



## **What We Teach**

*“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul,  
a hope both sure and steadfast....”*

Hebrews 6:19

December 2005



## Preamble

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God values truth! That statement should need little defense. Jesus, in His High Priestly prayer to the Father, petitioned the Father to “Sanctify them in truth. Thy word is truth,” [John 17:17]. The Lord understood the absolute necessity of truth and requested the Father to use truth to set apart His disciples for the purpose of bringing Him glory. Christian leaders are commanded by God to “speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine,” [Titus 2:1]. The careful attention to biblical detail in this doctrinal statement is presented to our local church with joy and great anticipation. John wrote, “I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth,” [3 John 4].

This statement of faith is created to be the guide of what we teach at Hope Bible Church. It represents the consensus of opinion and conviction of the Elders of the church concerning what the Scriptures teach. It is provided for the general instruction, unity, and guidance of our people concerning those articles of faith taught in the Scriptures. It is not expected that one must agree with the entire statement of faith before becoming a member of the church; only the basic doctrines below are necessary for membership (the full explanation and Scriptural basis for which are found on the following pages). Rather, the detailed statement is a challenge to each member to search the Scriptures and see if these things are true.

## Basic Doctrines of the Christian Faith

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- ✚ Every word of the Bible is inspired by God and is without error, so that the Bible is the only infallible rule for faith and Christian practice.
- ✚ There is one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- ✚ God created everything out of nothing.
- ✚ God is the one supreme ruler in the universe.
- ✚ Jesus Christ is fully God—the second person of the Trinity.
- ✚ Jesus Christ is fully man—the unique God-Man.
- ✚ God has supernaturally performed many special miracles, as recorded in the Bible—including the virgin birth of Christ.
- ✚ Jesus Christ never sinned; he lived a sinlessly perfect life.
- ✚ Jesus Christ’s death on the cross was a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins.
- ✚ Jesus Christ was bodily resurrected from the grave, and is now living victoriously over death.
- ✚ Jesus Christ will bodily come again.
- ✚ The Holy Spirit is fully God—the third person of the Trinity. He is a person—not an impersonal force or power.
- ✚ Every human being has sinned, and apart from Christ is unfit for Heaven.
- ✚ Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.
- ✚ Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and men.
- ✚ The Holy Spirit indwells all those who place their faith in Christ for salvation.
- ✚ The saved need to live a Christ-like life in the power of the Holy Spirit, turning away from sin, and showing love and goodness.
- ✚ Every believer is commanded to learn the word of God, to pray, to worship, to witness about his faith, to fulfill family duties, and to fellowship with other believers.
- ✚ Satan, demons, and angels are real spiritual creatures.
- ✚ Heaven and Hell are real places, and each person will spend eternity in either the Kingdom of Heaven or in Hell.



## I. WHAT WE TEACH<sup>1</sup> *About The Scriptures*

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### A. Revelation

1. The Bible is *special revelation*. Special revelation is direct propositional revelation from God. It is called special for two reasons: it is particular (not given to all of creation), and it is propositional (it is given through human language). [2 Chronicles 36:22; Isaiah 55:11 with 1 Kings 17:24; Acts 2:4-11; Revelation 1:1-3,11,19; 22:6]
2. Special revelation has been with man since the beginning and is necessary for man to understand himself and his world properly. Adam could not interpret his world properly without it. [Genesis 2:15-17; 3:14-19]
3. In contrast, *general revelation* discloses God's character to all people. It is not a propositional revelation, and therefore it cannot be read as a book. Discoveries in the sciences are not general revelation since they are not available to all mankind and do not deal with the character of God. [Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:19-20]
4. Special revelation interprets the meaning of general revelation. General revelation does not interpret the meaning of special revelation. [Psalm 19; Acts 14:15-17; 17:24-31]

### B. Canonicity and Completeness

1. The Holy Spirit inspired all 39 books of the Old Testament and all 27 books of the New Testament equally and completely. No other book besides these 66 belongs in the canon of Scripture. Other writings may be useful in understanding the Bible, but they are not inspired by God. The Apocrypha is not the word of God. [Luke 11:49-51; 24:44; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 3:15-16]
2. The Bible is complete. It contains all revelation necessary for the Church in this present age. No new normative revelation is being given to the Church today. The Church is to reject any teaching from claims of new revelations. [Ephesians 3:5; Hebrews 1:1-4; Jude 3,17; Revelation 22:18-19]

### C. Inspiration

1. The Bible is verbally inspired. Every word of Scripture is God-breathed. The Bible does not simply *contain* the word of God. It *is* the inspired word of God. The Bible does not convey to us simply inspired thoughts but actual inspired words from the breath of God. Therefore, it is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction. [Matthew 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21]
2. God spoke in His written word by a process of dual authorship. Both God and man are the authors of Scripture. The Holy Spirit so superintended the writing through the individual personalities and different styles of writing of the human authors that they composed and recorded God's word to man without error in the whole or in the part. [1 Corinthians 2:7-14; Hebrews 1:1; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 3:15]
3. The Bible does not *become* the word of God as it is understood and accepted by man. Rather, it *is* the word of God whether or not man understands and accepts it. [John 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 4:2-4]

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<sup>1</sup> Besides the Holy Scriptures, help in wording this statement of faith came from the following creeds and statements of faith (partial use of a creed or statement of faith does not necessarily mean agreement with the whole): *What We Teach* by Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California pastored by Dr. John MacArthur; *Articles of Biblical Faith* of the IFCA International; *The Westminster Confession of 1646* in the Puritan tradition; *Statement of Baptist Faith and Message* of The Southern Baptist Convention of 1925; *The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* according to the American Revision of 1801 in the Anglican tradition; *The Augsburg Confession* of 1530 in the Lutheran tradition; *The Second Helvetic Confession* of 1566 in the Reformed tradition; *The Schleithem Confession* of 1527 and *The Dordrecht Confession* of 1632 both in the Anabaptist tradition; *The Constantinopolitan Creed* of 381 from 150 eastern church fathers; *The Creed of Nicea* of 325 a creed of 318 eastern church fathers; *The Articles of Religion* of 1784 in the Methodist tradition; *Articles of Faith* Forcey Memorial Church in Silver Spring, Maryland.

