



CSBC Theological Triage

A Balanced Approach of Grace & Truth for Distinguishing Between Essential & Non-Essential Beliefs at Cedar Street Baptist Church

I) First Tier: Essential Christian Beliefs

First Tier Qualifications: *Beliefs that are essential for all Christians, in all places, at all times*

First Tier Beliefs:

a) The Trinity (*2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2*)

-The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together are one triune God, eternally present as three unique persons. Each person of the Trinity is fully divine and equally worthy of our total worship, devotion, and love.

b) The Nature of Christ (*John 1:1-18; Colossians 1:15-20*)

-Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, with these two complete natures present in one person unmixed.

c) The Nature of Man (*Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 3:10-20*)

-Humans are created moral beings made in the image of God who are worthy of our love and respect. However, all humans also have a fallen, sinful nature and will face eternal judgement by our transcendent, holy Creator.

d) The Gospel Message (*Genesis 3:15; John 3:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11*)

-The gospel is the good news that through the virgin birth, perfect life, sacrificial death, supernatural resurrection, heavenly ascension and eventual second coming of Jesus Christ, God has offered the free gift of eternal salvation to mankind. This gospel message must be proclaimed to every tribe, tongue, and nation to make Christian disciples before Christ returns to consummate His eternal kingdom.

e) Justification by Grace Through Faith Alone (*Romans 3:23-25; Ephesians 2:8-9*)

-Mankind can only be justified before God and saved from eternal judgement by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. This grace cannot be earned but only received as an unmerited gift.

f) Authority of the Holy Scriptures (*2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21*)

-The Bible is the divinely inspired Word of the Living God as His special revelation to mankind. The Scriptures are the foundation of all truth and the final authority for all areas of faith and practice for Christians.

II) Second Tier: Essential Cedar Street Baptist Church Beliefs

Second Tier Qualifications: *Beliefs that are essential for healthy church life and order*

Second Tier Beliefs:

a) Form of Church Government (*1 Peter 2:4-9*)

-CSBC practices congregational church government because we believe in the priesthood of all believers. It is our belief that no institution outside of our local fellowship should determine how we are to worship, serve, or commune with our Lord and each other.

b) Expectations of Church Membership (*Ephesians 2:18-22*)

-CSBC believes all Christians should practice their faith through the support and accountability of local church membership. Therefore, we have established a church covenant that clearly defines our mission, vision, focus, commitment, and expectations for all individuals who seek to become members of our church family.

c) Practice of Church Ordinances (*Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29*)

-CSBC believes that the only two ordinances that Scripture has commended to the local church are Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These both qualify as ordinances because they were instituted by Christ, are a demonstration of the gospel, and are intended for all church members to participate in.

d) Gender Roles in Church Leadership (*1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6*)

-CSBC welcomes women to teach and serve in many key areas of church leadership, but we believe that the office of elder/pastor is a unique role that Scripture reserves for men alone.

e) Eternal Security in Church Teaching (*John 10:27-29; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Philippians 1:6*)

-CSBC believes in the eternal security of every true believer in Jesus Christ, and we maintain a consistent approach to teaching this doctrine because of its implications on several first-tier beliefs.

III) Third Tier: Non-Essential Personal Beliefs

Third Tier Qualifications: *Beliefs that are non-essential personal convictions open to discussion but not debate*

Third Tier Beliefs:

a) Interpretation of Difficult Bible Texts (*1 Corinthians 13:12*)

-There are many difficult passages in Scripture that even faithful, conservative, biblical scholars continue to disagree on. Whenever these passages do not concern first or second-tier beliefs, further discussion may be encouraged as long as grace is offered in all areas of disagreement.

b) View of End Times (*Revelation 22:20*)

-All faithful believers acknowledge that Jesus Christ is coming back to consummate all things and establish His heavenly kingdom on earth, but exactly how and when He will do this is still a great mystery.

c) Issues of Gospel Freedom (*1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23*)

-Issues where we can differ in how we choose to live our lives under the freedom of God's grace may include the use of alcohol, tattoos, worship music, attire, political affiliation, Bible translations, celebrating national holidays, ethics of war, children's education, percentage of financial giving to the church, etc.

d) Availability/Use of Miraculous Gifts (*1 Corinthians 12:4-7*)

-The Bible teaches that miraculous gifts of the Spirit were bestowed upon the Apostles as the early church was first being established. These gifts included areas of healing, prophecy, and speaking in tongues. There is great disagreement among faithful believers today over whether these gifts ceased to exist after the departure of the Apostles, or if they are still available for Christians today.

e) Relationship of Sovereignty vs. Free Will (*Psalm 3:8; Jonah 2:9; Revelation 7:10*)

-Understanding how the sovereignty of God and the genuine choices of mankind work together to bring a person to saving faith in Christ is one of the greatest mysteries of Christianity where faithful believers differ.

f) Personal Experiences with God (*2 Corinthians 5:17*)

-Every Christian is invited into a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and we all have memorable experiences that are unique to that relationship. These experiences should be celebrated and not debated unless any aspect of the experience is a direct contradiction to what has already been revealed in Scripture about God's eternal truth.

**As St. Augustine says,
"In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity."**