

[»» About Willow](#) [»» What Willow Believes](#)

What Willow Believes

Our Mission

Willow Creek Community Church was founded on this conviction: People matter to God; therefore they matter to us. God bridged the unfathomable chasm between His holiness and our sin-stained humanity through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. Luke 19:10 tells us, "The Son of Man [Jesus] came to seek and to save the lost." We humbly recognize that we are among those Christ seeks and saves.

Jesus went beyond a mere rescue mission; He transformed lives. In Matthew 6:10, He taught His followers to pray, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus came to redeem this broken world, both for all eternity and in the here-and-now. This conviction drives our mission. Simply stated:

Willow Creek exists to turn irreligious people into
fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

Our Core Values

Ten core values bring clarity to the things that matter most at Willow. They guide how we achieve our mission, influencing major leadership decisions as well as everyday ministry plans. They even help us navigate staffing and budget issues. In short, they keep us focused on the unique call God has given us as a local church.

We believe anointed teaching is the catalyst for transformation in individuals' lives and in the church. This includes the concept of teaching for life change (Romans 12:7; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; James 1:23–25).

We believe lost people matter to God, and therefore, they matter to the church. This includes the concepts of relational evangelism and evangelism as a process (Luke 5:30–32; Luke 15; Matthew 18:14).

We believe the church should be culturally relevant while remaining doctrinally pure. This includes the concept of sensitively relating to our culture through our facility, printed materials, and use of the arts (1 Corinthians 9:19–23).

We believe Christ followers should manifest authenticity and yearn for continuous growth. This includes the concepts of personal authenticity, character, and wholeness (Ephesians 4:25–26, 32; Hebrews 12:1; Philippians 1:6).

We believe a church should operate as a unified community of servants, with men and women stewarding their spiritual gifts. This includes the concepts of unity, servanthood, spiritual gifts, and ministry callings (1 Corinthians 12 and 14; Romans 12; Ephesians 4; Psalm 133:1).

We believe loving relationships should permeate every aspect of church life. This includes the concepts of love-driven ministry, ministry accomplished in teams, and relationship building (1 Corinthians 13; Nehemiah 3; Luke 10:1; John 13:34–35).

We believe life-change happens best in community. This includes the concepts of discipleship, vulnerability, and accountability (Luke 6:12–13; Acts 2:44–47).

We believe excellence honors God and inspires people. This includes the concepts of evaluation, critical review, intensity, and excellence (Colossians 3:17; Malachi 1:6–14; Proverbs 27:17).

We believe churches should be led by men and women with God-given leadership gifts. This includes the concepts of empowerment, servant leadership, strategic focus, and intentionality (Nehemiah 1–2; Romans 12:8; Acts 6:2–5).

We believe the pursuit of full devotion to Christ and His cause is normal for every believer. This includes the concepts of stewardship, servanthood, downward mobility, and the pursuit of kingdom goals (1 Kings 11:4; Philippians 2:1–11; 2 Corinthians 8:7).

Our Core Beliefs

Willow Creek's core beliefs describe our theological positions on key aspects of faith. Centered in Christ and His message, ours is a biblical theology rather than a theology that is speculative, subjective, or merely rooted in tradition. These beliefs are derived directly from Scripture (both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible).

The Bible

The sole basis of our belief is the Bible—the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. We believe Scripture in its entirety originated with God and He revealed it to chosen authors. Scripture speaks with the authority of God while simultaneously reflecting the backgrounds, styles, and vocabularies of these human authors. We hold that the Scriptures, in their original manuscripts, are infallible and inerrant; they are the unique, full, and final authority on all matters of faith and practice. There are no other writings similarly inspired by God.

God

We believe there is one true, holy God, eternally existing in three equal persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the beginning, God demonstrated His power, wisdom, and goodness by creating the world and everything in it. Through His divine power and providence, God continues to sustain His creation, operating within history to fulfill His redemptive purposes.

Salvation

The central purpose of God's revelation in Scripture is to call people into fellowship with Him. Originally created to be in relationship with God, humans defied Him by going their own independent way, resulting in alienation from Him and the innate inability to please God. This fall took place at the beginning of human history; since then all people have suffered these consequences and are in need of the saving grace of God.

The salvation of humanity is completely a work of God's free grace; it is not in any way the result of human works or goodness. Each person can receive salvation by repentance and faith. God's Word assures individuals that He will continue His saving work in them forever.

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, the eternal second person of the Trinity, was fully united with a human nature by a miraculous conception and virgin birth. He lived in perfect obedience to the Father, voluntarily paid the price for the sins of all people by dying on the cross as their substitute, and satisfied divine justice, bringing salvation to all who trust in Him alone. After His physical death, Jesus Christ rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father as the only intercessor between God and humans. He promises to return to earth, personally and visibly, to fulfill history and the eternal plan of God.

The Christian Life (The Holy Spirit)

People in a saving relationship with Jesus Christ are to live in holiness and obedience as they submit to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit applies Christ's saving work by enlightening the minds of sinners to their need to be saved. He renews and indwells each believer upon salvation, becoming their source of assurance, strength, wisdom, and gifting for building up the church. The Holy Spirit guides believers in understanding and applying the Bible. Appropriated by faith, His power and control empower believers to lead a life of Christ-like character and bear fruit for the Father's glory.

Human Destiny

Death seals the eternal destiny of each person. All humanity will experience a bodily resurrection and a judgment that will determine the fate of each individual. Having rejected God, unbelievers will suffer eternal condemnation apart from Him. Believers will be received into eternal communion with God and will be rewarded for works done in this life.

The Church

All who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are united with Him as members of His body, the one true church. Scripture commands believers to gather for worship, prayer, fellowship, and the teaching of the Word; to observe Baptism and Communion as established by Jesus Christ; to offer service to the body through development and use of talents and gifts and outreach to the world. The local expression of the church is wherever God's people meet regularly in obedience to this command. Cared for and led by Elders and leaders, church members are to work together in love and unity for the ultimate purpose of glorifying Christ.

Faith and Practice

In all matters of faith and practice, Scripture is the final authority. In matters where Scripture is silent, believers should conscientiously seek to be led by God because it is to Him alone he or she is ultimately responsible.

Baptism

Baptism is an outward expression of an inward commitment to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Willow believes the decision to be baptized is up to the individual and that he or she must fully understand what it means to be a Christ follower.

Communion

During Jesus' last days, He gathered the disciples in a room and asked them to consume bread and wine "in remembrance" of Him.

Two thousand years later, we regularly observe the act of consuming bread and grape juice as a community for the exact same reason—to remember our Savior, who sacrificed Himself for our sins.

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