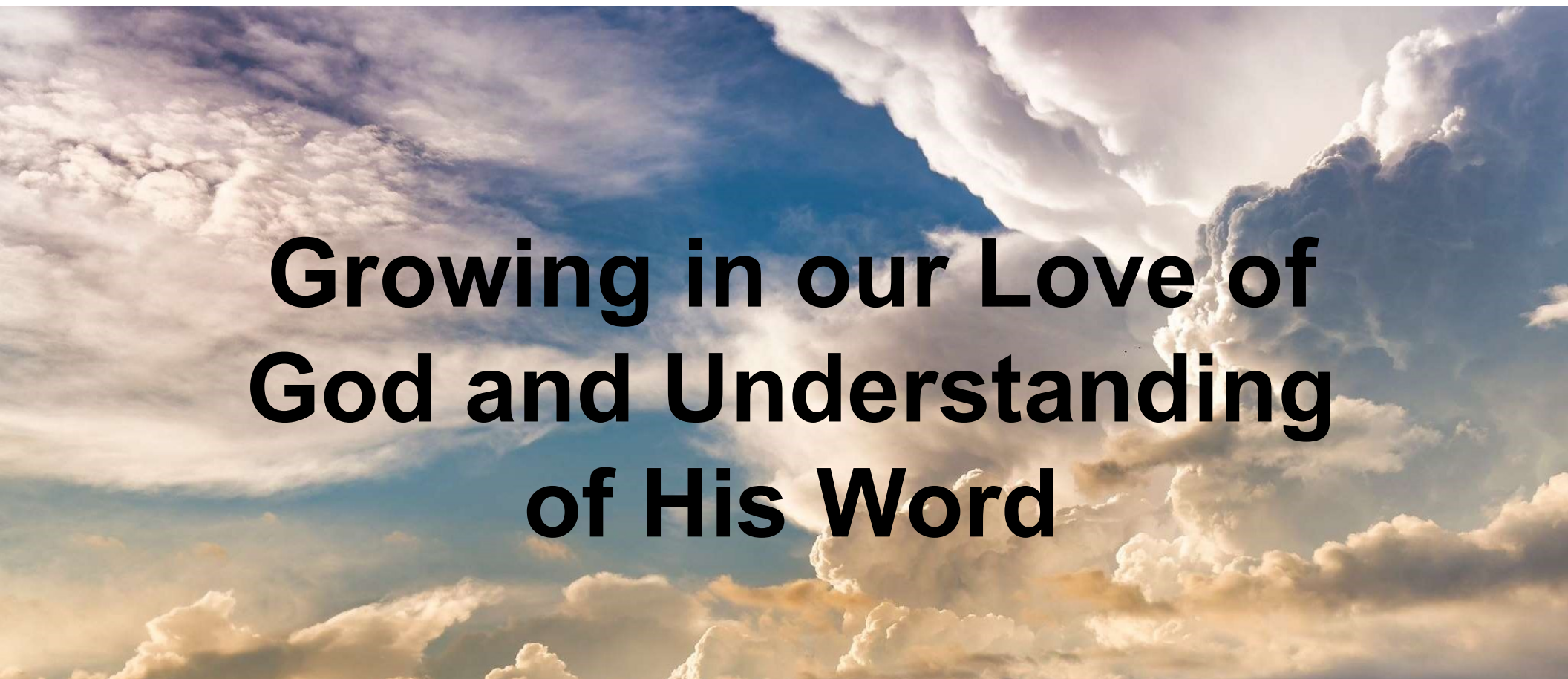


Cornerstone Church
Seeking to Advance Our Spiritual Health – August 2023



**Growing in our Love of
God and Understanding
of His Word**

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- **Welcome & Opening Prayer**
- **The purpose of our presentation includes the following:**
 1. We want to talk about what we believe are Cornerstones' CORE BELIEFS, and how they may be distinguished from PRACTICES and MATTERS OF OPINION.
 2. We want to discuss how we believe we should approach and Study the Bible.
 3. We want to teach about the meaning of the term HERMENEUTICS: Defined simply as the interpretation of language, whether written or spoken.
 4. We want to announce our goals to further study The Role of Women in the Church during the balance of the year applying the principles listed above.

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▪ **We have been on a journey together:**

- Over the last 4+ years, refocused on some of the basics about being a body of believers in God and followers of His Son, Jesus Christ.
 - Focused on prayer and study of God’s Word
 - Focused on being a community in the church
 - Focused on serving our broader communities we live in

“Following Jesus. Being Good News. Making Disciples.”

