

Doctrinal Questionnaire Writing Cohort
Session 1: Overview & 'The Scriptures'

What is the Doctrinal Questionnaire?

The ***Doctrinal Questionnaire*** (DQ) is a written questionnaire designed to assess areas of doctrinal and ministry compatibility with the Brethren in Christ U.S. It is to be completed and returned within *twelve months* after you have received a Provisional License.

The DQ is comprised of 43 questions covering 12 different topics related to your theology and ministry practice. It is organized in the following format:

- **Part I – DOCTRINE**
 - *The Scriptures* (6 questions)
 - *The Doctrine of God* (6 questions)
 - *Humanity & Sin* (3 questions)
 - *Salvation* (5 questions)
 - *The Church* (5 questions)
 - *Eschatology* (3 questions)
 - *Christian Ordinances & Practices* (2 questions)
 - *Understanding of Marriage, Singleness, and Sexuality* (6 questions)

- **Part II – PRACTICE**
 - *Christian Lifestyle* (2 questions)
 - *Case Studies* (2 questions)
 - *Serving the Church* (2 questions)
 - *Submitting to the Body* (1 question)

Responses to the DQ should be completed within the span of 40 pages worth of writing, with the questions included for reference by your review committee.

The completed DQ is reviewed by the Bishop, a Commission on Ministry & Doctrine (CMD) member from their Conference, and a number of other ministers. The review of the DQ may lead to further conversation and/or reading/writing requests for the candidate.

Following this the candidate will meet with the bishop, the CMD member for the region, and several other ordained persons for a ***Doctrinal Questionnaire interview***. The purpose of this interview is to investigate further the possibility of ongoing credentialed ministry with BIC U.S.

Part I – DOCTRINE, Section I - THE SCRIPTURES

The following questions are asked in this section of the Doctrinal Questionnaire. When writing your responses, be sure to include the questions within your document so that your review committee can verify that you have answered each section.

- A. State your view of divine revelation and the Scriptures. Give particular attention to biblical authority, principles of interpretation, and practical application in ministry.
- B. Comment on the role of the Holy Spirit in the inspiration and interpretation of the Scriptures.
- C. Describe the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament in understanding the Scriptures.
- D. Note how the interpretation of the Scriptures is impacted by the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- E. State your commitment to the Scriptures as the source of truth for ministry. In what way do they have authority over both your faith and conduct.
- F. What are contemporary issues or concerns with regard to the interpretation of the Scriptures?

In working on this section, be sure to describe your own views. The DQ is meant to determine your compatibility with the Brethren in Christ and your responses will be helpful for your review committee and for the interview. It is not meant to be a research paper.

Helpful Resources on “The Scriptures”

The following resources may be helpful for your reflection on the questions listed above. They are not required reading and you will not be expected to cite them in your DQ responses. But if you are unsure of your views on the topic at hand, you may find them to be helpful starting points on your journey.

Official Brethren in Christ U.S. Resources:

- Articles of Faith & Doctrine: Article I: [Revelation & Scripture](#) [MD&G pages 4-5]
- What we believe about the Bible: A Brethren in Christ approach to reading and interpreting Scripture [see attached]

Additional Resources:

