

AFFILIATION TALK

(Program Director: this is a scripted talk and you are free to make it your own or use it as it is. Just be sure to cover the essential ideas. This is a first draft, so I will welcome your suggestions for improvements for future use—Dan Denk)

A. Why Affiliate?

1. If you carefully consider the Purpose Statement of InterVarsity and the Doctrinal Basis, and you can say, "Yes, that is what I believe," then you are invited to affiliate with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.
2. To affiliate means that you have the opportunity to form a partnership with 560 campuses across the country, and with 150 countries around the world (as part of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students—IFES).
3. Affiliation with InterVarsity assures parents and churches that you are a part of a biblical evangelical group on campus, not a secret club or cult group. You are part of a group that is at the center of historic Christian faith.
4. Affiliation gives you access to a wide range of InterVarsity resources:
 - InterVarsity staff who provide training and coaching
 - Conferences, camps, Urbana, short-term missions projects
 - An online library of materials, publicity, ideas for reaching the campus and growing in your faith
 - InterVarsity Press books at a discounted rate
5. Other advantages of formal affiliation
 - Continuity of your group from year to year
 - Respect and recognition by the administration
 - Exposure to evangelical Christians from various denominations who share a common vision
 - Assurance that student leaders will be held accountable to clear biblical standards

(Response time in Leadership Teams: Which of these values stand out as most important to you?) (5 minutes)

B. Let me walk you through the InterVarsity Purpose Statement.

This is why we exist on campus.

(Make sure they have a copy of the Purpose Statement to look at)

In response to God's love, grace, and truth (this in God's idea and a part of his Great Commission)

The purpose of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship USA is

To establish and advance (our mandate)

At colleges and universities (our context)

Witnessing communities (our strategy: groups, not individuals; missional, not clubs)

Of students and faculty (our target group of people)

Who follow Jesus as Savior and Lord: (our calling)

Growing in Love (the four loves; these will be the qualities that characterize our witnessing communities)

For God

God's Word

God's people of every ethnicity and culture and

God purposes in the world

C. Why a Doctrinal Basis?

The idea of a short, concise, summary of Christian beliefs (doctrines) has a strong biblical and historical precedent. They are sometimes called *creeds* or a *confession of faith*.

1. The earliest one can be found in Deut. 6:4, "*Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.*" This was the center of Israel's faith (and ours). It is called the *Shema* (Heb. *Hear*). It is followed by "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength*" which Jesus said is the greatest commandment.
2. New Testament creeds: *Phil 2:6-11, Col 1:15-20, I Tim 3:16, II Tim 2:11-13, Rom 10:9, I Cor 15:3-4.*

Let's just look at one—Rom 10:9, "*That if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*" The actual confession, or creed, is simply—*Jesus is Lord*, but you must also believe in his resurrection.

3. Early church. The early church established creeds, or statements of doctrinal beliefs to deal with heresies and to help faithful Christians recite their faith in a clear summary form. The Apostles Creed dates back to the 3rd century, the Nicene Creed was written in 381.
4. Benefits of a doctrinal basis:
 - a. It can deepen and sharpen our understanding of what we believe.
 - b. It can protect our groups from false teaching.
 - c. It reminds us of spiritual realities in a world that does not generally think this way.
 - d. It directs the way we live, our behavior. False doctrine leads to false living (Titus 1:15-16).
 - e. It fuels our worship and mission in a healthy direction.
5. The following 8 points in our doctrinal basis define what unites us
 - a. There are many other doctrines, but these are the essentials for our mission on campus. We will have other beliefs but they should not become a basis of fellowship in the campus mission. It helps us avoid divisiveness over non-essentials.
 - b. We have found that this Doctrinal Basis is broad enough to include biblical Christians from all major denominations and yet distinct enough to distinguish us from various cult groups on campus.