This simple mission statement is a way of expressing our conviction that Christianity is ultimately a lifestyle and not just a set of beliefs or doctrines.

- **We want to be a healthy body of believers** - who are focused on Spiritual Health and want to go deeper in our shared understanding of God through our imitation and obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

A reminder of some of our faith statements:

- We are a Christian community that gathers to worship and to learn to put the teachings of Jesus into practice. Simply put, we are disciples of Jesus.
- We embrace Jesus Christ as divine and embrace his Good News of the Kingdom of God as a message that brings salvation to those who embrace it.
- We strive to show ourselves to be Jesus's disciples by holding to his teachings, loving each other the way Jesus loved, and making a difference through the good works he has given us to do.

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- **We want to be a healthy body of believers who worship God and obey the Greatest Commandment (as confirmed by Jesus):**



Keeping a Godly Focus & Commitment

Extended Families & Friends
(including “Big Church” and “Small Church” Members)

Children – Young & Adult
Parents
Individuals

Broader Communities & Relationships

The Greatest Commandment

... Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all of your mind; and Love your neighbor as yourself.

Luke 10:27 NIV

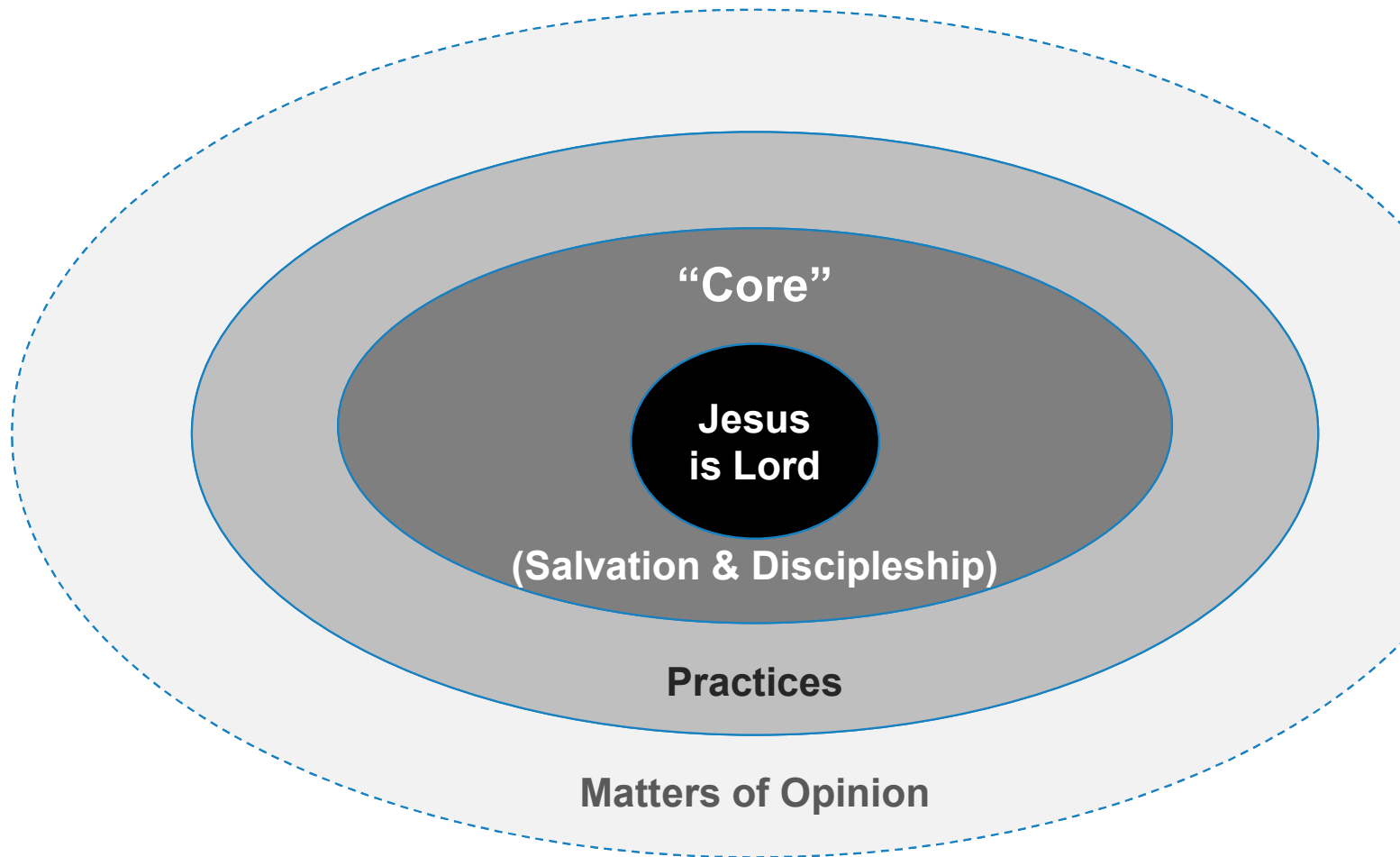
- We respect that there will be many different perspectives about what our priorities and teachings should be.
- We believe our focus should largely be on the scriptures that help us to follow Jesus and obey his commands to live and love as he called us. At the center of our beliefs and values is that **Jesus is Lord!**
- We believe that God has given us the Bible, which includes holy scriptures in a range of books that were inspired by God.
 - The Bible reveals God’s good story about his love for us, children created in His image but who have been separated from him by our sin.
 - God sent his only son, Jesus the Christ, to live among us and to teach us how to love the Father.
 - Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection demonstrate God’s ultimate love for us – and provide an opportunity for salvation through our followership of Jesus.