- Owen Alderfer, "Getting Acquainted with Hermeneutics" *Brethren in Christ History & Life* 9.3 (December 1986): pages 181-202
- BICLife Podcast, Episodes 23-24: "How Do We Interpret the Bible?" with Bishop Lynn Thrush. Available at: <https://biclifepodcast.podbean.com>
- Bruxy Cavey, "The Authority of the Word of God in Print and in Person" *Brethren in Christ History & Life* 33.1 (April 2010): pages 195-211.
- Arthur M. Climenhaga, "Towards a Brethren in Christ Hermeneutic(s)" *Brethren in Christ History & Life* 1.1 (June 1978): pages 18-25.
- Daryl R. Climenhaga, "Interpreting the Scriptures" *Brethren in Christ History & Life* 10.3 (December 1987): pages 198-209.
- Rob Douglass, "Current Evangelical/Anabaptist Perspectives on the Inspiration of Scripture" *Brethren in Christ History & Life* 44.2 (August 2021): pages 173-198.
- Luke L. Keefer Jr., "Principles of Interpretation at Work in the Brethren in Christ Church" *Brethren in Christ History & Life* 35.3 (December 2012): pages 430-441.
- Luke L. Keefer Jr., "'Inerrancy' and the Brethren in Christ View of Scripture" *Brethren in Christ History & Life* 15.1 (April 1992): pages 3-17.
- J.E. McDermond, "Kermit or Aslan: The Bible and Spiritual Formation" *Brethren in Christ History & Life* 33.1 (April 2010): pages 152-176.
- Matthew R. Peterson, "Reading the Bible Through a 'Jesus Lens'" *Brethren in Christ U.S. Blog* (October 28, 2021) <https://bicus.org/2021/10/reading-the-bible-through-a-jesus-lens>
- Clark H. Pinnock, "Catholic, Protestant and Anabaptists: Principles of Biblical Interpretation in Selected Communities" *Brethren in Christ History & Life* 9.3 (December 1986): pages 264-275.
- Martin H. Schrag, "A Historical Survey of the Brethren in Christ Hermeneutics" *Brethren in Christ History & Life* 9.3 (December 1986): pages 203-236.
- Lawrence M. Yoder, "Why the Changes in Brethren in Christ Hermeneutics? A Sociological and Anthropological Analysis" *Brethren in Christ History & Life* 9.3 (December 1986): pages 237-263.

*Articles from *Brethren in Christ History & Life* may be accessed via the [Brethren in Christ Historical Society website](#) or at the [Messiah College Archives](#). Articles from *Shalom: A Journal for the Practice of Reconciliation* can be accessed at the [Shalom website](#).

If you need help accessing these resources please do not hesitate to contact me.

ARTICLES OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE

Introduction

As Brethren in Christ, we trace our beginnings from a group known as the River Brethren, which originated about 1778 in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Our forbearers stood in the stream of historic Christianity mediated through the Protestant Reformation, especially the Radical Reformation. They bore witness to the beliefs that set them apart by formulating a Confession of Faith. The first confessional statement of about 1780 and others that followed reflect the Pietistic and Anabaptist influences that have shaped our doctrinal understandings. Some 100 years later the Brethren in Christ adopted aspects of Wesleyan thought, which were incorporated into subsequent doctrinal statements.

Through the years we have reaffirmed and redefined our essential beliefs. In the 20th century, new doctrinal statements were adopted by General Conferences in 1937 and again in 1961. In 1986 we decided to give written expression to our current beliefs and life. This was done with sensitivity to and respect for our doctrinal heritage. We regard each previous doctrinal statement of the church as having its own integrity.

In preparing the doctrinal statement we affirm an understanding of scriptural interpretation that recognizes (1) the inspiration and illumination of the Holy Spirit; (2) the centrality of Christ in divine revelation; (3) the New Testament as interpreter of the Old Testament; (4) the scriptural focus on piety and obedience; and (5) the essential value of community consensus in the interpretive process. One must read the doctrinal statement as a whole, since each of the sections is closely related to the others. Moreover, this is a summary statement of our beliefs; the *Manual of Doctrine and Government of the Brethren in Christ U.S.* together with other publications of the church explain more fully our understanding of biblical faith and the Christian life.

Following the doctrinal statement is a listing of selected Scripture references. Since the statement grows out of the totality of the biblical message, these references are only illustrative of the scriptural truths identified in each section. Study of these and other related Scripture passages is important for a clearer understanding of God and His will for humanity.

Here then, in summary, is what we, the Brethren in Christ, believe about revelation and Scripture, God and creation, humanity and sin, Jesus Christ and salvation, the Holy Spirit and the church, eternal hope and judgment.

Article I: *Revelation and Scripture*

We believe that it is the nature of God to make Himself known. God reveals Himself to humanity in various ways, most clearly in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. We accept these divinely inspired writings as the authoritative Word of God.

