

ESSENTIAL CHRISTIANITY

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“The great Christian revolutions come not by the discovery of something that was not known before. They happen when someone takes radically something that was always there.”

H. Richard Niebuhr

Introduction

The *MORE* you've been longing for...

Dear friend,

If you're reading this, you've likely already been captivated by Jesus, or perhaps find yourself strangely drawn to him. You've perhaps already been swept up by the promise of the Kingdom of God or are curious as to what the Christian vision actually is at its fullest.

If you're reading this, you may find yourself weary, or longing, or both. Surrounded by what may feel at times to be an anemic Christianity that presents itself as faithful but doesn't always look particularly Christ-like, you may be longing for an expression of Christian life that sets the table for the bountiful feast you know that it is. You may have been a Christian for a long time and find yourself wondering if what you've experienced to this point is all that there is. Whether it be in the corporate witness of the Church or your own personal life with God, you may be quietly wondering, "Is there more?"

Yes, there is! In fact, what follows is **"the More you've been longing for."** What follows is **"Essential Christianity"**— the main points and many integrations, implications, and invitations of the Good News of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God. The Bible says, "In Christ all things hold together" (Col. 1.17), and what follows is an attempt to unpack this profound truth, bringing it all the way into the concrete circumstances of our lives and cultural moment. Along the way, the icons (explained in the back of the book) will reflect Coracle programs and Fellowship retreats that touch on these themes.

This reflection began in late December 2020 as an attempt to answer the question, "What is the essence of Coracle?" That was the wrong question. The right question is "What is the essence of Christianity?" and then "How can we incarnate *that*?" in each of our lives and together. Pursuing these answers leads us into the thrilling, sometimes harrowing life-to-the-full with Jesus, intended by God for the good of the world and our good as well. Let's go on that journey together.

So then, what is **Essential Christianity**? It is this....

God:

1

God exists.^{1A} God is Love and loves.^{2B} God is a community^{3C} of Love. God is eternal and created all things,^{4D} including the Earth,^E and then rested.^{5F} God is beautiful,^{6G} God is holy^{7H} and entirely Other, and God's ultimate self transcends the limitations of human language.^{8I}

¹ There is a God, and God's reality calls for human response.

² Everything is ordered by and oriented around Love. Love is the ground and goal of human existence, because God is love. When we fail to love and keep learning to love, we fail spiritually, and our relationship to God is at best questionable. God's love is best understood as other-centered, self-giving, and sacrificial, most clearly displayed at the cross of Christ. God's love is cruciform.

³ God is a Trinity. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. **Implication:** God's nature is the foundation for family life, community life, and the ways we treat and relate to each other.

⁴ By creating, God worked six of the seven "days" of creation. **Implication:** This forms the basis of human labor being essential to our being image bearers, the dignity of work, and concepts of vocation.

⁵ **Implication:** This forms the basis for rhythms of work, rest, restoration, and enjoyment of God's many gifts. That God rested on the seventh day is the basis for the spiritual practice of keeping Sabbath.

⁶ **Implication:** This introduces the basis for both enjoying beauty and creating beauty.

⁷ **Implication:** This introduces the basis for our pursuit of holiness.

⁸ **Implication:** God's ineffability is the deepest foundation of the spiritual practice of silence.

Key Scripture References: ^A Hebrews 11:6, ^B 1 Jn 4:8, ^C Genesis 1:26, Lk 3:21-22, ^D Genesis 1, Jn 1:1-3, ^E Genesis 1:9-10, ^F Genesis 2:2, ^G Psalm 27:4, ^H Isaiah 6:3, ^I Psalm 89:6, Isaiah 55:9



Revelation:

2

Motivated by love,^A God desires to be known and so has revealed himself⁹ through all creation,^{10B} human beings,^{11C} and Jesus Christ, the Logos.^{12D} God continues to reveal himself in these and other ways,¹³ and now particularly through those in whom God's Spirit lives¹⁴ and the Church.^{15E} God has and continues to reveal himself through the written Scripture which is inspired, authoritative, and alive.^{16F} By all this God is made more known, that is, God is glorified.^G

⁹ While God transcends the categories of human gender, we stick with the pronoun most used in the Bible to refer to God.

¹⁰ There are deep things about God that can be known simply by interacting with and contemplating natural creation. God continues to reveal himself through creation.

¹¹ Having been made in the image of God, every human being has the capacity to reveal something of God to us, including those who are different from us and perhaps particularly those to whom we are not naturally drawn.

¹² Jesus Christ is different and of a completely different sort than all other varieties of divine revelation. As the definitive revelation of God, Jesus is radically unique.

