

# The Doctrines and Principles Contained in the Articles of Faith

By Elder L. Tom Perry  
*Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*



Each article of faith adds unique value to our understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When I was given the assignment to speak in the priesthood session of general conference, I immediately thought of a wonderful Primary teacher. Her great desire was to prepare us to be worthy of receiving the priesthood. She grilled us on the requirements then in place for graduation from Primary—memorize the names of the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Articles of Faith. She also made us a promise—if all of us could recite the thirteen Articles of Faith by memory, we could choose the place and go on an outing for our last class.

We decided on a special spot we liked to hike to on the rocky slopes just above the first dam at the entrance of Logan Canyon, in northern Utah. There was a small, flat space in these rocky cliffs that had a natural fireplace where you could cook hot dogs and roast marshmallows. When we chose the location, however, we did not consider our teacher, who was older and certainly not the athletic type. If we had thought about it more carefully, it might have occurred to us that she would have a difficult time making the hike. Her promise was her bond, however, and she gamely followed us.

First we climbed up the small hill. In our day there were no power lines to prevent access. With some help our teacher made it up the hill. Once over the top we dropped down into a rocky ridge to a place we called “Turtle Back.”

After we arrived, it took our teacher a little while to catch her breath. By the time we prepared to sit down and eat, she had recovered enough to teach us our final lesson. She told us how she had enjoyed teaching us in Primary for the last two years. She complimented us on how we had mastered the Articles of Faith. She could call out the number of any one of them, and we could quote it back to her. Then she said memorizing the Articles of Faith would mean nothing more than a lot of words unless we understood the doctrines and principles contained in them. She encouraged us to study the gospel doctrine taught in each of the Articles of Faith. She explained that the doctrine found in the Articles of Faith was divided into sections.

## I. The Godhead and the Basic Doctrine of Christ

We learn from the first article of faith that the Godhead is three personages: God the Father, Jesus the Christ, and the Holy Ghost.

The second article teaches us that we are responsible for our own actions on earth.

The third gives a vision of the Savior's mission for the salvation of Father in Heaven's children.

The fourth teaches the importance of basic principles and ordinances.

The power of our teacher's words has been a source of inspiration to me because of the emphasis she placed on gospel study. The scriptures guide us to a standard of truth by which we can judge the knowledge we are receiving, whether it be true or false. True doctrine comes from God, the source and foundation of all truths. The teachings and concepts of true doctrine are found in the gospel of our Lord and Savior. False teachings come from Satan, the father of all lies. His desire is to pervert, change, and alter revealed truths. He wants to deceive us so some of us will lose our way along the journey back to our heavenly home.

The scriptures teach us how to avoid false teachings. For example, in Paul's letter to Timothy we read:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

"That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

This doctrine is to the Church like a battery is to a cell phone. When you remove the battery from your cell phone, it becomes useless. A church in which true doctrine is no longer taught is similarly useless. It cannot guide us back to our Heavenly Father and our eternal home.

## II. Organization and Order of the Priesthood

After we start to understand the basic doctrine of Christ, the fifth and sixth articles of faith teach us about the organization and order of the priesthood. Under the direction of the Lord, Joseph Smith organized the Savior's Church using priesthood authority—the power of God. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the same organization that Christ organized and directed while He was on the earth.

What a glorious day it was for Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in May 1829 when they went into the woods to pray about the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins that they had read about while translating the Book of Mormon. There were many teachings about baptism being taught by different churches in the early 1800s, and Joseph and Oliver knew they could not all be true. They wanted to know about the correct manner of baptism and also who had the authority to baptize.

In answer to their petitions to the Lord, a messenger from heaven, John the Baptist, appeared to them. He placed his hands on their heads and conferred upon them the authority to baptize with these words: "Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron" (D&C 13:1).

What a marvelous day in the history of the world! The priesthood was restored to the earth.

When we receive the priesthood, we receive the authority to act in the name of God and lead in ways of truth and righteousness. This authority is a vital source of righteous power and influence for the benefit of God's children on earth and will last beyond the veil. It was necessary for the priesthood to be restored before the true Church of Jesus Christ could be organized. This is the fundamental lesson we learn from the fifth and sixth articles of faith.

### III. Eternal Resources in a Mortal Journey

The next three articles of faith—seven, eight, and nine—outline resources available to instruct us in our mortal journey. We are given spiritual gifts to guide us as we follow the Lord’s teachings and to protect us from evil. The scriptures are another guide; if we read carefully the word of God, He will reveal our path back to eternal life.

The ninth article of faith teaches us that God has revealed, does reveal, and will reveal in the future many great and important truths to His prophets, seers, and revelators. We learn that in addition to listening to the still, small voice of the Spirit and reading the scriptures, another source of guidance is our Church leaders, who are chosen, called, and set apart to bless our lives through the lessons they teach.

### IV. Member Missionaries

The tenth, eleventh, and twelfth articles of faith instruct us on how to conduct missionary work and share the gospel in a world of many nations and various laws. We learn about the gathering of Israel in preparation for the Second Coming of the Savior. We are instructed that men and women are agents unto themselves, and they can either accept or reject the word of God according to their own conscience. Finally, we learn as we spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to the four corners of the earth that we must respect the governments of each nation we enter. Truly, we believe in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law of each land.

### V. Aspirational Attributes

The thirteenth article of faith provides special insight into how we should conduct our lives and present ourselves. It reads: “We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.”

All of us should aspire to embody these attributes and lead lives that exemplify them. The truths taught in the Articles of Faith build upon one another like the components of a cell phone mutually supporting one another. Like the elaborate supply chain that adds components to a cell phone, the Articles of Faith supply us with key doctrines of the Restoration. Each article of faith adds unique value to our understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

My Primary teacher instilled in me a determination to study the doctrines of the kingdom. She taught me to seek the deep meaning contained in these simple Articles of Faith. She promised me that if I would invest in learning these sacred truths, the knowledge I acquired would change my life for the better, and I testify to you that it has.

After my teacher’s wonderful lesson on that mountain in Logan Canyon, we noticed that we had stayed a little longer than we had planned. The evening was drawing to a close, and we realized we had a problem.

My teacher had struggled to arrive at our special spot, but returning presented a major challenge for us. This only compounded the poor selection of a place for our outing. The climb back was difficult for us, but even more so for a person of her age.

As we struggled to help her back up the hill, two policemen appeared. The Primary president had sent them out

to find us, fearing we were lost. The drama of the event and the lessons taught made it an unforgettable experience in my life.

You young men—I encourage you to use your bright minds to study and learn the Articles of Faith and the doctrines they teach. They are among the most important and certainly the most concise statements of doctrine in the Church. If you will use them as a guide to direct your studies of the gospel of Jesus Christ, you will find yourself prepared to declare your witness of the restored truth to the world. You will be able to declare in simple, straightforward, and profound ways the core beliefs you hold dear as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I add my testimony to the truthfulness of the thirteen Articles of Faith in the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen.

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