#### **D. Inerrancy**

1. The Bible is absolutely inerrant in the original documents. It is true without any mixture of error in the whole or in the part. [Matthew 5:18-19; John 10:35; 17:17]
2. The Bible is completely true in all it asserts, including matters of doctrine, Christian living, ministry, history, geography, and science. [Matthew 19:4-6; 22:29-32; Romans 3:4]
3. The inerrancy of the original documents of Scripture written in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic, is not an irrelevant doctrine, but ensures the accuracy of all careful copies and translations of the Bible from the originals. [Matthew 19:4-6; 26:64; Mark 12:35-37]

#### **E. Authority and Sufficiency**

1. The Bible is the only infallible rule for faith and for Christian practice. The Bible is the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be evaluated. [Matthew 5:18-19; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12-13; 17:17; Hebrews 4:12]
2. The Scriptures are powerful and effective in transforming the believer into the image of Christ; God's words applied by The Holy Spirit are sufficient for life and for godliness. [Psalm 19:7; Proverbs 8; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3-9]
3. Since the Bible is the word of God, it is eternal. God's words will never pass away. [Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 5:18-19; 24:35]

#### **F. Interpretation**

1. The Scriptures are to be interpreted by the diligent application of the literal-grammatical-historical method of interpretation as the believer is enlightened by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not give a hidden meaning to the Scriptures but rather helps the believer to apprehend the meaning of Scripture already in the inspired words. [Matthew 22:29-33; John 16:12-15; 1 Timothy 4:13-16; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 John 2:20]
2. There is only one true interpretation of any passage of Scripture, but there may be several applications. [Matthew 22:23-33; Romans 4:4-10; 2 Peter 3:15f]
3. It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. [Joshua 1:8; Nehemiah 8:8; Matthew 22:29; Luke 20:34-44; 24:44-45; John 5:39-40; 2 Timothy 2:15]
4. There is a progression of revelation within Holy Scripture. The New Testament completes the Old Testament and anticipates no other revelation until the second coming of Christ. [Romans 16:25-26; Ephesians 3:5; Hebrews 1:1-4; 1 Peter 1:9-12; Revelation 22:10 compared with Daniel 12:4]

#### **G. Use**

1. It is the duty of every believer to be learning the Bible and meditating on its teachings daily. The Scriptures should be read, preached, studied, and carefully applied in every congregation. [Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-4; 119:11,97; Acts 2:42; 20:31; 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:1-5]
2. Nothing is ever to be added to or taken away from Holy Scripture. Rather, Scripture is to be guarded as a completed heavenly treasure. [Matthew 5:17-19; 2 Timothy 1:13-14; Revelation 22:18-19]

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## **II. WHAT WE TEACH *About God***

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#### **A. The Holy Trinity**

1. There is but one true and living God who eternally exists in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Three persons; One God—The Holy Trinity. [Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10; 45:5-7; 48:16; Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; John 10:30; 1 Corinthians 8:4; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2; Jude 20-21]
2. These three persons of the Godhead have precisely the same nature, attributes, and perfections, each deserving worship and obedience. [2 Corinthians 3:18; Hebrews 1:3,6,8; Revelation 5:13]

## B. God's Being

1. Spirit. God is a spirit, invisible to man, having no body or parts. Therefore no man has seen or can see God in His essential being. God can and has manifested Himself in various ways and at various times. However, these manifestations are not of His essential being. [Exodus 33:20; Numbers 16:22; Psalm 139:7; John 1:18; 4:24; 5:37; 1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16; 1 John 4:12]
2. Immutable. God's being and attributes are unchangeable. God does not fluctuate, grow, improve, adapt, learn, or evolve. From eternity past to eternity future He is the same God. [Numbers 23:19-20; Psalm 33:11; Isaiah 40:28; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 6:17-18; 13:8; James 1:17]
3. Eternal. God is eternal in existence, having no beginning and no end. God was not created, born, or caused. He is the eternal "I AM." [Genesis 21:33; Deuteronomy 33:27; Psalms 9:7; 41:13; 104:31; Isaiah 40:28; 44:6; 48:12; Daniel 4:34; Romans 1:20; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 1:8; Revelation 4:8]

## C. God's Greatness

1. Creator. God alone is the foundation of all existence from whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things. Nothing has existed or can exist apart from a creative act of God. [Genesis 1:1-28; Exodus 20:11; 1 Chronicles 16:26; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 33:6-7,9; Isaiah 66:2; Romans 11:36]
2. Self-Sufficient. God is alone unto Himself all-sufficient, in need of nothing from His creation and deriving no glory from them. God has no needs outside of Himself. The glory God receives back from His creation was first derived from Him. [Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 50:10-12; Isaiah 40:13-15,21-25; 44:6; Acts 17:24-25; Romans 11:36]
3. Transcendent. God is incomprehensible to the human mind. No one can have exhaustive knowledge of the transcendent God. No creature can ever have exhaustive knowledge of the Creator. [Deuteronomy 29:29; Job 11:7-9; Psalm 92:5; Ecclesiastes 3:11; Isaiah 40:12-31; Romans 11:33-34]
4. Immanent. Even though God is incomprehensible, He is at the same time immanent—close by and knowable. Though He is beyond total understanding, He can be known personally as He chooses to be known. Indeed, in Him we live and move and have our being. [Isaiah 57:15; John 14:23; 17:3; Acts 17:27-28; 1 John 2:3]
5. Omnipotent. God is all-powerful. He is the only omnipotent ruler in the universe. He has absolute power to accomplish whatsoever His will is to accomplish. Even Satan and all evil are subject to the plans and desires of the Almighty. [Genesis 17:1; 18:14; Job 42:2; Isaiah 14:27; 26:4; 46:10-11; Matthew 19:26; Luke 1:37; Philippians 3:21; Revelation 19:6; 21:22]
6. Omniscient. God's knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent of the creature. In His sight, all things are open and manifest so that nothing to Him is contingent or uncertain. God knows the future as well as the past. He knows and examines the hearts of all men. [1 Samuel 2:3; 16:7; 1 Kings 8:39; 1 Chronicles 28:9; 2 Chronicles 16:9; Job 37:16; 42:2; Psalms 33:13-15; 139:1-4; 147:4; Proverbs 15:3,11; Isaiah 29:15-16; 40:27-28; Ezekiel 11:5; Acts 15:8,18; Romans 11:33-34; Hebrews 4:13]
7. Omnipresent. God is all-present. He is infinite in being having no limits or restrictions to His size or to His presence. He is immense—filling and surpassing the universe. Nowhere can man flee from His presence. [1 Kings 18:27; Psalm 139:3,5,7-10; Jeremiah 23:23-24; Jonah 1-2; Acts 7:48-49]