¹³ There are valuable insights about God to be gained from non-Christian or pre-Christian sources, every aspect of creation, the moments of our days, and any personal circumstance.

¹⁴ **Implication:** The presence of the Spirit in other followers of Jesus is a foundation for how we interact with others in the family of faith, regardless of difference. We approach all true followers of Jesus truly as brothers and sisters in one family, our family.

¹⁵ **Implication:** Connection to a local expression of the Church matters—serving it, building it up, and loving it. Sometimes this love manifests itself by critiquing the Church when it is not revealing God's character, calling it to live into its vocation to reveal God more clearly.

¹⁶ As a primary place of God's revelation, engaging the Bible matters deeply. **Implication:** This introduces the basis for study and engagement with the Christian Scripture. Those who are not able to do so still can have a meaningful relationship with God.

Key Scripture References: ^A Jn 3:16, ^B Rom 1:20, ^C Gen 1:27, ^D Jn 1:1-2, Col 1:15, ^E 1 Cor 2:9-10, Col 1:24-27, ^F 2 Tim 3:15-16, Heb 4:12, ^G Hab 2:14, Jn 17:1-5

Spiritual Practices



Community



Creation Care



Resources



Coracle Fellowship Program: Retreats #2, 3, 9

3

Relationship and Union:

God is conscious and personal—God talks and listens to us and we can talk and listen to God.^{17A} God loves us, each and every human being, and is attentive to all aspects of every human life.^{18B} God desires intimacy with us^C even so far that we would share God's nature through union with him, becoming more like God,^D thus manifesting God's presence and work in the world, thereby revealing God and his glory.¹⁹ This invitation to Theosis^{20E} is for each and every person,^{21F} and each individual person can experience it uniquely according to how God has uniquely made them.²²

¹⁷ **Implication:** That God is a sentient, conscious, thoughtful being and can communicate is the basis for prayer in all its forms, including petitionary prayer and contemplative/listening prayer. There are many legitimate forms of prayer across the spectrum of the Christian tradition.

¹⁸ God's orientation to us is always love, and this is true for every human. God loves every human, which impacts how we see and treat each person or type of people. **Implication:** That God sees us, always, is the foundation for how we experience the unique challenges of our individual lives.

¹⁹ The original purpose for creating people was that we would reveal God and share God's nature with God in union, also called Theosis. God wants to be put on display, not only for his sake, but ours too. Further, it is part of the original design that we would be dignified by doing God's work on his behalf, humans as the material hands and feet of the immaterial God.

²⁰ Theosis is the heart, ground, and goal of Christianity and all human existence.

²¹ Every human being is invited into this union with God, and each one will experience it differently because each person is radically unique. The point is not to live someone else's relationship to God but one's own through union with Christ.

²² God has made each person unique in order for them to be their own unique expressions of image-bearing humanity in their unique circumstances and callings. To live into this is freedom and bliss, regardless of how challenging it is or whatever suffering it leads to. Further, our vocations will be unique, both paid and unpaid.

Key Scripture References: ^A 1 Sam 3, Acts 17:22–29, ^B Mt 6:25–33, ^C Jn 15:4–9, 17:20–26, ^D 2 Cor 3:18, Php 3:10, ^E 2 Pet 1:3–4, ^F 1 Tim 2:4



4

Earth and Shalom:²³

God created the planet we call Earth^{24A} for God's Shalom.^{25B} God desires to be in loving relationship with all things so that all things would mutually flourish in harmony together in and through God. This was God's original intent and design, what God is wanting and working to restore, and will restore.^C Marked by love and justice, Earth was to be—and indeed will be—God's incarnate Kingdom²⁶ with a kingdom of priests²⁷ for all people and all things.^D Human beings are invited and even beckoned to join God in this work, while given the freedom to refuse.^{28E}

- ²³ **Implication:** This section introduces the basis for creation care and wise stewardship of the natural world on God's behalf. This includes the development of the created world across the wide scope of vocations and human development. Co-creating with God for the flourishing of all things is essential to the human vocation, corporately and as individuals.
- ²⁴ Our planet is a very localized and specific expression of God's action in a very big solar system, galaxy, and universe. God is very big; we are very small. Still, we are loved with infinite dignity and eternal value. **Implication:** This is a foundation for awe and humility, gratitude and praise. We are "the Visited Planet."
- ²⁵ Shalom is the tangible expression of the fullness and goodness of God in everything. If a person or arena is not experiencing God's goodness, no one is fully experiencing God's goodness (and thereby God's full revelation). **Implication:** This introduces the basis for concern about any place or person or community not experiencing Shalom, which damages them, hides God's glory and goodness, and obscures God's design.
- ²⁶ **Implication:** This introduces the notions of mutual flourishing and the common good for all people.
- ²⁷ **Implication:** This introduces the idea of the priesthood of all believers.
- ²⁸ A person's actual freedom is the center jewel in the crown of being made in the image of God. **Implication:** This introduces a basis for treating others with respect, without coercion or manipulation.