(Response time in Leadership Teams: Which of these values and benefits of having a Doctrinal Basis seem most important to you?)(5 minutes)

D. Walk Through the Doctrinal Basis

Let's walk through the 8 points in this Doctrinal Basis to make sure we understand what it is saying.

(Make sure that they have a copy of the Doctrinal Basis in front of them)

1. The Triune God (*Gen 1; Matt 28:19; II Cor 13:14; Eph 1:13-14, 3:16-19, 4:4-6; John 14:15-17*)

a. Personal creator:

Because a personal God created the world, this world has meaning and purpose. As human beings, we derive our personhood from God.

b. The Trinity:

There is one God in three distinct persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This doctrine is so difficult to comprehend that we would not choose to believe it if the Bible didn't require it. In fact, God's nature is a mystery to us that we can only grasp imperfectly. The word *Trinity* is not found in the Bible, but it is the word that we have come to use to describe the Three in One God, which is clear taught in the Bible. Christians have sometimes been unfairly accused of believing in three gods, as being polytheists. This is not true. Christian faith is monotheistic, believing in one God in three persons.

The symbol that has been most commonly used in church architecture and stained glass windows to depict the Trinity is the triangle Δ . The triangle has three distinct sides but it is still one triangle.

There are numerous passages in the Bible that present God as a Trinity. Perhaps the most well known is in Jesus' Great Commission: "*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*" (Matt 28:19)

Other passages: *John 14:15-17, II Cor. 13:14, Eph. 1:13-14, 4:4-6, 3:16-19.*

Implications: God is by nature a relational God. The whole idea of relationship begins in the Godhead. This relational God chose to make us in his image as relational creatures, as distinct persons, so that we would have the capacity of having a relationship with the personal Creator of the universe, and with other people.

Our response: This doctrine is not to be fully logically comprehended, but to elicit worship of this glorious and wonderful Triune God.

2. The Bible (*II Pet 1:1-21, II Tim 3:16-17, Matt 5:17-20, Psalm 119*)

a. The unique divine inspiration

We might say that the writers of the constitution were *inspired*, but that is not what is meant here. The meaning is that Scripture is God-breathed. Inspiration is the process God used to guide the writers of Scripture so that the result was a divine revelation of God, that the Bible is the very Word of God.

b. Entire trustworthiness

The whole of Scripture, not just part, is a reliable guide for truth and living. As the Word of God, it can be trusted in all circumstances of life. During times of temptation (Matt 4:1-11), grief, doubt, confusion (John 14), we can turn to it again and again. It is to be treasured and revered (Ps 119). We should seek to learn the "whole counsel of God," not just favorite verses or portions of Scripture.

c. Authority

The Bible deserves and requires our full submission and obedience. We interpret our subjective experiences through the objective authority of God's Word, not the other way around. Scripture is our supreme authority in all matters of faith and practice.

3. The People (*Gen 1:26-27, Gen 3, Psalm 8, Rom 1:18, 3:10-18*)

a. By Creation. The whole creation was pronounced *good*. And human beings are uniquely endowed with value and dignity, being made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-27). We are the crown of creation, kings and queens of the earth. In the garden, humans were granted the capacity to love God and one another, in perfect innocence and fellowship with God (Gen 2).

b. By the Fall. The human rebellion against God has had devastating consequences (Gen 3). We now find ourselves alienated from God and with broken relationships with one another. We still bear the image of God though it is distorted and corrupted. This is due to the exaltation of the *self* with pride and self-centeredness, resulting in defiance against God and disregard for others. All of humanity is summed up in this way: *There is no one righteous, not even one* (Ps 14, Rom 3:10-18). This does not mean that we are

all as bad as we can be. But it does mean that evil has spread to every sphere of life and has infected every part of our being. We are prone to self-exaltation; to worship and serve our own desires. As a result, we find ourselves under God's righteous judgment against sin and in need of redemption. That is what Jesus came to provide.