## D. God's Goodness

1. Holy. God is absolutely holy and will not entertain sin nor allow it in His holy presence. Indeed, God's eyes are too pure to look upon sin with approval. He cannot even be tempted by sin. [Leviticus 19:2; 1 Samuel 2:2; Job 4:17; Psalms 5:4-5; 18:30; 34:15-16; 47:8; Isaiah 47:4; Ezekiel 39:7; Hosea 11:9; Habakkuk 1:13; John 17:11; James 1:13; 1 John 1:5; Revelation 4:8; 15:4]
2. Loving. God is loving, gracious, merciful, and full of lovingkindness. God loves and shows mercy based upon His own character—not based upon the goodness or the value of His creation. God's love extends even to His enemies. He provides for both the righteous and the unrighteous. He forgives even the worst sinner who turns to Him in repentance and faith. [Deuteronomy 7:7-8; Isaiah 63:9; Psalm 63:3; Matthew 5:44-45; John 3:16; 14:21,23; Ephesians 2:4-5; Titus 3:4-5; Hebrews 12:6; 1 John 3:1; 4:7-8]

3. **Forgiving.** God is a forgiver of iniquity, transgression, and sin, and rewards those who diligently seek Him. Basic to God's nature is the desire to forgive. God takes no delight in the death of the wicked. [Exodus 33:19; Deuteronomy 4:31; 2 Samuel 12:13; 2 Kings 13:23; 1 Chronicles 16:34; 2 Chronicles 30:9; Nehemiah 9:17,27-31; Psalms 100:5; 111:4; 145:8-9; Isaiah 55:7-9; Jeremiah 33:8,11; Lamentations 3:22-23,31-33; Zechariah 3:9; Luke 6:36; John 3:16-18; Acts 3:19; Ephesians 2:4-7; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 11:5; 1 John 1:9]
4. **Just.** God is also most just and awesome in His judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty. All sin will be judged, and His judgments are always righteous. [Genesis 18:21,25; Numbers 16:22; Deuteronomy 10:17; 32:4,35; 1 Samuel 2:3,10; 1 Kings 8:32; 2 Chronicles 19:7; Nehemiah 9:33; Job 4:17; 8:3; Psalms 19:9; 51:4; 58:11; 89:1; 92:15; 119:137; Proverbs 16:2; Isaiah 45:21; Zephaniah 3:5; Acts 17:31; Romans 1:32; 2:2-16; 3:4-6; 9:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-6; Revelation 15:3; 19:2]
5. **Faithful.** God is faithful to all His promises and covenants. His word is absolutely reliable. His character is completely dependable. His promises of blessing are always fulfilled. His warnings of judgment are real; apart from repentance on the part of those who are warned, they are always carried out. His predictions of the future always come true. [Genesis 9:16; Psalm 89:1-2; Jonah 3:10; Jeremiah 18:7-8; 32:40; Romans 11:2,29; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:24; 2 Timothy 2:13]

### **E. God's Sovereignty**

1. God has absolute sovereign dominion over His creation to do by them, for them, or upon them whatever He desires to do. [Genesis 14:18-20; Exodus 8:22; Deuteronomy 10:14,17; 32:8; 1 Samuel 2:6-8; 1 Chronicles 29:11-12; 2 Chronicles 20:6; Job 42:2; Psalms 103:19; 135:5-6; Isaiah 14:27; Jeremiah 23:20; Daniel 4:17; John 10:29; 19:11; Acts 17:26; Ephesians 1:11; Philippians 3:21; 1 Timothy 6:15-16; Revelation 19:6]
2. To God, as King of the Universe, is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatever worship, service, or obedience He is pleased to require of them. [Deuteronomy 6:5; Nehemiah 9:5; Psalms 100:1-5; 150:1-6; Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 5:13]
3. It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, beauty, and goodness, in the beginning, to create the universe out of nothing and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in six literal days. Moreover, all He created was very good. [Genesis 1:1-2:4; Exodus 20:11; 1 Chronicles 16:26; Nehemiah 9:6; Job 9:8-9; 38:4,7-10; Psalms 19:1,4; 124:8; Isaiah 44:24; 48:13; Jeremiah 51:15-16; John 1:3; Acts 17:24; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; 11:3; Revelation 4:11]
4. God, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably decreed whatsoever comes to pass for His own glory; yet not withstanding this, neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established. [Genesis 21:12-13; Deuteronomy 32:8; Job 14:5; Psalm 139:16; Isaiah 37:26; Daniel 4:35; Matthew 7:13; John 1:12; Acts 4:27-28; 13:48; Galatians 1:15-16; Ephesians 1:11; 1 Peter 1:17]
5. God works all things together for good to those who love Him. He has a plan that will glorify His name and bring blessing to His elect. [Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 8:28; 11:33-36; Ephesians 1:11]

### **F. God the Father**

1. The Father is the first person of the Holy Trinity and has all the attributes, perfections, and powers of God. [Luke 10:21-22; John 5:17-23,26,36-37,43; 17:1-5]
2. He is designated as Father to show both His relationship in the Holy Trinity and His relationship to mankind. The relationship He has within the Trinity of God is not one of superiority in essence. Rather He is Father according to His role and function within the Godhead. [John 10:29-30; 17:1-5; 2 Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 1:3; 3:14; Colossians 1:3; 1 John 1:2]
3. In the Holy Trinity, the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding. [Luke 11:13; John 5:19; 10:29; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 John 1:2]