Key Scripture References: ^A Gen 1:1-2, ^B Is 11:1-9, ^C Is 43:19, Rev 21:1-5, ^D 1 Pet 2:9, Rev 21:1-2, ^E Rom 8:18-25, Mt 19:16-22



Dignity and Darkness:²⁹

5

Human beings were and are made in the image of God,^{30A} and as such each individual person at every stage of life³¹ holds infinite value and dignity.^{32B} While there is tremendous diversity amongst humankind,³³ all humans were and are created to live in love-union with God, in harmony with each other and with all creation, and to develop the created world^{34C} to be a place of Shalom and mutual flourishing for all peoples and all creation.^D Humans were created to love God and be loved by God, be one with God, share God's nature, reveal God, participate with God, and worship God. Because of sin,^{35E} humankind initially failed in its vocation to live in union with God and one another for the sake of all creation.^F Our relationship with God³⁶ and with each other³⁷ was broken.^G Profound and pervasive brokenness³⁸ entered the world at every level, including death.^H The world was cursed and is broken.^I Satan^J and the powers of Evil^{39K} were unleashed in the world and given great influence with very tangible and incarnate effect.^L Evil seeks to diminish and destroy⁴⁰ all of God's creations⁴¹ constantly, persistently, and powerfully by any means available.^M

²⁹ Going deeper into biblical anthropology, this section begins heavily weighted in the direction of the inherent goodness and dignity of created people, an important corrective in some settings. Humans were first good before we were fallen... this orientation deeply matters.

³⁰ "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply.'" (Gn 1:27-28) Every human being equally bears the image of God, and Christian community marked by love can powerfully reveal God. God created human beings both male and female to more fully reflect his image, and further that the marriage union of a man and a woman marked by life-long fidelity would reveal both his image and God's

Key Scripture References: ^A Gen 1:26-27, ^B Ps 139:13-14, Jer 1:5, ^C Gen 2:15, ^D Jn 3:16-17, ^E Gen 3, ^F Ecc 7:20, Rom 3:23, ^G Gen 4:8, ^H Gen 6:5-6, Jn 7:7, ^I Gen 3:17, ^J Lk 4:1-13, ^K Eph 6:12, ^L Is 14:12-15, Lk 10:18, ^M Jn 10:10, 1 Pet 5:8-9, Eph 6:11-12

invitation to an intimate love relationship with him. **Implication:** This original creation and design forms the basis for Christian sexual ethics and explains the power and pleasure of sexuality.

³¹ This pertains to every individual man, woman and child, from conception through every stage of life to natural death.

³² **Implication:** The image of God in every human being—past, present, and future—introduces the basis for a “complete and coherent pro-life ethic.” This ethic has implications for everything that threatens the life or flourishing of each individual human being anywhere, at any time, at every stage of life. These threats are many and range in scope from the personal and relational, to the cultural and systemic.

³³ The diversity of peoples (temperaments, cultures, languages, ethnicities, giftings, histories, and more) testifies to the broad range of God’s self that cannot be fully expressed in one people or culture. **Implication:** This forms the basis for valuing diversity, and particularly peoples and cultures that may be too often overlooked or undervalued.

³⁴ **Implication:** This introduces the basis for the theology of vocation and the divine value of work, the “Garden Mandate.”

³⁵ Sin is real, an affront to the holiness of God with deadly consequences. **Implication:** This introduces the need for the forgiveness of sin, and the basis for the pursuit of freedom from sin, obedience, and holiness. Sin is not consonant with the dignity of our design and fundamental vocations. Sin dishonors God. Further, sin seeks to steal from us the good life that God wants for us.

³⁶ Sin separates us from God, thus the call to conversion by repentance for the forgiveness of sins through

Christ matters. The right response to this forgiveness is the pursuit of holiness, Christ-likeness, and loving and caring for others.

³⁷ Broken relationships between people and groups of people is a result of the fall and must be resisted. This is not part of God’s design. **Implication:** This reality calls for both peacemaking and being peacemakers.

³⁸ **Implication:** The utter brokenness of the world calls for redemptive response in all the ways it manifests itself, as an ongoing ministry of the redeeming God.

