

Distinctive Beliefs

The following distinctive beliefs demonstrate our particular interpretation of the Bible in these areas. Our particular interpretation of baptism, communion, the chronology of future events, and supernatural gifts may differ from another church's interpretation, thus making ours distinctive or unique.

The Sacred Moments – We believe that the following expressions are symbolic in nature and provide a vivid picture of the love and grace of God, and the difference He can make when we live in relationship with Him.

1. **Baptism** – Baptism is an outward sign of a person's internal faith in Jesus Christ. This physical demonstration symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, but more importantly, communicates a believer's loyalty and allegiance to Jesus Christ in a public way. Baptism is commanded in the Scriptures as an initial act of obedience by Christ-followers. We believe in baptism by immersion in water.

2. **Communion** – Communion is a time of worship when believers commune with God together by remembering the death of Jesus, using the physical elements of bread and the fruit of the vine. Jesus created this expression during an intimate moment with his closest followers in Matthew 26. Paul, the writer of I Corinthians, instructed us to continue observing this time of worship.

The Future Story - In His own time and in His own way, God will bring the world as we know it to an end. We believe the following events will occur: Jesus is coming back at any moment for all who have a personal relationship with His Father and will take His followers to heaven (the rapture). The world will experience a seven-year period of misleading peace and unprecedented distress (the tribulation). Satan will be defeated in a great battle and will be imprisoned for 1,000 years as Christ reigns physically on the earth (the millennium). Satan will seek to deceive the world one final time. He and his followers will ultimately be defeated, judged, and sentenced by God to eternal torment in hell. God will make all things new — heaven and earth — where His followers will live with Him forever in the new era of God's universal, visible reign.

Supernatural Gifts – We believe that the Holy Spirit empowers and gifts believers for their ministry. Some of these gifts can be categorized as “supernatural” gifts, because their expression overrides natural laws and ordinary human abilities. These gifts can include speaking in unlearned foreign languages, miraculous healing, and speaking prophetically of future events. It is clear from Scripture that God empowered human beings with these gifts at certain times and in certain places as a way of authenticating His message. (We believe that God is no less capable of working through His people in these same ways today.) We do not believe, however, that the expression of these supernatural gifts was an indicator of greater spiritual maturity in the life of a believer. Nor do we believe that Scripture clearly supports the expression of these gifts in all times and in all cultural contexts. In fact, there is strong evidence from Scripture that these gifts were linked specifically to the birth of the early church as a way of confirming the message. For the sake of unity within this church family, we do not practice or teach these supernatural gifts. Instead, we encourage believers to seek the “most excellent way” of love and to be zealous about the gifts that are certain to edify the church (I Corinthians 12:31).