### **III. WHAT WE TEACH *About Jesus Christ***

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#### **A. Jesus' Deity**

1. The Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity, possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father. [Isaiah 9:6; Micah 5:2; Matthew 28:18; John 10:17-18; 11:25; Colossians 2:10; Hebrews 1:5-6,8-10; Revelation 1:17; 22:13 cf. 22:16]
2. All the fullness of deity dwells in Christ in bodily form. He is worshipped by all the angels of God, given the titles of Lord and God and is the Creator of all things. [John 1:1-3; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Colossians 1:16; 2:9; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:5-6,8-10]

#### **B. Jesus' Incarnation**

1. In the incarnation (God becoming man), Christ surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind. He laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God and took on an existence appropriate to a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes. [John 1:1,14; Romans 1:3; 8:3; 1 Corinthians 15:47; Galatians 4:4; Philippians 2:5-8; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:9,14,16; 10:5; 1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 7]
2. In His incarnation, the eternally existing second person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God-man. [Matthew 1:16-18,23; Luke 2:1-21; John 1:1,14; 7:42; 20:27; Acts 3:22; Romans 9:5; 1 Timothy 2:5; 3:16; 1 John 5:7-9; 2 John 7]
3. Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness. [John 1:1,14; 20:28; Acts 17:31; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:5; 1 Timothy 2:5]
4. Our Lord Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin Mary. He had to be virgin-born to fulfill prophecy as a sign, and to not be born with a sin nature. [Isaiah 7:14-16; Matthew 1:16-18,23; Luke 1:26-35,38-56; 2:1-21]
5. Being truly human, Christ experienced all the things associated with true humanity. He grew and developed as a child. He experienced fatigue, hunger, thirst, and pain. Jesus Christ truly suffered, truly bled, truly died, and was truly buried. He was not a phantom, spirit or ghost. His agony and death included real physical torment. [Matthew 4:2; Mark 14:33-34; 15:37; Luke 2:40,52; 8:23; John 4:5-8; 19:28-29,33-37; Hebrews 2:18]
6. The purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom. Thus, Christ in His incarnation is The Prophet, our High Priest, and The King of Kings. [Matthew 2:2,6; 18:11-14; 21:5; Mark 10:45; Luke 1:32-33; 2:11; 24:19; John 1:29,49; 3:16-17; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17; 12:47; 18:37; Acts 5:31; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3]

#### **C. Jesus' Role as The Prophet**

1. Jesus, as the Word of God, perfectly revealed God to man. He is the exact representation of the invisible God. So perfect was His revealing of God, that the one who saw Jesus saw the Father. [John 1:1,14,18; 14:7-10; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3; Revelation 19:13]
2. Jesus Christ is the prophet foretold by Moses who would be raised up among His brethren and to whom the Jews were to give heed. No greater prophet has arisen or will arise among men. [Deuteronomy 18:15,18; Luke 13:33; Acts 2:36; 3:21-23; Philippians 2:9-11]
3. Jesus summed up the requirements of the Law of God in the two greatest commands of loving God with one's whole being and loving man as one's self. Christ revealed the spirit of the Law as coming from inner attitudes and rebuked hypocritical external conformity to the Law. [Matthew 5:22,28,44; 6:1-8; 22:36-40; 23:13-33]
4. As a master teacher, He spoke with unique authority and used a variety of methods of communication to impress the truth of God upon the hearts of the people. [Matthew 7:28-29; 22:18-22; Luke 4:16-21; 6:7-10; 24:38-39; John 6:5-6; 13:12-15]

#### **D. Jesus' Role as The High Priest**

1. Jesus Christ was tempted in every way that we are, yet without sin either in His body or soul. He always did the will of His Father. Jesus Christ was and is the only sinless human being. [Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13; John 8:46; 14:30; Romans 5:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 2:18; 4:15; 1 John 3:5]
2. Our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross, which fully paid for all our sins. [Isaiah 53:10-11; Mark 10:45; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:7; 5:2; Colossians 1:14,20-22; 1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 10:10-14; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 5:9-10]
3. Jesus' death was voluntary because no one took His life from Him, but He laid it down on His own initiative. [Matthew 26:53-54; John 10:17-18; 15:13; 18:3-11; Ephesians 5:25]
4. Jesus' death was substitutionary and vicarious because we should have suffered instead of Christ and because it was provided for our benefit. [Isaiah 53:4-6; Luke 22:20; John 1:29; 6:51; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 2:9,17; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18; Revelation 5:9]
5. Jesus' death was propitiatory because it fully satisfied the righteous anger of God against our sin. [Romans 3:25; Hebrews 9:11-15; 1 John 2:2; 4:10]
6. Jesus is the all-sufficient Savior of man. Indeed, He is The Savior of the World. There is no other savior given among men under heaven through whom man may receive salvation. [Matthew 1:21; Luke 2:11; 9:56; John 3:16-17; 4:42; 12:47; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 5:31; 15:11; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; 1 Timothy 1:1,15; Hebrews 2:3; 1 John 4:14; 5:11-12]
7. Jesus Christ was raised from the dead bodily (physically, literally), thus resulting in an empty tomb. His resurrected body was not a spirit, but had flesh and bones—yet it had capabilities that unglorified bodies do not possess. [Psalm 16:9-10; Matthew 20:19; 28:6; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:4-7,30-31,36-43,46; John 20:6-9,19,26-29; 21:12-14; Acts 1:3,9; 2:24; 4:10,33; 5:30-32; Romans 1:4; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8,12-20; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; 2 Timothy 2:8; Revelation 1:15,18]
8. Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven and was exalted to the right hand of the Father. He ascended into heaven in His glorified human body. [Mark 16:19; John 6:62; 16:5,7,10,16; 20:17; Acts 1:9-11; 3:21; Ephesians 1:20; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:3; 4:14]
9. At the right hand of the Father, Jesus Christ now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest. As High Priest Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses, represents us to the Father, and intercedes on our behalf. [1 John 2:1-2; Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 6:19-20; 8:1-2,6; 12:24]
10. Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. Christ, being the infinite God-man and being fully adequate as High Priest, is the only mediator God recognizes. [1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 6:19-20; 8:1-2,6; 10:11-12,19-21; 12:24; 1 John 2:1-2]