³⁹ Dark spiritual forces are real. **Implication:** This introduces the reality of spiritual warfare and the legitimacy of engaging spiritual forces spiritually, physically, and sacramentally.

⁴⁰ This can be explicit (i.e. abortion, genocide, gun violence, etc.) or more subtle (i.e. systemic racism, imbalanced economic possibility, accessibility issues, unjust law, etc.). **Implication:** This introduces the basis for the legitimacy of Christian political action for the sake of resisting diminishment and destruction as well as political action for the sake of creating the context for flourishing, without putting our ultimate hope in human political systems.

⁴¹ These creations include both human and not-human.



The Old Testament Foundation:

6

Out of all the people populating the planet 4,000 years ago,⁴² God called Abram^A and through him entered into a special relationship with his descendants who would be called Israel, that they would be a special revelation of God's nature, character, and ways.^B The story of God's relationship with Israel, especially the Exodus, reveals God's sovereignty over a history covering thousands of years and his consistent and faithful love for his people. In spite of their disobedience to the Law he had provided to them through Moses, God persistently called them back through the Prophets.^{43C} Through this covenant relationship, God laid the foundation for the Messiah, the Christ, whose coming met the expectations and hopes of Israel, fulfilling God's promise to give his people new hearts to love, serve and enjoy him.^D The Jewish people were to model God's ways in the world and prepare the way for the Christ.^E They were forerunners to God's self and God's ways being revealed more fully to and for all people.

⁴² There were many people living 4,000 years ago spread across the entire planet Earth, some in quite advanced civilizations. God was neither absent nor inactive.

⁴³ There is much to be gained by studying the Old Testament, particularly for what we can learn about the nature, ways, and desires of God and God's design and desire for his people. Further, the New Testament is significantly diminished without a foundational understanding of the Old.

Key Scripture References: ^A Gen 12:1-3, ^B Ex 20:1-20, ^C Deut 30:19, 2 Chr 7:14, ^D Heb 6:15-20, ^E Ex 19:5-6



Incarnation:⁴⁴

7

Then 2,000 years ago, God most clearly and fully revealed himself through Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish man, the Christ, born of the virgin Mary⁴⁵ in Bethlehem.^A Jesus was God's Son and God incarnate.^B Jesus was a real man and really God, the visible and tangible embodiment of the invisible and eternal God.^C Jesus is the fullest revelation of God this planet has yet seen.^D Through his life and teachings,⁴⁶ Jesus revealed some true truths about God and God's ways, that which we most need to know but not all that there is to know.^{47E} Naturally, Jesus's life was oriented by Love.^F

⁴⁴ **Implication:** This section introduces the central and all-orienting reality of Jesus. It forms the basis for simple Christological orthodoxy.

⁴⁵ This locates a particular orientation to appreciate, learn from, and be inspired by Mary's humility, faithfulness, and "Yes" to God. (Lk 1:38)

⁴⁶ **Implication:** Deep engagement with the Gospels especially matters, what Jesus said and also how he lived and what he did. Not everything about Jesus' life and teachings was recorded in the Gospels. In fact, we know very very little about Jesus' life.

⁴⁷ Jesus did not reveal everything that there is to be known about the infinite God. He revealed what needed to be known at that time, in that culture and context, which was enough for all times and contexts. Still there is more. He did reveal the essential essence of God, and that is enough. Still there is more.

Key Scripture References: ^A Mt 1:18–25, Lk 2:6–20, ^B Mt 3:16–17, Jn 1:14, ^C Heb 1:3, ^D Col 1:15, ^E Jn 21:25, ^F 1 Jn 4:7



Kingdom and Family:⁴⁸

8

Jesus was sent and determined to proclaim the good news of the reality, accessibility, presence, and coming of the Kingdom of God,^{49A} as well as to demonstrate God's love and power to and for all people.^{50B} He was particularly concerned for the poor and vulnerable and those on the margins of society,^{51C} and he was committed to and concerned about justice.^{52D} He was determined to make the way and point the way to eternal life, which can begin while we are still on earth^{53E} and continues after our death.^F While here he maintained constant attentiveness⁵⁴ to his Father,^G and retreated often in solitude.^{55H} While here, Jesus suffered, not only in his Passion^I but in his whole earthly experience.^{56J} While here Jesus was rejected.^{57K} Motivated by love of people, his love for his Father, and his desire to reveal his Father, Jesus did what he did so that human beings could have reconciled relationships with God.^L The point of this reconciliation is to intimately share in Jesus' love-union with his Father so that together he and we would be God's big family^{58M} with one Father, now spiritually and later physically in the New Creation of the New Earth.^N

⁴⁸ **Implication:** This section forms the basis for emphasizing the Kingdom of God as the major theme of Jesus' ministry and of the Christian's orientation.