Revelation in nature, history, and the Son

The world of nature and God's sustaining care of it speak of His existence and power. In addition, God has placed a sense of right and wrong in human hearts. This revelation through nature and conscience is partial and incomplete.

Therefore God has acted in history to reveal Himself to humanity. Through Abraham, God began to form a covenant community that would reveal God and His will to all humanity. Through His words, acts, and relationship with the people of Israel, God has made His person and purposes known in order to provide salvation to all who respond in faith and obedience.

In all of this, God was preparing for the time when He would reveal Himself preeminently through His Son, Jesus Christ—the “Word made flesh.”

Scripture, the record of revelation

The Christian Scriptures complete the revelation of God. They recount and interpret God's action in creation, in human events, in God's saving acts for Israel, in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and in the life of the New Testament church.

The Scriptures are God's message, written by people in their own language and settings, as inspired by the Holy Spirit. This same Spirit guided the processes of selection and transcription through which the Scriptures were passed on to us. Therefore the Bible is the authoritative and reliable Word of God.

We believe that the Bible, composed of the Old Testament (39 books) and the New Testament (27 books), is God's written Word. The Old Testament is the record of God's saving acts for Israel and of His redemptive purpose for all people. It contains numerous prophecies, many of which are fulfilled in the New Testament. The New Testament clearly reveals God in the person and work of Jesus Christ, whom God sent to be the Savior of the world and to establish His church.

The Old Testament prepares the way for the New, while the New Testament fulfills and clarifies the Old. They complement each other in a unified message.

Scripture and the Church

We believe that the Bible is God's message of salvation for all people. As believers, we accept the Bible as the final authority for faith and practice.

The Holy Spirit continues to work in the church today in teaching us how to understand, interpret, and apply the Scriptures through faith and diligent study. As believers open the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit helps them to discern God's truth and will from the Word. As the church gathers around the Word, the Holy Spirit leads God's people into all truth.

The Scriptures themselves are the primary standard for understanding and interpreting the Bible. The person, teaching, and work of Jesus Christ best clarify God's written revelation.

Christians are called to read and obey the Bible. Therefore the church needs to provide faithful preaching and teaching of the Scriptures. Individuals and families should practice Bible reading and study. As we read and respond obediently to the counsel of God's Word, our statements of belief have integrity.

Article II: God and Creation

The Bible opens with the words, "In the beginning God created. . . ." This dramatic statement declares God to be the eternal source and foundation of all that is. The Bible proceeds to reveal the person, nature, and character of the triune God who forever is—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Nature of God

We believe in one sovereign, true, and living God, creator and preserver of all things. God knows all things, is all-powerful, and transcends time and space. God is a personal being, revealing His righteousness, truth, and grace to all people. He calls everyone to respond to Him in reverence and obedience. God is perfect, just, and good. God is holy, calling us to righteousness. God is love, bridging the distance between Himself and us, reaching out in redemption to draw us to Himself.

God's self-disclosure has been progressive. Even though God transcends human perception and language, He has revealed Himself in Scripture, entered human history in the person of Jesus Christ, and comes to live in us by the Holy Spirit. As God opens our understanding by the Scriptures and by the Holy Spirit, we gain knowledge of Him. Thus, as believers, we bow before Him in worship.