#### **E. Jesus' Role as The King of Kings**

1. Jesus Christ is Lord. He is the king through whom God will judge all mankind—including believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ, living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return, and unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne. Jesus Christ is the final judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior. [Isaiah 11:3-4; Matthew 3:12; 25:31-34; Luke 3:17; Acts 17:31; 1 Corinthians 4:4-5; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 2:9-11; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; James 5:9; Revelation 2:23; 20:11; 22:12]
2. Jesus Christ will return to receive the Church, which is His body, unto Himself at the rapture and, returning with His Church in glory, will establish His millennial kingdom on earth. [Matthew 19:28; John 14:1-3; Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; 5:2-3; Revelation 19:11-16; 20:1-6]
3. The exact day and hour of Christ's coming to receive the Church no one knows except God the Father. Believers are to be prepared at all times for the any-moment return of Christ. [Mark 13:32-37; Luke 12:37-40; Acts 1:6-7; James 5:7-9; 2 Peter 3:3-4,10-12; 1 John 2:28; Revelation 3:11; 16:15; 22:12,20]

## **IV. WHAT WE TEACH *About The Holy Spirit***

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### **A. The Holy Spirit's Deity and Personality**

1. The Holy Spirit possesses all the attributes of personality and deity. He is coequal and consubstantial and coeternal with the Father and the Son and is underived. [Genesis 1:2; 2 Samuel 23:2-3; Psalm 139:7; Matthew 28:19; Luke 11:13; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; Romans 8:2; 1 Corinthians 2:11; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:4; Hebrews 9:14]
2. Being a person and not an impersonal power, He has intellect, emotions, and a will. [Mark 3:29-30; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; Acts 5:3-4; 13:2,4; 15:28; 16:6-7; Romans 8:26; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11; 12:11; Ephesians 4:30]

### **B. The Holy Spirit's General Role**

1. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to mankind. Thus, the Holy Spirit sovereignly acted in creation, in the incarnation, and in inspiring the written revelation. [Genesis 1:2; Matthew 1:18,20; 22:43; Luke 1:35; John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13; 2 Peter 1:20-21]
2. The Holy Spirit sovereignly acts today in the work of salvation. He draws man to Christ, convicts him of his sin, regenerates man, seals him for eternity, and then sanctifies him. [John 3:5-8; 16:7-11; Acts 2:4,37; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; Titus 3:5]

### **C. The Holy Spirit in Relation to Christ**

1. The Holy Spirit performed a miraculous conception in the womb of Mary resulting in the incarnation of the Son of God. Thus, God becoming man and the existence of the God-man were the work of the Holy Spirit. [Matthew 1:20-21; Luke 1:34-35]
2. Jesus Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit in His preaching, miracle working, and healing ministry. [Matthew 12:18-21; Luke 4:1,18; Acts 2:22]
3. The Holy Spirit led Christ to the cross and raised Christ from the dead. [Romans 1:4; 8:11; Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 3:18]
4. The Holy Spirit always seeks to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit seeks to provoke interest in and devotion to Jesus Christ. [John 16:13-14; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 1 John 4:13]

### **D. Baptism of The Holy Spirit**

1. A unique work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost when He came from the Father as promised by Christ to initiate and complete the building of the body of Christ. [John 7:38-39; 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:7-15; Acts 2:1-4; 8:14-17]
2. The baptism of The Holy Spirit is not a second work of grace given only to some believers who seek it. It is given to all the moment they receive Christ as Lord and Savior. [Acts 10:44-47; Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:4]

### **E. The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit**

1. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer permanently from the moment of salvation. [Psalm 51:11; John 7:39; 14:17; Romans 8:9-10; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Galatians 4:6; 1 John 3:24]
2. This indwelling is the seal of the Holy Spirit guaranteeing our eternal inheritance and sealing us unto the day of redemption. [2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30]
3. Though the Spirit is grieved and quenched by sin, yet He never leaves the believer. [John 14:16; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19]
4. The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is an eternal sin and can never be forgiven. By the very nature of the sin, it cannot be committed by the true believer who is permanently indwelt by God's Spirit. [Matthew 12:31-32; John 3:16; 10:28]

### **F. Other Works of the Holy Spirit in the Believer**

1. The Holy Spirit works in the believer to transform him into the image of Christ. The believer must submit to the Spirit and cooperate with Him in this process of sanctification. [Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22; 4:22-24; 5:18]

2. Though there is only one baptism of the Holy Spirit, there can be and should be continuous fullness of the Holy Spirit during the life of a believer. [Acts 2:4; 4:8; 7:55; Ephesians 5:18]
3. The Holy Spirit illuminates regenerate people, whose minds are filled with God's word, to the application of righteous and wise living in all settings and circumstances and phases of life. In this way, He is the divine teacher working with—not outside—His inspired word. [John 7:17; 1 John 2:20,27]

### **G. The Holy Spirit's Work in the World**

1. The Holy Spirit today is convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He uses the lives and prayers of believers, the words of Scripture, and various circumstances of life to convince unbelievers of the truth of the gospel. [John 16:7-11; Acts 2:37; Romans 1:16; 10:17]
2. Only the Spirit of God can awaken a spiritually dead person to his sinful condition and to the truth of the gospel. Left to himself, man does not seek God. It is the grace of God that sends the Spirit to convince man of his desperate need for Christ. [Romans 3:10-18; Ephesians 2:1-5; 2 Timothy 2:26]

## **V. WHAT WE TEACH *About Man***

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### **A. Man's Creation in the Image of God**

1. Man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man did not evolve from the animals but was created by a special act of God on the sixth day of creation as recorded in the book of Genesis. [Genesis 1:26-28; 2:7; 5:2; 9:6; Deuteronomy 4:32; Job 33:4; Psalms 8:5; 100:3; 119:73; Acts 17:28; 1 Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9]
2. Mankind was created free from sin. Man had an original holiness and righteousness given to him by the Creator before the Fall. [Genesis 1:28,31; Psalm 8:5; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Isaiah 42:5; 1 Timothy 4:4]
3. Man was created with a rational nature, a self-volition, emotions, and moral responsibility. Therefore, God holds man responsible for his choices, actions, and attitudes. [Genesis 2:18-20; 3:6; 3:16-19; 4:7; Proverbs 12:14; Isaiah 1:18; 3:10-11; Jeremiah 17:10-11; Zechariah 1:6; Matthew 8:12; 11:20-24; Mark 6:11; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 2:5-12; 2 Corinthians 7:10-11]
4. Man is a two part being having both a material part (body) and an immaterial part (soul or spirit). The spirit, soul, heart, mind, and conscience of man are not separate parts of man but are different aspects of the one immaterial part of man. [Genesis 2:7; Matthew 10:28; 26:41; Luke 23:46; compare Acts 7:59 with Revelation 6:9; 1 Corinthians 2:11; 6:20; James 2:26]