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- Consequently, we believe our focus should be on those core scriptures that outline matters of spiritual salvation and followership of Jesus' example of sacrificial love.
- We will respect that other churches and individuals may not agree with these core beliefs but will focus on our continued teachings in these areas.
- As spiritual shepherds and ministry leaders, we will also examine our Practices at Cornerstone – and will seek to ensure they are in alignment with the scriptures.
- There are and will be many different opinions about how we should worship and build community together.
- We pray that our members will seek unity in all these areas and join us as we continue to study the Bible, pray, meditate, and seek God's will in how we can build a stronger, healthier church and impact for God together.

- **We want to be a healthy church, with focus on Salvation and Discipleship issues, supportive practices, and respect for varying opinions in how we seek to fulfill the Greatest Commandment.**



The Greatest Commandment

... Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all of your mind; and Love your neighbor as yourself.

Luke 10:27 NIV

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- **At Cornerstone, we seek to teach about “core” Salvation and Discipleship scriptures by examining verses focused on the call to unity set forth in Ephesians 4:**

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

(Ephesians 4:3-6)

- **Additional lessons and sermons on these “core” beliefs will follow this year and beyond - but a high-level of overview is included below.**

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(Ephesians 4:3-6)

We Believe In One God

God, the Father, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, is good and keeps his promises. He is YHWH, the great I AM and the Ancient of Days. Often referred to as the Holy Trinity, we believe in the Three-In-One: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

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(Ephesians 4:3-6)

We Believe In One Lord

Jesus Christ the Son of God. Jesus, the Messiah, is the risen, reigning, and returning King. He is the eternal Word of God who became flesh and lived among us, fully human and fully divine. He was crucified, died, was buried, and was resurrected on the third day. He is reigning on the throne and will return to judge the living and the dead.

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We Believe In One Spirit

God’s Holy Spirit fills every Christian and unites us in one body; our Teacher and Counselor who gives us wisdom, discernment, and conviction of sin; our Comforter, Intercessor and Advocate before God’s throne; our Seal and Deposit, who guarantees our glorious inheritance.

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(Ephesians 4:3-6)

We Believe In One Faith

We believe the Bible to be inspired by God, a reliable witness to the story of God’s people through the ages, and authoritative for our life and teaching. Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ. We view the Scriptures as the primary instrument for introducing God’s story and message to the world – the Good News of the Kingdom.

*“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, **one baptism**; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”*

(Ephesians 4:3-6)

We Believe In One Baptism

Salvation begins and ends with God – it is God’s work and it is accomplished by God’s grace, love, kindness and mercy (Titus 3:3-8). God alone saves, but we are free to accept or reject God’s offer of salvation. The biblical response to God’s offer of salvation involves faith (Acts 16:31-34), repentance (Acts 2:36-39), and baptism (Acts 8:35-39). As we see in the many conversion narratives in the book of Acts, God meets the convert in faith, repentance, and baptism and the result is salvation (receiving the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit). Although believing, repenting, and being immersed are things we do, they are not works that in any way earn salvation. They are simply the appropriate biblical response to accept God’s gracious offer.

