

Full

Convocation Theme and Teaching Vision, 2025–26 Houston Christian University



“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10b)

*For in [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,
and you have been filled in him,
who is the head of all rule and authority. (Col 2:9-10)*

*You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Ps 16:11)*

**Because God has taken our humanity fully into himself in his Son,
we are able to live fully the lives he lovingly created and redeemed us to lead.**

THEME: FULL

In A.D. 325, a pressing division threatened to upend the Roman Empire in a way no army yet had. This schism compelled the emperor Constantine to call together pastors and theologians to help clarify the church’s teaching on the question, *What does it mean that Jesus Christ is the Son of the One True God?* The gathered leaders did not invent a new answer to this question but set out to compose a simple creed that would consolidate what the church had always preached about Jesus Christ from Pentecost on.

The Bible is unequivocal in its witness that God is eternally and indivisibly one (Deut 6:4; Rom 3:30; Gal 3:20; Jas 2:19), that he simply and singularly is the source of all being (Gen 1:1; Ps 95:3–7; Isa 42:5–9; 45:5–7), that he alone is to be worshiped and glorified (Isa 42:8). And yet the Gospels narrate, the Epistles proclaim, and the Apocalypse anticipates a man—Jesus Christ of Nazareth—who possesses fully the divine identity and the right to exercise all divine prerogatives. The New Testament is clear that this is not a story like so many ancient religions, where a creature somehow ascends to attain divinity. Rather than an *apotheosis*, the Incarnation is a *kenosis* (Phil 2:6–7). In the words of the creed, “for us and for our salvation he came down from heaven...and was made man.”

And so the creed distills the scriptural witness to unfold the mystery of how “the only-begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true

God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father” is the very one who became “incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.” Jesus Christ is fully and truly God—eternal, unlimited, uncreated, all glorious; the Eternally Begotten of the Father, through whom all things were made, was made man—fully and truly human.

The Son took on flesh and our full humanity so he could suffer death and be buried. Because Jesus Christ is fully God, he could rise again in accordance with the Scriptures and ascend into heaven and resume his rightful place at the right hand of the Father. Or, in the Spirit-inspired words of the Apostle Paul, “For in [Jesus Christ] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col 1:19-20).

This saving work is for the good pleasure and glorification of the Triune God, the Father glorifying the Son so that the Son may glorify the Father by welcoming those who have believed to enjoy the eternal glory shared between the Father and the Son in the fellowship of the Spirit before the existence of anything else, visible or invisible (John 17:1-5). By Jesus’s own declaration, this incarnation of full deity joined to full humanity aims also at our redemption and restoration into the very life for which the Triune God created us: “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10b). Because the “whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” in Christ, we also “have been filled in him” (Col 2:9-10a). The Son’s deity has filled our humanity, and so believers have become “partakers of the divine nature” through the promise we have in him (2Pe 1:4). In the words of the great champion of Nicene orthodoxy, Athanasius, “He was made man that we might be like God” (*De incarnatione Verbi* 54.3).

Because God the Unbegotten Father and Jesus the incarnate Eternally Begotten Son are one (John 10:30; 17:21-23), we see in Jesus’s invitation to abundant life the fulfillment of Psalm 16:11’s promise that in God’s presence there is fullness of joy, and in the One at his right hand there are pleasures forever. Because Jesus is the source of all fullness, this abundance of life can be found in him alone.

All this is why Paul prays to the Father that the power of the Spirit would cause Christ to dwell in our hearts through faith so that we would come to know the full dimensions of God’s love for us in Christ and “be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 3:14-19). When we know the love of the Triune God, we are satisfied. We are full.

Seventeen hundred years after Nicaea, Christians in churches around the world continue to worship and confess their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who is fully God and fully man using the words of this early creed (as confirmed in Constantinople and translated into hundreds of languages today). In words of rhetorical beauty produced by theological rigor, the creed upholds the clear witness of the Christian Scriptures that God is ever and indivisibly one and that in the incarnation of the Son he has become one with all those who believe what the creed confesses. And as we confess together, we are united by the Spirit to the universal and apostolic church, enjoying fellowship with the one communion of saints across all times and in all places. We grow in this simple faith into the abundance of life that Jesus’s fullness brings to us—grace upon grace (John 1:16).