⁴⁹ The Kingdom of God is where the ways God designed things to be actually happen, where what God wants done is done. It is very expansive and also very particular.

⁵⁰ The Kingdom of God and the love and power of God is for all people, not just some people.

- ⁵¹ **Implication:** This introduces the basis for the Christian's commitment to and orientation towards the poor.
- ⁵² **Implication:** This introduces the basis for the Christian's commitment and orientation to pursuing justice.
- ⁵³ Eternal life with God can be accessed before death, justifying spiritual practices and disciplines, and the intentional pursuit of ongoing formation and transformation. "Living eternal life now" can become a posture and orientation for our whole lives.
- ⁵⁴ Jesus wants for us the same sort of relationship he had with his Father, introducing the basis for the contemplative life and related spiritual practices.
- ⁵⁵ **Implication:** This forms the basis for taking personal spiritual retreats.
- ⁵⁶ This is the foundation for how we understand and approach our own sufferings. To consecrate our pain to Jesus' use is to see it redeemed.
- ⁵⁷ **Implication:** Jesus' suffering and rejection introduces ideas of what Jesus' followers might expect in their own experiences as they follow his way and live his life.
- ⁵⁸ God's big family means God as Father to us all, Jesus as older brother to us all, and we as brothers and sisters with Jesus and each other, one family.



9

Crucifixion:⁵⁹

Through his crucifixion and death,⁶⁰ the willing sacrifice of Jesus most clearly displays his love and the love of God.^{61A} The cross accomplished Christ's victory over evil.^{62B} The cross made possible the forgiveness of all sins past, present, and future,^C making a way for new life and reconciled relationships with a holy God by grace through our repentance and faith in Christ.^{63D}

⁵⁹ Our sinfulness matters, and the cross of Jesus matters so much more. Primarily, at the cross, the love and nature of God was put on clearest display. At the cross, our need for atonement is recognized and affirmed, as well as the invitations to new life in Christ the cross creates, which includes the ability to engage in an unhindered relationship with God.

⁶⁰ As it says in the Apostle's Creed (pg 28), Jesus "suffered under Pontius Pilate," the Roman governor of Israel in the early first century. This locates Jesus historically in a specific time and place.

⁶¹ Cruciform Love, which then sets the pattern for all Christian love.

⁶² Hence, one of the most ancient titles for Jesus is "Christus Victor", a significant theme in early Christianity.

⁶³ **Implication:** This forms an initial basis for evangelism.

Key Scripture References: ^A Jn 3:13-16, ^B Col 2:13-15, ^C Col 1:20-22, ^D Ro 10:9-13, 2 Cor 9: 18-19, Eph 2:1-10



10

Resurrection:⁶⁴

Jesus was raised physically from death at his resurrection, the first day of new creation.^A By his resurrection, Jesus was the first to break the finality of death and create the way and means for our own embodied resurrection and eternal life.^{65B} The sacrament of baptism unites us to Jesus by being joined with him in death and being raised with him to new life.^C

⁶⁴ We affirm the physical resurrection of Jesus and all of its many **Implications**, including the hope for our own resurrection, the value of the body, and stewardship of creation.

⁶⁵ **Implication:** This forms another basis for evangelism.

Key Scripture References: ^AMt 28:1–10, Mk 16:1–6, Lk 24:1–7, Jn 20:11–16, ^B1 Cor 15, ^CRom 6:4, 1 Jn 5:6



11

Christ Followers, The Gospel, and Communion:⁶⁶

While on Earth, Jesus received and selected followers to be with him, to learn from him, and to join in his mission of proclaiming and bringing the good news of the Kingdom of God to all people, in both deed and word.^{67A} He empowered them and sent them out to further and continue his mission,^B which they did in community with one another for their own formation and mutual assistance.^{68C} He then ascended into heaven.^D While on Earth, Jesus instituted the sacrament of communion whereby his followers then and now could be continually nourished in their union with him.^{69E}

⁶⁶ **Implication:** This section introduces the foundation for our simple and deep Christian vocation—to further the ministry and mission of Jesus in its whole sweep, in both deed and word.

⁶⁷ Following Jesus' explicit lead, bearing witness to him in deed and word demonstrates the breadth of the Gospel to include acts of the Kingdom of God and also sharing the facts about Jesus.

