

On the profession of our faith...

[Because¹ if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. Romans 10:9-10

Goal for Church Covenant Study

To understand and fulfill our covenant relationship with God (God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit) and each other.

Objective

As a result of participating in this Covenant Discipleship Group learning experience, we will be able to profess of our faith by addressing the following questions:

- Why do we profess our faith?
- How do we profess our faith?

Covenant Emphasis for this Session

The underlined phrase serves as the basis for this session.

Having been led, as we believe, by the spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior; and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels and this assembly most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

Why do we profess our faith?

We profess our faith that we may declare and affirm who we are and who the Lord our God is. When we are led by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, we move to profess our faith. Our profession of faith is our declaration of:

- who the Lord our God is, where and in whom the Lord our God is revealed;
- what the Lord our God has done for us and offers to all of humanity if persons will acknowledge and submit to God as God;
- what the Lord our God requires of us;
- our intention with the help of the Holy Spirit to live our lives in accordance with God's will and to serve as God's agents.
- our commitment to be open disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We profess our faith in God through Jesus Christ that we may claim God's gift of salvation. Profession of faith is a response to the proclamation of the Gospel. We respond by receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Jesus charged people to confess him, *"Therefore, everyone who acknowledges me before people, I also will acknowledge before my Father" (Matthew 10: 32)*. The apostle Paul said, *"Because if you confess with your mouth "Jesus is Lord" and in your heart you have faith that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Trusting with the heart leads to righteousness and confessing with the mouth leads to salvation" (Romans 10:9-10)*. If we have received the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, we will want to profess this faith to all.

We profess our faith in God through Jesus Christ that we may ward off the attacks of the evil one or those who are enemies of God (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4.1-13; John 16:18-25). When we profess our faith, we will encounter opposition. Some people might despise us, say critical things about us, and make life more difficult for us. Actually, when we profess our faith from the beginning, it removes the questions in people's minds about who we are. They might have thought that we were just persons in the world—indulging in worldly pleasures and ways. When we make it clear from the beginning that we love the Lord Jesus and are living to and for him, they will seek to come against us. We have to keep professing our faith in Jesus Christ that we may remain faithful to our commitment

We profess our faith in God through Jesus Christ that we may openly declare to others that we have made a decision not only to accept Jesus Christ but to follow Jesus Christ. We follow Jesus Christ when we become and serve him as a part of the church, the body of Christ. Acceptance is passive. Following is active. Following Jesus requires

- leaving things behind and being with Jesus by listening to him through the Scriptures, hearing his words, and sharing in the community of faith (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; 3:13-19; Luke 5:1-11),

- laying down our lives that we might find it (Matthew 16:21-28; Mark 8:31-37; Luke 9:22-27),
- dying to self that we might discover the abundant life in the purpose of God (Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:36-49; John 10:10; 20:31; 21:15-19; Acts 1:8).

Professing our faith enables us to put our faith into action and to serve as agents with Jesus in fulfilling God's purpose.

How do we profess our faith?

To profess our faith, we make use of resources that have been made available to us through the church. Our primary resource is the Scriptures but other resources serve to help us articulate our faith which is reflected in the Scriptures, the traditions of the church, our African American history/experience, and human history/experience.

Our profession of faith identifies us with

- the Church Universal (Apostles' Creed),
- our particular church tradition and communion, (in our case it is Baptist expressed in our Articles of Faith and Church Covenant),
- our local church family (MAABC) expressed in our MAABC Confession of Faith and other faith sayings,
- our personal faith based on our reading of Scripture, our tradition, and our experience processed by reason personally and in community.