So throughout this year, Convocation will celebrate the anniversary of this trinitarian confession by steadily pushing out the edges of our understanding of this ultimately unfathomable mystery of God in Christ, by hearing our commission to be sent in the power of the Spirit just as the Father sent the Son (John 20:21–22), by seeking to become more fully alive by learning habits that invite us into greater intimacy with Jesus Christ, and by finding assurance for this life and the next in the inseparable work of the Triune God.

FULL TEACHING SERIES AND FOCAL LEARNING AIMS

Altogether, the teaching series for Convocation aim to develop the dimensions of the annual theme, and each series aims to teach at least one of the key learning aims selected from the four-year Convocation teaching vision (see HCU Convocation Vision and Strategy for a complete list of the 19 learning aims grouped in five emphases—*gospel, Scripture, wisdom, vocation, and mission*).

The Full Truth

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth....From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.
(John 1:1, 14, 16)

For in [Christ] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Col 1:19-20)

GOSPEL: We will regularly make a clear gospel presentation.

SCRIPTURE: We will continually show that the story of Scripture is united by and centered on Jesus Christ.

The opening series for *Full* will build the foundation to guide our year of exploring the reality and implications of Nicene theology in our lives as disciples of Jesus. After a week of orientation to the mission of Convocation at HCU and an introduction to the theme for the year grounded in Jesus's declaration in John 10:10, three messages will preach through John 1:1–18 and the three major movements of the second article of the Nicene Creed: ***eternal generation, incarnation, salvation***.

We will begin to know the Lord Jesus Christ in the fullness of his deity, as the Word and the only and eternally begotten Son of the Father, unpacking how John 1:1–5 introduces to us the one who is and who has never become “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father, through [whom] all things were made” (cf. Col 1:15–17; Heb 1:1–4). In the second week, we will consider the mystery of the incarnation and how God the Son, through whom all things were created, joined himself inseparably to his creation that he might graciously reveal the Father, redeem humanity, and restore the world (John 1:14–18; Col

1:18–20). In the love of the Triune God, all this is “for us and for our salvation,” and so in the third week of the series, we will conclude by proclaiming the offer of redemption and adoption as children of God that will come to all those who will believe in this name that is above every name, the name of the eternally begotten Son of God (John 1:9–13; Phil 2:5–11; Col 1:21–23).

Poured Out

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.
(John 7:37–39)

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” (John 20:21–22)

MISSION: We will teach the imperative of **evangelism, disciple-making, and global mission.**

VOCATION: We will help students to **understand and discern their vocational callings.**

VOCATION: We will exemplify how a **biblical worldview gives meaning and purpose to our academic disciplines and spheres of work.**

Because we believe in the Father, the Almighty, and in one Lord, Jesus Christ, we also believe in “the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life...who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified...” The Spirit who has eternally proceeded from the Father and Son is poured out into the lives of believers with the mission to unite us to Christ and to send us out to carry on Christ’s same mission. We are filled with the Spirit so that we might be poured out for the sake of others, just as Jesus was.

As this series begins following our fall Spiritual Emphasis Week, we will start with the story of **Pentecost** (Acts 2) and how the filling of the Spirit reorients and empowers us to live for the glory of Jesus Christ and to joyfully welcome the coming of his kingdom to earth (Acts 13:52; Eph 5:18; John 16:14). In the remaining weeks, we will consider four channels through which the Spirit moves every disciple of Jesus to pour out their lives in imitation of our Master: **global missions, ministries of mercy, personal witness, and our daily vocations.**

Because the Incarnate Son has given his life to ransom people from every nation, tribe, and language, we want to fulfill our calling to make disciples of all people groups, pouring out our lives so that the world will be filled with the glory of God seen in the face of Christ (Hab 2:14; Matt 28:18–20; Rom 15:19; Rev 5:9–10; 7:9–10.) As we seek to love Jesus Christ, we seek to pour out our lives in ministries of justice and mercy to “the least of these”—those whom the Lord Jesus has designated to receive the acts of love we would direct to him were he still present on the earth (Isa