4. Jesus Christ (*John 1:1-18, Col 1:15-20, Heb 1:1-4, 2:10-18*)

a. His Person. Jesus is the God-man, not half human and half God, but fully human and fully divine. In Jesus, God took on human flesh (incarnation). As such, he is able to be the perfect Mediator between God (the Father) and the people.

b. His Work.

i. Redemption (*Isaiah 53, Mark 10:15, II Cor 5:21, Heb 9:15*)

As the perfect sacrifice for sin, Jesus willingly gave himself to suffer and die on the cross for us. Because he took God's judgment for sin upon himself, he is able to provide forgiveness of our sins, freedom from guilt, and reconciliation with God.

ii. Raised and Ascended (*I Cor 15, Acts 1:9-11; Luke 24*)

Scripture teaches that Jesus was raised bodily from the dead and physically ascended to heaven to take his place at the right hand of the Father.

5. Justification *(see further notes at the end)

(*Rom 3:21-4:25, 5:1-2, 5:9, 8:33-34, Luke 18:9-14; Isa 6:7*)

Those who place their faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation are declared by God to be righteous; that is, in right relationship with God. This is a legal, courtroom term to describe another aspect of our amazing salvation. God, as the supreme judge, delivers a verdict of not guilty. This is not a statement about our character change (that comes later) but of our standing before God. The *grounds* for this incredible declaration is that Jesus bore our sin and guilt on the cross. Because we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection, we are delivered from any condemnation and his righteous life is credited to us by faith and repentance. This teaching, then, defines the Christian life as one of gratitude, not striving to find favor with God.

6. The Holy Spirit (*John 14:15-2, 16:5-15, Rom 8:9-17, I Cor 12:1-11*)

- a. God's Indwelling Presence.** The amazing truth is that God himself lives in every believer by means of the Holy Spirit, assuring us that we belong to God. To fully appreciate this truth, we must understand two things. The Holy Spirit is a Person, just like the other members of the Trinity. He is not an impersonal force or power (Eph 4:30). Second, he is God, an equal member of the Trinity (Acts 5:3-4). He is the presence of God in your life, testifying that you are a child of God. He is God's deposit or down payment guaranteeing the final completion of our redemption (Eph 1:13-14).
- b. He Transforms us.** Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as our Counselor, or Advocate, our Teacher who would guide us into all truth. He opens our eyes to understand the spiritual message of Scripture (I Cor 2:9-16). He renews our inner spirit until one day we are made alive in resurrection just like Jesus (Rom 8:11). He gives gifts to the various members of the Body of Christ to serve the church I Cor 12).

7. The Church (*Eph 4:1-16, 5:18-21; I Peter 2:4-10; Rev 4:8-11*)

There is one universal church, made up of all Christian believers of all ages and it is manifest in a myriad of particular churches, locally and historically.

- a. The Purpose of the church is worship,** to bring praise and glory to God that is appropriate to his name (Col 3:15-17; I Peter 4:9).
- b. The Mission of the church is witness;** to make disciples beginning at Jerusalem (local community), Judea (region), Samaria, (country) and to the ends of the earth (all nations) (Acts 1:8).

8. The Return of Christ ******(see further notes at the end)

(*Acts 1:11, Matt 24-25, I Thes 4:13-5:11*)

We believe in the personal, physical return of Christ. He will return in the same manner in which he left (Acts 1:11).

a. The King.

The Kingly reign of Christ began with his first coming. He is ruling now in his church and in the heavenly realm. It will be consummated at his second coming. At his return, his rule will come to the whole earth. The prayer which we frequently offer—"Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"—will finally be realized at his return.

b. The Judge

As supreme Judge he will make all things right according to his justice and mercy.

i. Hell (*Matt 7:23, 25:41, Rev 14:11, 20:15*)

Those who have persisted in unbelief and unrepentance, having rejected Christ as their redeemer, will be judged by their works and found guilty. They will be subject to eternal condemnation, separation from God, usually referred to as hell.

ii. Heaven (*I Cor 15:42, Rev 19:5-22:21; Isaiah 65:17-25; Matt 25:34*)

Those who have come to faith and repentance, placing their trust in Jesus alone, come under God's mercy. They are judged as righteous by nature of their union with Christ and are welcomed into eternal life in his Kingdom.