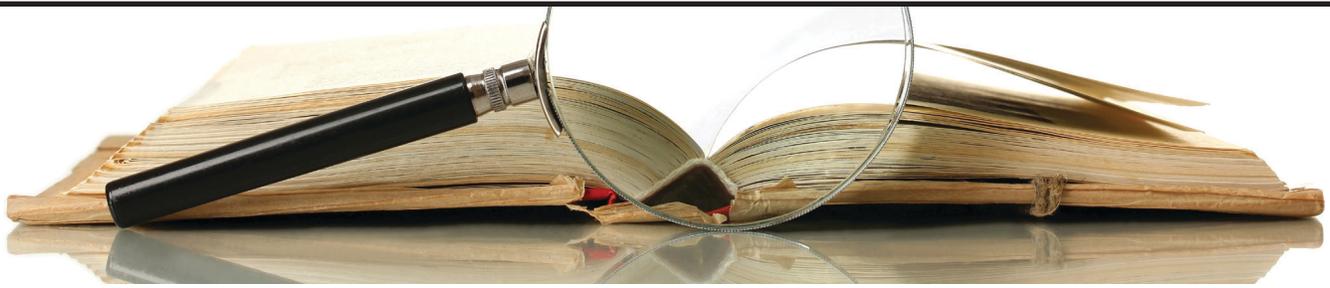
Creation and providence

God created all things, visible and invisible, including all spiritual beings. All creation is finite and dependent upon the Creator, who was before all things and will continue forever.

God's work of creation was good, both physically and morally. God blessed creation with His loving-kindness. Although God upholds and governs creation by the power of His will, God has given humanity the role of caretaker of the earth. Therefore we are responsible for its cultivation and preservation, and our use of its resources.

What we believe about the Bible

A Brethren in Christ approach to reading and interpreting Scripture



From our earliest days, Brethren in Christ believers have maintained a profound commitment to the Bible as the source for Christian belief and practice. In February 2013, 38 women and men from across the Brethren in Christ Church in the U.S. gathered for a Consultation on the Nature of Scripture to reaffirm our commitment to God's Word and work towards a common understanding of biblical interpretation.

The 10 principles that emerged from this Consultation are intended to summarize our core beliefs about the nature of the Bible, as well as provide some basic guidelines for reading and interpreting it. As self-described "people of the Book," we view this as a way to reemphasize the value that we place on the Bible as God's authoritative Word and to renew our pledge to study it together and build our lives on its truth.

10 guidelines for reading and interpreting Scripture

1. We believe the Bible, as composed of the Old Testament (39 books) and the New Testaments (27 books), is the divinely inspired, authoritative Word of God.
→ *2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21*
2. We believe the Bible is God's message, written by people in their own language, literary style, and cultural setting as inspired by the Holy Spirit. We hold it to be a trustworthy account of God's interaction with humankind to make God's nature and purposes known to the world.
→ *Acts 1:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 1:1-2; 1 Peter 1:10-11; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 John 1:1-3*
3. We believe the Bible invites all people to experience God's saving grace, ultimately offered through Jesus Christ, and to participate in God's redemptive purposes for humanity and creation.
→ *Ephesians 1:7-10, 2:4-7*
4. We believe the Bible, as God's Word, is our final authority for faith and practice. As Christ's followers, we commit ourselves to studying it together and building our lives on its truth.
→ *Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17*
5. We believe that Jesus Christ is the fullest revelation of God and is central to our understanding and interpretation of Scripture.
→ *Matthew 5:17; John 1:1-5, 14-18; Hebrews 1:1-3*
6. We believe that the Old Testament should be interpreted through the lens of the New Testament while affirming the integrity of the whole Bible as God's written Word.
→ *Matthew 5:17-18, 21-48; 1 Peter 1:23-25*
7. We believe in the importance of determining the author's primary purpose, the cultural setting, and the literary genre when interpreting the Bible.
→ *John 20:30-31; 1 Corinthians 10:1-11; Hebrews 1:1-2*
8. We believe that the Christian community, as informed by Christian tradition, is the most reliable context for the study and understanding of Scripture.
→ *Acts 2:42, 17:11; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 1 Timothy 3:14-16*
9. We believe that diligent and prayerful study, illuminated by the Holy Spirit and accompanied by an attitude of humility and faith, are fundamental in determining the heart of God in Scripture.
→ *Psalms 19:7, 119:11; John 16:13; Hebrews 4:12-13, 11:6*
10. We believe that the proper interpretation of Scripture ultimately leads to a change of heart and a change in behavior, and makes God's redemption available to every person and to all of creation.
→ *Matthew 7:24; Luke 11:28; John 14:23-24; Acts 3:19-21; Romans 15:4; Ephesians 1:7-10; 1 Thessalonians 2:13*