58:6–12; Matt 25:31–46; 1Jo 3:16–18). While certain believers have been called by the Lord to focused roles in global missions and ministries of mercy, all believers have been given the Spirit so that we can be witnesses to the Lord Jesus, making the most of every opportunity in the relationships he has providentially placed us in (Acts 1:8; Eph 5:15–18; Col 1:25). It is not only those who are in “professional” ministry who have a calling from God; rather, every believer has been re-created in Christ with a vocation from God to do good works through their good work—the very work through which God himself providentially works in the world (Eph 2:10; 2Th 1:11–12).

Fully Alive: *Habits for Intimacy with Jesus*

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph 3:14–19)

GOSPEL: We will help students to understand the liberating power of the gospel in all of life by showing how a **Christian’s identity is securely defined by their union with Christ** and their participation in his very life within them.

GOSPEL: Through praise and proclamation, we will show that **worship is the “chief end” of human life.**

WISDOM: We will help students understand and practice the **basics of the spiritual disciplines.**

Jesus has come in the fullness of his divinity into the fullness of our humanity so that we can know life abundantly (John 10:10)—a life of fullness that properly images the glory of God. The Eternally Begotten Son took on every dimension of our created human nature so that no part of life that we have marred and broken by sin would be beyond the healing power of his redemption. As Gregory of Nazianzus wrote in the decades following Nicaea, “For that which [Christ] has not assumed he has not healed; but that which is united to his Godhead is also saved” (*Letter 110, to Cledonius against Apollinarius*). Graciously, Jesus Christ’s fullness fills us (Col 2:9–10) as we come to know the love of the Triune God expressed in Christ—a love which surpasses all knowledge (Eph 3:19). We grow up into the maturity of Christ’s fullness as we pursue biblical habits of formation that invite us into increasing intimacy with Jesus Christ (Eph 4:13), which fills our lives with the fruit of righteousness as our wills, desires, and affections are increasingly brought into conformity with God’s through Jesus (Phil 1:9–11).

Our “Fully Alive” series will introduce essential biblical practices for experiencing the abundance of life God intends for us to know through deep discipleship to the Lord Jesus. We will invite students to cultivate intentional habits to experience intimacy with him and express their devotion to him. We will begin with ***the foundation of our union with Christ*** to establish that we pursue the

fullness of life in Christ, not as a religious achievement but as the accomplishment of his finished work announced in the gospel—we find fullness only in the fullness Christ graciously gives to us (Col 2:9–10; Ps 16). But Jesus’s words and his incarnate example have indeed shown us the path of life in which we should walk: **deep engagement with the Scriptures** (Ps 1; John 5:24; 6:63; Deut 8:3; 32:47; Ps 119:107); **prayer and intercession** (Matt 6:7–13; John 16:23–24; 1John 5:13–15); **worship** (John 4:23–24; Rom 11:33–12:2; Rev 4—5); **lament and endurance in suffering** (Pss 6; 13; 22; 73; 1 Peter 4:12–19, Rom 8:18–39); and **intentional relationships** with our brothers and sisters who are a means of God’s grace to accompany us into the abundant life Christ has secured for us in him (Eph 1:23; 1Co 11:1; Phil 3:17; 1Th 2:7–12).

Full Assurance

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”
(John 10:27–30)

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Eph 1:13–14)

WISDOM: We will address **ambient anxiety and provide practices to cultivate peace.**

SCRIPTURE: We will help students to **make sense of suffering through the witness of the biblical story** and prepare them to **respond in ways that welcome God’s redemptive purposes.**

Our teaching series will conclude where the year started: with considering how the inseparable works of the Father, Son, and Spirit assure our salvation. We’ll conclude where the creed does: “We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.” Our heart and flesh can dwell joyfully secure because we know that the Triune God will not abandon us to the shadows of death but will surely welcome us into the abundant life of unending joy we anticipate in his presence (Ps 16:9–11). **The Father** guarantees our salvation by his divine honor (Heb 6:9–20). **The Son** holds us in his hand and seats us even now in the presence of God in the heavenly places, secure in his eternal authority and power (John 10:27–30; Col 3:1–4). **The Spirit** provides perpetual witness to our adoption as children of God and is himself the downpayment of our future inheritance we will possess in full at the coming of Christ’s kingdom (Eph 1:13–14; Rom 8:12–30; 15:13; 1Jo 3:24).