### **B. Man's Purpose**

1. Man was created for the purpose of glorifying God and enjoying God's fellowship forever. Man was not created for self-indulgence, self-glory, self-satisfaction, or self-fulfillment. [Genesis 6:5-7; Isaiah 43:7; Acts 17:26-28; Romans 11:36; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11]
2. By carrying out the will of God, man was to accomplish God's purposes for mankind in the world. This purpose involves ruling over God's creation, and multiplying and filling the earth. [Genesis 1:26-28; 9:2-3; Psalm 8:6-8; Hebrews 2:7-8]

### **C. Male and Female**

1. Both man and woman were created in the image of God and are thus equal in God's sight. Man is not greater than woman, neither is woman greater than man. [Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-25; Proverbs 31:10-30; 1 Corinthians 11:11-12; Galatians 3:27-28; 1 Timothy 5:1-16]
2. Though man and woman were created equal, they were not created identical. The Creator endowed man with a male body intending man to act with masculine traits and to fulfill his distinct role as a man. The Creator fashioned woman with a female body intending woman to act with feminine traits and to fulfill her distinct role as a woman. Male and female together reflect God's image. [Genesis 2:18-25; 1 Corinthians 11:14; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; Titus 2:1-6; 1 Peter 3:1-7]

3. Since man was made first, he is the wife's head and her servant-leader. This role was established at creation—before the fall into sin. [Genesis 2:21-24; 1 Corinthians 11:3-16; 1 Timothy 2:11-14]
4. Since the woman was made from the man, she is his body and support. Woman was made for man to complement and complete him. This role also was established at creation—before the fall into sin. [Genesis 2:18-25; 1 Corinthians 11:3-9; Ephesians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:18; 1 Timothy 2:12-14; 1 Peter 3:1f]

#### **D. Family**

1. God instituted marriage to be between one man and one woman for one lifetime. [Genesis 2:18-25; Malachi 2:13-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:2-9; Romans 7:1-3]
2. Marriage is a covenant of companionship between one man and one woman in which the two become one. Supplementary purposes for marriage include the procreation and training of children, the completion of the man, and the picturing of the relationship God has with His people. [Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-25; Malachi 2:14; Ephesians 5:22-25]
3. God created sex to be enjoyed in the marriage bond, to promote the companionship between a man and his wife, and to provide for the multiplying of mankind on the face of the earth. [Genesis 2:25; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; Hebrews 13:4]
4. Any sex outside of this bond of marriage between one man and one woman is a perversion of the Creator's original intent and is therefore both sinful and harmful to man. [Romans 1:26-32; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; Hebrews 13:4]
5. Marriage is not required of every man and woman. Some men and women are gifted by God to live a single life to God's glory. However, marriage is a desirable position. [1 Timothy 4:1-3; Matthew 19:10-12; 1 Corinthians 9:5; 7:8-9; 1 Timothy 3:2]
6. Children are a gift from the Lord. They are given to bless the family and to extend the family's influence for good. [Psalms 127:3-5; 128]
7. God has given parents the charge and privilege to disciple (raise, train, educate, and motivate) their own children. Godly families should be encouraged to support each other, cooperating with each other and with the church to give proper training to their children. [Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:18-21; Proverbs 13:20,24; 22:6; 23:13-14; Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20-21]

#### **E. The Value of Man**

1. The image of God stamped on man gives all human life sacred value. This value is derived from God and is not self-originating. All human life, therefore is sacred, both the born and the unborn, the healthy and the infirm. [Genesis 1:26-28; 9:6; James 3:9]
2. Man is distinct from the animals because only man was made in the image of God, and was given life by the breath of God. [Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 8:1-9]
3. The image of God in man does not mean that man is God. There are certain attributes of God that man can never have—including self-existence, omnipresence, omnipotence, immutability, eternity, sovereignty, and omniscience. [John 17:3; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 John 5:20; Revelation 1:8]
4. Man in his sinful condition is neither pleasing nor useful to God. In this sinful condition, man's value to God is greatly reduced, putting him in an unfavorable position before Almighty God. [1 Samuel 2:30; Psalms 58:1-5; 62:9; Romans 3:10-18; 1 Corinthians 13:1; Hebrews 11:6]
5. God did not send Jesus to redeem sinful man because man had great value to God. Rather, God sent Jesus to redeem man in order to impart great lasting value to man. [Deuteronomy 7:6-8; Romans 5:6-10; Revelation 20:15]
6. Regenerate man has great value to God because he is now in Christ, Who has great value to God. This value of man is based upon the infinite value of Christ, not on the value of man from creation. [1 Corinthians 15:9-10; Ephesians 1:3; Philippians 3:3-9; James 1:9; 1 John 3:1-2; Revelation 1:6]

## VI. WHAT WE TEACH *About Sin*

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### A. Definition of Sin

1. Sin is an attitude or action that expresses independence from God and His standards. It is any thought, word, or deed with which God is not pleased. Sin involves both sins of commission (when man does what God forbids), and sins of omission (when man fails to act the way God commands him to act). [Deuteronomy 29:18; 2 Chronicles 12:14; Psalm 95:10; Proverbs 24:8-9; Jeremiah 7:24; Matthew 5:28; 12:31-35; Mark 7:20-23; Luke 10:25-37; Romans 1:26-32; James 4:17; 1 John 3:4]
2. Sin is believing a lie and doubting the truth of God. It is living pridefully rather than for the glory of God. It is living selfishly rather than as a reflection of God's love. It is the loving of the things of the world rather than the things of God. [Exodus 20:1-17; Romans 14:23; Hebrews 11:6; James 4:6-8; 1 Peter 5:5-6]
3. Sin is disobedience to the revealed will of God. It is lawlessness—breaking the commands of God. [Deuteronomy 29:18; Romans 5:13; 7:12-14; James 2:10; 1 John 3:4]