⁶⁸ Believers sharing life together matters for both mission and formation. **Implication:** This introduces the basis for Christian community.

⁶⁹ **Implication:** This raises the central importance of the sacrament of the Eucharist, not merely as remembrance but as actual spiritual sustenance and a true means of divine exchange. Jesus' "Real Presence" is really present in the mystery that is the Eucharist.

Key Scripture References: ^A Mk 3:13–19, Mt 28:18–20, ^B Lk 9:1–6, 10:1–9, ^C Acts 2:42–47, 4:32–35, ^D Acts 1:9–11 ^E Jn 6:54–58, Mk 14:22–23, Lk 24:30–31, 1 Cor 11:23–26



12

The Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit universalizes and internalizes the presence of Jesus.⁷⁰ After his resurrection, Jesus gave the Spirit of God⁷¹ to his closest band of disciples^{72A} and commissioned them to continue his mission even as he himself was sent, even to the end of the world.^{73B} After his ascension, Jesus gave God's Spirit to all those who believed in him.^C This was so that they could experience union with Jesus and also be empowered by him to continue his work^D in the world as Jesus's ongoing incarnate presence, with a profound orientation to Love.^E

⁷⁰ This insight is helpfully stated by John Stott.

⁷¹ **Implication:** The need for the Spirit is the basis for all spiritual practice and discipline, for the experience of union with God, and for the purpose of empowerment to do God's work.

⁷² By giving his disciples God's Spirit, Jesus created a new sort of human being, a new creature, echoing the Garden of Eden.

⁷³ **Implication:** This is the foundation for domestic and global missions.

Key Scripture References: ^A Jn 20:22, ^B Acts 1:7-9, ^C Acts 2:4, 10:44-45, ^D Jn 14:12, ^E Jn 14:26, 16:13-15, 1 Jn 4:13-17



13

Church and Community:

The good news about the Kingdom of God and the many implications of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus began to spread, and Jesus' "called ones"^{74A} began to organize their corporate life⁷⁵ and worship under their appointed authorities⁷⁶ as they carried out Jesus's mission.^B This group was marked by radical diversity and radical hospitality.^C This body would become known as "the Church," and there is only one Church.^{77D} Jesus is the head of the Church in heaven,^E the Church is his body on earth.^F Followers of Jesus, made one with him by his Spirit,^G are the ongoing Incarnation of his Incarnation, thereby revealing the reality and nature of the God-Who-Is and bringing God's Kingdom more fully to Earth.^H Naturally, followers of Jesus will be oriented around Love.^I

⁷⁴ "Ekklesia," Greek for "called ones" is where we get the basis for the word that has become "church."

⁷⁵ The earliest lifestyle for the church revolved around Scripture, prayer, fellowship, and the sacrament, shared in each other's homes while taking care of each other's needs and the needs of the poor. **Implication:** This forms the basis for many things including corporate worship, hospitality, mercy, Bible study, generosity, community, and of course prayer.

⁷⁶ **Implication:** This forms the basis for being connected to some sort of established church.

⁷⁷ **Implication:** This forms the basis for our commitment to church unity because there is in fact only one Church, and external divisions hide the glory of God and diminish our experience of God's richness. They are not only distracting, they are false and destructive. The pursuit of Christian unity around the Apostles Creed (pg 28) through interdenominational relations and ecumenism is an essential task.

Key Scripture References: ^A Ac 5:11, ^B Ac 6:1-6, ^C Ac 4:32, 15:12-21, ^D Eph 4:4-6, ^E Eph 1:22, ^F 1 Cor 12:27, Col 1:24, ^G Eph 4:4, ^H 1 Pet 2:9, ^I Jn 13:34-35, 1 Jn 4:11,16



Coracle Fellowship Program: Retreats #5, 10

14

Jesus' Return:⁷⁸

At the appointed time^A and at the end of Earth's time as we know it, Jesus Christ will return to Earth in bodily form,^B and renew it physically, enabling it to finally function according to its original intent and design at "the renewal of all things."^C "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."^D Until then, all expressions of God's Kingdom in the world, though resisted at every point, are in fact God's Kingdom coming into the world.^E They are pointers to and foretastes of the glory to come. At his return, King Jesus will judge each human being according to their lives lived on earth and both punish and reward appropriately, and his wisdom will be just, merciful, and wise.^F

⁷⁸ **Implication:** This section orients us on (and justifies) doing things now that are foretastes of the Kingdom to come.