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(Ephesians 4:3-6)

We Believe In One Body

The biblical word for church means “congregation, assembly.” We are a Christian community that gathers to worship and to learn to put the teachings of Jesus into practice. We are a “called out” people – called out from death to life, from darkness to light, and from captivity to freedom. We are the family of God, the body of Christ, citizens of the Kingdom of God.



“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

(Ephesians 4:3-6)

We Believe In One Hope

Jesus came to give us abundant, authentic and eternal life. This eternal kind of life is the life of the age to come, when God’s Kingdom fully comes and God’s will is done on the new earth as it is in the heavens. But that eternal kind of life begins now, as we experience it in some measure through the Holy Spirit, through our relationships with God and each other, and as we see the Kingdom break in on this world as God’s will is put into practice. We believe in the Great Resurrection in that age to come, when God will live with us and we will reign with God.

- As we continue our study of the Bible, we need to appreciate:
 - There are 66 books in the standard Christian bible (39 old testament; 27 new testament)
 - The text was written in 3 languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek)
 - Estimated dates: written over 12-13+ centuries (approximately 11-12th century BC, and completed during the 1st century AD)
 - Includes several types of biblical literary styles and genres, such as allegory, narratives, histories, prophecy, apocalyptic writings, poetry, psalms, and letters.
 - Translated into English and other languages through multiple approaches – including some translational difficulties and challenges (which do not invalidate God’s holy inspiration).
 - Historical context and seeking an understanding of the author’s original meaning is needed as we seek to apply scriptures from the Bible to our current lives.

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- Keeping perspective as we study the Bible (continued):
 - The Bible was not written to us, but it was written for us.
 - It was written:
 - ❖ by prophets and scholars, mostly if not all Jewish, to a mostly if not all Jewish audience in a very Eastern Culture
 - ❖ over 2,000 years ago to people who had a different lifestyle and different set of circumstances than we do here in our Western Culture.
 - That does not mean we cannot learn what God, who is the same today, yesterday and tomorrow, is wanting to teach us in living a Godly life.

▪ **Hermeneutics:**

- Comes from the Greek root meaning “interpreter” or “interpret”; therefore, hermeneutics is an interpretation.
- Typically used to discuss the methods or principles of interpretation.
- The purpose of hermeneutics is to discover what God wants us to learn and take away from the scriptures – to discover the truths and values expressed in the Bible.
- Exegesis (which is sometimes included as part of hermeneutics) is the actual interpretation (aka, bringing out its meaning) of the biblical texts.
- Today, we will only provide a high-level summary of the example hermeneutic processes and approaches. Additional opportunities for more “deep-dive” lessons and discussion will be provided in the future.

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- **Hermeneutics** – typical process steps:
 1. **Seeking an understanding of the historical and cultural context;**
 2. **Seeking an understanding of the literary context;**
 3. **Making observations; and**
 4. **Drawing applications.**

- *Cautions* about how we seek to understand the original meaning:
 - **Exegesis** is the act of studying a passage critically and objectively and interpreting the meaning. [Analytical approaches include: (1) Lexical-syntactical analysis; (2) historical/cultural analysis; (3) contextual analysis; (4) theological analysis; and (5) special literary analysis].

 - **Eisegesis** exists when someone approaches the text with preconceived ideas and attempts to find passages that support those claims. (We should avoid this “proof text” approach).

