to build strong communities if they decide to get together, because they never learnt in the first place to effectively handle conflicts and build relationships of mutual tolerance! Our attitude with such believers is to humbly convince and show by our own examples that deep and life changing friendships with a few other Christians is God's ultimate plan, and that solo Christianity is not.

Finally, I am not convinced that churches or ministries who pose themselves as "heresy hunters" have any biblical legitimacy. I believe that the Bible is calling us to protect our sheep from OUTSIDE influences that we perceive as heretic, but I am not convinced that we have the biblical right or mandate to go around telling other churches what is heretic. I am saying by this that we should not diligently study the Bible and test every doctrinal position for ourselves? Certainly not, but Peter encouraged us to DEFEND and explain our views to outsiders who ask, and not to attack others! There is a big difference between defending ourselves and attacking others. In other words, our whole attitude should be one of DEFENSE against outside "heresies", because we have a personal responsibility for our own very people, but at the same time we should seek the truth in asking outsiders about their doctrinal convictions. Think of it this way: we want to protect our own children against what we perceive bad influences, but eventually we want them to think for themselves, which is why they have to learn to ask questions. To not protect them is bad, but to overprotect them is wrong as well. If we had more this attitude in our own churches, we probably would have less doctrinal ignorance and fewer divisions in the Body of Christ!