Key Scripture References: ^AMk 13:32, ¹Cor 15:52, ^B1 Th 4:16, Heb 9:28, ^CMt 19:28, Is 43:19–21, Mt 24: 29–31, ^DRev 11:15, ^EMt 10:7–8, ^FMt. 6:19–20, 16:27, Rom 2:6, Heb 11:6



Resources



Beauty



Justice + Mercy



Creation Care



Vocation



Peacemaking

Coracle Fellowship Program: Retreats #3, 6, 7, 10

15

New Earth and Shalom Realized:

Those ultimately found in Christ according to Christ's wisdom and judgment^{79A} will physically inhabit the Earth made new, together in perfect union with each other and in perfect union with the Father and Son with the Holy Spirit.^B They will come "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages."^{80C} God's Shalom will be realized and enfleshed, all people and creation will flourish in mutuality with each other for reciprocal benefit.^{81D} Each person and thing will live and flourish according to God's perfect design for it, and experience great joy and pleasure.^E God in his wisdom will know our next vocations and opportunities, and all will be ordered by Love. God will be given great praise,^{82F} much to the enjoyment of God's big family.^G The extent to which God's Kingdom will extend through the universe we do not yet know, nor the forms of our participation in his universal mission of revelation and perhaps redemption. Maranatha!^H

⁷⁹ Ours is not to determine who is in or out of God's eternal Kingdom. That is Jesus' to know and decide, and his wisdom will be just.

⁸⁰ **Implication:** This vision of heaven justifies efforts in many arenas, including world mission, ecumenical efforts, racial reconciliation, peacemaking, multi-ethnic churches and worship, and more.

⁸¹ To participate in these things now is to anticipate their goodness to come.

⁸² **Implication:** This introduces a basis for worship experiences on earth.

Key Scripture References: ^A Mt 7:21-23, 25:32, 1 Cor 13:1-3, ^B Jn 14:19-20, Rev 21:10, ^C Rev 5:9, ^D Is 11:6-10, ^E Ps 16:11, Ps 37:4, Is 65:25, Rev 22:3-5, ^F Rev 19:1-8, ^G Rom 8:17, ^H Rev 22:20



The Invitation

Looking back over this sweep of history from before all time to the end of time, with all times in between including our own right now, we can say that **Essential Christianity** is this:

Grounded and oriented in Love, Essential Christianity is living the fullness of one's whole life and unique self in union with God through Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit, and bringing God's Kingdom and Shalom into the world for love's sake through co-creating with God and co-redeeming brokenness with Jesus until our death or Christ's return.

Essential Christianity is union with God lived in the concrete circumstances of each of our unique lives as God sees fit to use us in bringing God's Kingdom.

The mission of Coracle is and has been *“to inspire and enable people to be the presence of God in the brokenness of the world through Spiritual Formation for Kingdom Action.”*

Now with a clearer sense of Essential Christianity's beautiful breadth, we are able to locate and orient Coracle's mission with more force and specificity. We can articulate our ultimate “Why?”, our deepest essence and what we're most deeply about.

The Essence of Coracle then is

1) to glorify and to bear witness to the God-Who-Is by incarnating essential Christianity with all its many and varied implications, both individually and organizationally in community *and*

2) to invite and enable others to join and journey together in this thrilling adventure and enjoy this rich feast. We do this by working to bring God's Shalom wherever it is not, which means confronting brokenness in all its forms with the redemptive power of Christ, thereby witnessing to the reality of God's Kingdom until Christ returns and completes the work.

Our Invitation then simply is to live fully in the goodness of God ourselves and together give the goodness of God fully to all others. God is glorified through this work by being revealed, praised, and enjoyed.

Essential Christianity is what we are joyfully incarnating AND inviting others to join us in! We want nothing less than the fullness and beauty and strength and hope and joy that Christianity is in all of its glorious implications and splendor. And do you want to know what's really cool? There is nothing new here, just taking radically that which has always been there (see page 3).

Friend, we hope you can join us— online, in person, around the country and even the globe! At the very least, I pray that you'll take this vision of the Christian life and faith and work it out in your own setting and communities. The world needs more Essential Christianity, now as much as ever, and so do we.



Rev. Bill Haley
Coracle Executive Director

Coracle Program Key:

These programs are some of the ways Coracle seeks to incarnate Essential Christianity

Coracle Fellowship Program:

This 12-retreat spiritual formation program, offered online and in-person, guides participants through a process of discovery and formation in community with others seeking more in their relationships with God and in their redemptive engagement in the brokenness that surrounds us all.

Resources:

We are committed to producing, collecting, and offering high-quality print, audio, digital, and video resources in order to help you on your Essential Christianity journey. The Coracle Journal and our Resource Collections are good starting points, as is the “Coracle Weekly,” our newsletter with your soul in mind.