This series will answer pastorally the deep anxiety so many believers face today because they root their security and assurance in the uncertainty of circumstances, the fickleness of feelings, or even the confidence they have in their own convictions. The creed and the gospel it rehearses are a deep comfort to us, anchoring us in what is unshakably real whether we feel that in the moment or not.

Those who come to Christ weary and burdened can find rest as they confess that the Father, Son, and Spirit each and in unity care for them and will safely bring them home.

WEEKLY BENEDICTION

Because of the Community Life and Worship credit requirement for graduation, a necessary part of our Convocation weekly liturgy is the scanning of a QR code to allow students to register their participation. But to add to this moment a more intentional conclusion of the time of worship and to bless and commission all of us to go into the world affirmed in and animated by the gospel, we will close each service this year with “The Grace”—one of the New Testament’s great trinitarian benedictions:

*“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.” (2 Cor 13:14)*





Nicene Creed with Biblical Annotations

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, visible and invisible.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the
Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the
dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father
[and the Son],
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and
glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

Deut 6:4; Mark 12:29; Eph 4:6; 1Ti 1:17
Gen 35:11; 2Co 6:18; Eph 4:6; Rev 1:8; 4:8; 15:3-4
Gen 1:1; Job 38:4; Pss 24:1-2; 95:4-5; Isa 44:24; Rev 4:11
Rom 11:36; Heb 11:3
Rom 10:9; 1Co 8:6; Eph 4:5; Rev 22:13
John 3:16; 1Jo 4:9
Prov 8:25; John 1:1-2; 17:5; Col 1:15-20; Heb 1:5
John 1:18; Titus 2:13; 3:4; Heb 1:2-3
John 1:4-5, 8:12; 2Co 4:6; 1Jo 1:5
John 5:18b, 17:11; Col 1:19, 2:9; Heb 1:3; 1Jo 5:20
Ps 2:7; John 1:13; Heb 1:5
John 10:30, 14:11; Col 2:9
John 1:3, 10; Rom 11:36; 1Co 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2
Luke 2:28-32; John 1:11-13; Acts 4:12; Col 1:20; 1Jo 1:2
Matt 1:18; Luke 1:34-35; Rom 1:3-4; Gal 4:4-5
John 1:14; Phil 2:6-8; Heb 2:14-15; 1Jo 4:1, 2
Mark 15:25; 1Pe 2:24
Ps 22; Matt 27:50-60; John 19:30; Heb 2:10

Ps 16:8-11; Hos 6:1-3; Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; 1Co 15:3-4
Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9-10; 1Pe 3:22
Ps 110:1; Acts 7:55-56; Heb 10:12

Matt 25:31; 26:63-64; John 5:22-24, 25-29; 2Ti 4:1
2Sa 7:12-16; Ps 2:7-8; Luke 1:33; 1Co 15:24-26; Rev 22:1-5
Gen 1:1-2; Acts 5:3-4; 2Co 3:17-18; 13:14
Rom 8:2, 10; 2Co 3:6
Luke 24:49; John 15:26; Acts 1:4-5; Rom 8:16-17
John 16:7; 20:22; Acts 1:2; Gal 4:6

Matt 28:19; Mark 3:25; Rev 1:4-5, 4:5-8, 5:6-14
John 14:26; Acts 28:25; 2Pe 1:21
Matt 16:16-18; 1Co 12:12-13; Eph 2:20; 4:4; 5:26-27; 1Ti 3:15
Acts 2:38; Eph 4:5; Col 1:13-14; 1Pe 3:21
Isa 26:19; Dan 12:2; John 5:29; Rom 6:5; 8:11; 1Co 15:50-55
Matt 25:34; 2Pe 3:13; Rev 21:1-7; 21:22-22:5