(Now move into Leadership Teams for the remainder of the time [about 20 minutes] to process the presentation and fill out the Affiliation papers with student leaders signing the documents)

TO GOD BE THE GLORY

Taken together, all of the aspects of this grand plan of redemption reveal the deep wisdom of God and should move us to worship God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Eph 1:1-14).

***Further background notes on justification**

In every world religion, people are desperately trying to reach up to God and to win his favor. In Christianity, God is the one who is reaching down to us with love and

grace. The doctrine of justification makes it clear that this is at heart a religion of grace and faith. It is salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

We (in the U.S.) are far removed from the biblical context of a monarchy.

But if you are living in a monarchy, the king is also the supreme judge. And if you commit a crime, you have not only violated the law, you have violated the king. If you are to be declared not guilty, you will need to restore your relationship with the law and with the king. If the king says you are acquitted, someone else bore your penalty, then you are indeed acquitted, and no one can condemn you. Your debt to society has been paid and cancelled. (*Isa 6:7, 27:9; Rom 3:25; Heb 10:22*)

Justification has to do with our standing before God. It is a one-time act whereby God declares us not guilty and puts his righteousness upon us. You cannot be "more or less" justified. You are either justified or you are not. We can be "more or less" Christlike in our character and behavior, but that comes after justification and is usually referred to as the process of our sanctification.

In the cross, God's justice and mercy meet. His justice is satisfied in that God's own Son bore the penalty for sin (Gal 3:13). In this way, God is both just and the justifier of all who have faith in Jesus (Rom 3:26).

One result of this truth of justification is that there is absolutely no room for boasting. "Where then is boasting? It is excluded" (Rom 3:27). None of us can take credit for our salvation or become proud of our standing before God. It is all his initiative. We did not earn our righteousness by keeping the law.

Another result of this doctrine is that we can have assurance that although our walk of obedience is still imperfect, we are still full members of God's redeemed people. There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. No one can bring a charge against us. "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns" (Rom 8:33-34)?

A dialogue:

God, the judge, says, "Here is my verdict—not guilty, you are innocent of the crime, righteous, acquitted, pardoned."

"But," you say, "I am not innocent. I know my heart. I know my selfish nature. I am full of sin."

And God says, "Yes, I know, isn't it wonderful? It is a gift that is yours by nature of your faith in my Son, Jesus; your faith in his death and resurrection."

"But," you say, "It doesn't seem fair. I don't deserve it."

God replies, "Yes, isn't it wonderful? You absolutely don't deserve it. This is not about what you deserve; this is about my grace. I know that you are still far from perfect, but I have accepted you in my Son to be my beloved child, and I have put

my Spirit in you, and I have set a process in motion that one day you will indeed be righteous because you will be fully conformed to the image of my Son.”
 “But,” you say, “Why me? What about all the other people?”
 The Lord says, “Oh, yes, my offer of salvation by faith in Christ alone is open to everyone who will repent and believe.”

Is it possible to be truly saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone without ever having heard of the doctrine of justification? Yes. However, you would be missing out on the full-orbed wonderful truth of the atonement of Jesus. You would be missing some important understanding and motivation for living your life for God out of deep gratitude for his amazing grace. You would be missing out on a great truth that should rightfully elicit praise and thanksgiving in lifelong worship. The disciple of Jesus who understands this truth will be both humbled and motivated to live a life that is pleasing to God and will desire to bring honor to his name because of the wonderful work of pure grace that God has done.