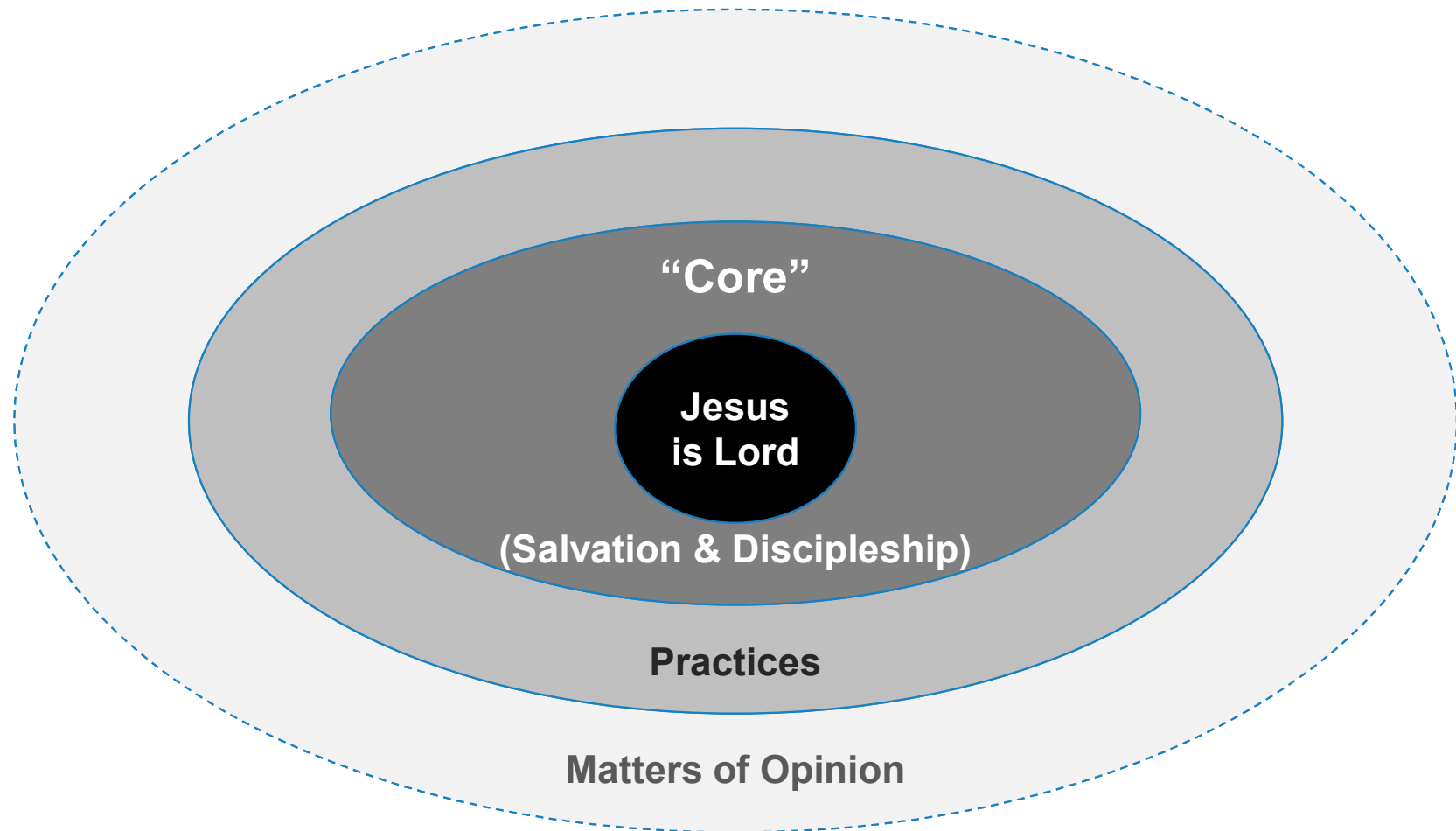
- **Hermeneutics** – examples of approaches:
 - **Literal (or Historical) Interpretation:** Understands the text in its plain and straightforward meaning based on the author's intent and historical context.
 - **Allegorical (or Typological) Interpretation:** Sees certain stories or elements in Scripture as metaphors or symbols that represent deeper truths, especially concerning Christ or the Church.
 - **Tropological (or Moral) Interpretation:** Emphasizes the moral lessons that believers can draw from the Scriptures.
 - **Anagogical (or Mystical) Interpretation:** Understands texts in light of their ultimate end and their eternal significance, especially regarding the last things (e.g., heaven, hell, the final judgment, and the culmination of history).

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- **Hermeneutics** –examples of other approaches:
 - **Pattern:** “blueprint” review approach
 - **Theological:** “holistic” review of broader context/themes approach
 - **Trajectory:** “analyzing the trajectory of God’s will as it is revealed over time.

- **In addition to a focus on “core” scriptures to enhance our spiritual health during 2023 and beyond, we will begin a study of the role of the Women in the Church – which we believe is a matter of Practice.**
 - We will include a series of lessons at midweeks, resources for self-study, some “deep dive” sessions, opportunities of other individual discussions, and one or more sermons – with the goal of completing our study and confirmation of our practices by the end of the year.
 - We ask for your prayers and patience as this will hopefully set a great precedent for how we engage in deeper Bible study and application of all of these issues at Cornerstone.

- Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. – **2 Peter 1:20-21**



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- All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. – **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