Retreats + Hospitality:

Corhaven, our retreat space in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, has been a cherished place for people to meet with and be met by God for over a decade. Beyond this we create other spaces for people to encounter God and be on retreat and find welcome.



Spiritual Direction:

If you are searching for a trained companion on your spiritual journey with God, you might consider exploring our growing community of Spiritual Directors. They can provide a listening ear and a prayerful presence as you seek to navigate the ups and downs of life with God in a broken world.



Spiritual Practices:

We believe the riches of the Christian contemplative tradition offer strong medicine to many of the maladies we face in the modern world— anxiety, loneliness, distraction, etc. Many of our offerings and resources (most notably our “Space for God” online devotional series) are designed to offer accessible introductions to these riches.



Racial Healing + Reconciliation:

Helping individuals and communities heal the deep wounds of racial division and oppression in America has long been a core aspect of our Kingdom Action Initiatives. This has worked itself out in the creation of the Corhaven Graveyard for the enslaved, the Repentance Project, and a number of articles, seminars, and pilgrimages offered regularly.



Creation Care:

A core part of the human vocation is to steward the Creation entrusted to us by God. We seek to do this primarily through the care of the land at Corhaven, both in the Garden and at the Graveyard.



Community:

None of us are meant to live our lives of faith in isolation. Knowing this, we consistently seek to make space for creative, formational communities, most notably through the Coracle Fellowship Program and our regular Coracle Community gatherings.



Beauty:

We believe that the beauty of creation, human culture, and human persons have unique abilities to direct our worship to the God of all beauty. Therefore, we seek to create spaces, resources, and opportunities that will aid us to encounter and appreciate the beauty that is always all around us.



Pilgrimage + Mission:

For many years, we have offered trips to the sacred spaces and broken places of the world to offer individuals the opportunity to practice the ancient spiritual discipline of pilgrimage – taking a journey with God, to meet God, together. We also maintain vibrant mission partners in Guatemala, Nepal, and Israel/Palestine.



Justice + Mercy:

We worship a God of justice and mercy. Therefore, we seek to build God's Kingdom through just relationships and systems wherever there is injustice, and we show mercy to those in need, through food donations from the Corhaven Garden, our Benevolence Fund, and more.



Vocation:

God has placed a unique call upon the lives of every person, which can be lived out in myriad occupations. We seek to support and encourage one another in those vocations through targeted retreats, our monthly Coracle Community gatherings, and the work of Common Good Things, a business ministry which seeks to provide everyday goods for living well.



Peacemaking:

God's design for creation is "Shalom," or peace, realized in the fullest sense of the word. Through many partnerships, we support the work of peacemaking particularly in America's racial environment, in Israel/Palestine, and in Guatemala.



Church Unity:

There is only one Church. Knowing this, we seek to create contexts where interdenominational and ecumenical dialogue and collaboration is possible so that God's people might reflect the beautiful unity of God's triune nature.

Coracle Fellowship Program Retreats

Retreat 1:
God Loves You... No, Really!

Retreat 2:
To Be with God: The Contemplative Life

Retreat 3:
Becoming Who You Are: True Self/False Self/Christ's Self

Retreat 4:
Grow to the Next Level: Stages of Spiritual Development

Retreat 5:
Spiritual Formation for Kingdom Action:
Christ in You for the World

Retreat 6:
All Things New: Where It's All Going

Retreat 7:
In the World: Vocation and Work

Retreat 8:
The Holy Spirit and You: Power

Retreat 9:
Discernment: Becoming Familiar with God's Voice to You

Retreat 10:
Take, Eat, Be: On the Eucharistic Life

Retreat 11:
Light in the Darkness: Consecrating Your Pain

Retreat 12:
Where Faith Leads: Abandonment to God

The Apostles' Creed

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty.
From there 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.*

Notes

Notes

We would love to have you join us on the journey of enjoying and offering Essential Christianity!

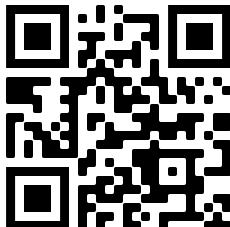
You can explore our full range of offerings as well as our extensive Resource Collections by visiting
www.inthecoracle.org

You can also follow us on Social Media **@inthecoracle**



If you'd ever like to connect, please reach out to us:
info@inthecoracle.org

Scan this and tap the link
to visit our website:





Coracle exists to inspire and enable people to be the
presence of God in the brokenness of the world through
Spiritual Formation for Kingdom Action

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