Is there any place for works? We are not saved by works, but we are saved for works (Eph 2:10). This is God’s design and intention for us. The presence of righteous deeds in our lives is also evidence that our faith is genuine and that God’s presence in our life is real.

Is faith a kind of work? No. In Paul’s argument in Rom 3-4, faith is presented as the opposite, or alternative, to works. It is not viewed as a work but simply believing God, or taking God at his word (Rom 4:4-5). Saving faith is understood as trusting Jesus alone for salvation. It is specifically faith in Christ’s atoning death and resurrection. Faith is the *means* of our justification, but it is not the *grounds* of our justification. The *grounds* upon which God can declare us righteous is the substitutionary death of Christ on our behalf. At the same time, genuine faith will move us to repentance and humility before God.

****Further Notes on the Return of Christ**

This doctrinal statement leaves no room for the doctrine of **Universalism**, that everyone will be saved in the end. This notion is growing in popularity, most recently presented in Rob Bell’s book, *Love Wins*, which made the cover of *Time Magazine*. While Bell does not compromise on the centrality of Jesus, he does offer a modified version of universalism. Jesus is at the core of his teaching and no one is reconciled to God apart from Jesus. Jesus is the only way. But according to Bell apparently everyone, or almost everyone, will eventually come to Jesus, who takes on many forms. After his statement on the exclusivity of Jesus, he says, “*Then there is inclusivity. The kind that is open to all religions, the kind that trusts that good people will get in, that there is only one mountain, but it has many paths* (p. 154).” Well, yes, that does sound like old-fashioned universalism

with a new face. The thorough treatment that Bell claims to present of Jesus' teaching on hell can hardly be considered serious exegesis. (I can provide a fuller response to Bell's book upon request).

Hell. It is no wonder that universalism is such an attractive viewpoint. Who wants to send people to hell? Hell is a terrible reality to consider. Which of us gets our kicks from thinking of others spending eternity in torment? (Unfortunately, this is the caricature that Rob Bell presents of Christians who believe in hell.) The fact is that most of us would like to ignore the biblical teaching on hell. It goes against our sensitivities. It conflicts with our own sense of fairness. In fact, if the Bible were not so doggedly unambiguous about this teaching, we might happily set it aside. However, it is Jesus who uses the strongest language about hell. He makes it clear that not everyone will enter the Kingdom. "Depart from me, I never knew you" (Matt 7:23). In the final judgment of the sheep and goats, some are welcomed into the kingdom. To the others, he says, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt 25:34,41). On seven different occasions, Jesus warns that there will be those who are cast into outer darkness where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth." In John's *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, we are told of those who are tormented for ever and ever and who have no rest day or night (Rev. 14:11). And finally, at the Great White Throne judgment, "If anyone's name was not found in the book of life, they were thrown into the lake of fire" (Rev 20:15). Granted, the imagery used to describe hell (or heaven) must be understood to be just that—imagery. Both heaven and hell are incomprehensible to us. However, the message is clear enough. Whether there is literal fire is not the issue, an eternity without God is one of torment and anguish.

Heaven. There is a great deal of sentimental nonsense about the afterlife in numerous poems, funeral messages, and popular books. We were living in England at the time of Princess Diana's death. Many of the notes that were left with flowers outside the palace expressed this sentiment: "*I did not leave you at all. I am still with you. I am in the sun and in the wind. I am even in the rain. I did not die. I am with you all.*" I find that most people who call themselves Christians have the notion of heaven as an ethereal, ghostlike existence, floating on clouds, playing harps, or howling in the wind. Many confuse heaven with the teaching in Greek mythology of the immortality of the soul. The Christian doctrine is that of the resurrection of the body into a glorious, imperishable body (I Cor 15:42). Heaven is described as "the new heavens and new earth," and it is a very physical, material kind of place, with trees and rivers, a city with walls and streets. It is a place where there is no longer any crying or dying, where the Lord's presence is known and enjoyed forever.