### B. Original Sin

1. In Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and word of God (the Fall), man lost his innocence, incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death, became subject to the wrath of God, and became inherently corrupt. [Genesis 3:1-19; 6:5-6; Psalm 51:1-5; 53:1-3; Romans 5:12-21; Ephesians 2:1-3]
2. Adam's sin was transmitted to the entire human race because when he sinned the whole human race was in Adam. Hence, every child of Adam is born into the world with a sinful nature. [Genesis 3:19-20; 4:1-5; Matthew 12:31-35; Romans 3:10-18; 5:12-21; Ephesians 2:1-3]
3. Therefore, man now is utterly incapable of choosing or doing what is acceptable to God, apart from divine grace. In this state man is totally depraved. [Genesis 6:5-6; Psalm 58:3; Jeremiah 7:24; Romans 3:10-18; 8:6-8; Ephesians 2:1-3; Hebrews 11:6]

### C. The Effects of Sin

1. Total depravity means that every aspect of man has been affected by the Fall into sin. Man's desires, his thinking, his will, his emotions, his conscience, and his relationships have all been tainted with sin. Total depravity does not mean that every single human is as corrupt as he possibly can be. [Matthew 7:11; 11:21-24; John 8:34; Romans 1:28-32; 3:10-18; 7:5; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Galatians 5:17-21; Ephesians 4:18; Colossians 3:5; Revelation 20:11-12]
2. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost. Sin has brought man into bondage to sin. Man in an unregenerate state cannot break the power of sin over his attitudes and actions. [Jeremiah 7:24; John 8:34; Romans 6:16-17; 7:5-6; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Ephesians 2:1-3, 11-12; Hebrews 3:13; James 1:14-15]
3. Sin results in both physical and spiritual death. Spiritual death involves being separated and alienated from God. [John 5:24; 10:10; Romans 6:23; 1 John 2:9-11; 3:14; Revelation 20:11-15]
4. Man's works of righteousness are as a filthy rag in God's sight because they are done for man's honor and glory rather than for God out of faith. Works of faith are evidence of faith, but works of self-righteousness cannot be acceptable to God. [Isaiah 64:6; Matthew 5:20; 6:1-8; 7:21-23; 23:13-33; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Philippians 3:2-9; James 2:14-26]

### D. The Extent of Sin

1. All men (male and female) are sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration—Jesus Christ being the only exception. [Genesis 6:5-7; Psalm 53:1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21-23; John 3:19-20; Romans 3:23; 5:12-21; 7:5; Ephesians 2:1-2; James 1:14-15; 4:1-3; 1 Peter 4:3]
2. All people have broken God's expressed law and have proven themselves unworthy of God's blessing and kingdom. [Psalm 53:1-3; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 16:17; Romans 6:23; Luke 23:40-41; Romans 3:9-20; Galatians 3:10; 5:19-21; Ephesians 2:5-8; 1 John 3:4]

## VII. WHAT WE TEACH *About Salvation*

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### A. General

1. Salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His precious shed blood at Calvary, and not on the basis of human merit or works of any kind or degree. [Luke 18:9-14; Acts 16:31; Romans 3:18-24,28; 4:1-8; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-6]
2. Salvation in Christ is complete, forgiving all our sins, providing for the resurrection of our bodies, and the restoring of the world to paradise. [Romans 8:11,18-25; Hebrews 10:14; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 John 3:1-2]
3. Salvation is received as a gift by personal repentance from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. [Luke 24:46-47; John 3:16; 3:36; 20:30-31 Acts 2:38; 16:31; 17:30; Romans 6:23]
4. There is salvation in no one besides Jesus Christ. All those who die without Christ die in their sins and without salvation. [Matthew 10:32-33; John 3:36; 8:24; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 2 Corinthians 6:1-3]
5. The purpose of salvation is to conform man to the image of Christ and unto the doing of good works. Obedience is what is expected of servants of Christ. [Luke 17:7-10; Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9-10; 2 Peter 3:11-13; 1 John 3:1-3]
6. The believer's union with Christ is the cause of all the other aspects of salvation. [John 15:1-8; Romans 6:3-8; 7:4; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 1:3,7,13; Colossians 2:9-10; 3:1-4; 1 John 5:12]

### B. The Atonement

1. Christ Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross. It was the death of Jesus Christ on a Roman cross in human history that made atonement for the sins of man. [1 Corinthians 15:3; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 9:12-26; 10:10; 1 Peter 1:18-20; 2:24; 3:18; Revelation 1:5; 5:9; 7:14]
2. Jesus' one death accomplished complete atonement for all time. The death of Christ never needs to be repeated, and no other atonement of any kind is needed. [John 1:29; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 10:10-14; 1 John 2:2]

### C. Regeneration

1. Regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the new nature and divine life are imparted to the believer. It is the new birth, which results in a change of heart leading to a growing obedience to the will of God. [John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5; 1 John 2:29; 3:8-10; 5:18]
2. Regeneration is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the word of God. [John 3:3-8; Titus 3:4-5; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 3:9]
3. Man does not contribute to his own regeneration but receives it entirely by the undeserved favor of God in Christ. [Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3; 1 John 2:29-3:2]
4. Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works will be its proper evidence and fruit. [Matthew 3:7-8; John 5:28-29; 15:1-6; Romans 6:1-5,17; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-24; Ephesians 2:10; 1 John 2:29; 3:9-10]

### D. Election

1. Election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies. [Daniel 12:1; Acts 4:28; Romans 8:29; 9:11; 11:5; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Galatians 1:15; Ephesians 1:4-5,11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9]
2. Sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord. Salvation is thus withheld from some because of their refusal to accept Christ as Savior and Lord. [Matthew 7:26-27; 10:14-15,33; Mark 16:16; Luke 13:34; 14:16-24; John 5:38,40,43; 12:37,48; Acts 13:46; 17:30; Romans 2:4-5]

3. Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines. [Matthew 11:25; 16:17; Mark 9:24; Acts 13:48; Romans 9:14-16; Galatians 1:15; Ephesians 2:8-9]
4. The unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part nor to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy. Thus election excludes any possibility of boasting on the part of man and promotes humility and eternal gratitude. [Deuteronomy 7:6-7; Acts 13:48; Romans 9:14-16; Galatians 1:15-16; Titus 3:4-5]
5. Election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love. This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. [Deuteronomy 7:6-11; John 12:37-41; Romans 2:5-8; 9:14,19-23]
6. Election does not discourage evangelism, but establishes its successfulness. Without divine election, no man would turn to Christ of his own will and thus evangelism would not result in the salvation of people. [John 6:44; Acts 13:48; Romans 11:1-15]

#### **E. Adoption**

1. God's gracious act of salvation results in the believer being immediately adopted into the family of God as His child forever. [John 1:12-13; 11:52; Romans 8:15; Galatians 3:26; 4:5-7; Ephesians 1:5-6]
2. Therefore, it is the privilege of believers not only to serve God but also to call Him "Father." [Matthew 6:9-13; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 5:20; 1 John 3:1]

#### **F. Justification**

1. Justification before God is an act of God by which, based on the death of Christ and motivated from His own love, He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins and confess Him as Sovereign Lord. [Romans 3:18-22; 28; 4:5; 5:8-10; Galatians 2:16]
2. Justification is not a process of becoming righteous but is an instantaneous act of God whereby He declares the sinner to be righteous based upon the righteousness of Christ. Justification does not happen to a believer after he dies but at the moment he believes in Christ. [Romans 3:24; 4:5; 5:1; 8:1-2; 1 Corinthians 1:2,21]
3. From the moment of justification, there is no condemnation for the believer because all the believer's guilt has been removed. Justification brings the believer into a permanent state of most blessed peace and favor with God. [Romans 4:6-8; 5:1; 6:23; 8:1]

#### **G. Faith and Repentance**

1. Repentance and faith are sacred duties and inseparable graces brought about in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God. [Luke 22:31-32; John 1:12; 3:36; 6:44; Acts 11:18; 13:48; 16:14; 17:30-31; Romans 12:3; Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5; 2 Timothy 2:25; 3:15]
2. Repentance and faith mean that one is convinced of his guilt, danger, and helplessness, and the way of salvation in Christ, and therefore turns to God for mercy while at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as his king. [Psalm 32:10; 147:11; Matthew 3:7-8; 11:28-30; John 16:7-11; Acts 2:36-38; 16:29-31; Romans 1:16-17; 10:9-13; 1 Peter 2:25]
3. Repentance and faith are not works performed to earn salvation. They are the appropriate response of a sinner who is moved by God to come to Christ. [Matthew 4:17; Luke 24:46-47; Romans 3:28; 4:4-5; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10]
4. Saving faith involves more than a mere intellectual assent to the truths of Christianity. It involves a personal trust in the person of Christ. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not yet seen. [John 2:23-25; 3:16; 7:17; 8:31-32; 14:1; Acts 9:5-6; 16:31; Romans 10:9-10; Galatians 5:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 11:1]
5. Repentance is required for salvation. Repentance is part of the gospel preached by Jesus and the apostles both to Jews and to Gentiles. [Matthew 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 5:32; 13:1-5; 24:47; Acts 5:31; 17:30; 20:21; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 1 Peter 2:25]

6. Repentance is the desire within the heart and mind of the sinner to turn away from a life of sin and independence from God, and to turn toward the true and living God—all the while recognizing that this can only be accomplished by God's regenerating work in his heart. [Psalm 51:10; Matthew 3:7-8; Luke 23:40-42; 18:10-14; Acts 14:15; 26:18; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10]

## **H. Sanctification**

1. Every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification, is therefore declared to be holy, and is therefore identified as a saint. This sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition. [1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11; 1 Peter 2:9-10]
2. There is also by the work of the Holy Spirit a progressive sanctification by which the believer is brought into greater obedience to the word of God and is characterized by growing empowerment by the Holy Spirit. The believer is thus able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ. [Romans 6:12-14; 12:2; Ephesians 4:22-24; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Galatians 5:16; Colossians 2:6-7; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 1:5-8; 1 John 1:6-7]
3. Every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. [Matthew 26:41; Romans 8:12-13; 1 Corinthians 9:26-27; Galatians 5:16-17; Ephesians 4:22-24; James 1:13-17]
4. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin. [Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23; 6:1-6,17,22; 8:4,9,13; 12:3; Galatians 5:16; Philippians 3:12-14; James 5:16; 1 John 1:8,10]
5. True believers can and do sin and act carnally. Such sinful actions and attitudes do not indicate a lack of salvation but, rather, the reality of indwelling sin remaining in the believer. True believers, however, due to the new birth, will not live continuously as unbelievers but will evidence the new birth by attitudes and actions of love and righteousness. [John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:1-4; 5:1-8; 6:9-11; 11:17-22; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:19-21; James 2:14-26; 1 John 1:5-10; 2:3-6,29; 3:6-10; 4:7-8; 5:18]

## **I. Security, Perseverance, and Assurance**

1. All the redeemed once saved are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever. No truly saved person can or will lose his salvation. [John 10:28-29; 17:12; Romans 8:30,35-39; 11:29; Ephesians 1:5; 1 Peter 1:5; 1 John 2:1; 5:13,18]
2. All real believers endure in their faith to the end. Their continuance in the Christian walk and Christian doctrine is the mark that distinguishes them from those who merely profess Christianity. [Matthew 24:13; Luke 22:31-32; John 15:1-6; Romans 8:17; Galatians 5:4; Colossians 1:21-23; 2 Timothy 4:7-8; Hebrews 10:38; 2 Peter 2:20-22; 1 John 2:18-19,28]
3. A special providence of God cares for the saved and keeps them from falling away permanently. Therefore, perseverance is guaranteed by God's provision of new life in Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the intercessory work of Christ at the right hand of the Father. [Luke 22:31-32; John 17:9-12; Hebrews 1:3; 4:14; 1 Peter 1:5; 1 John 2:1; 5:13]
4. It is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's word and the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, which however, clearly forbids the use of Christian security and liberty as an occasion for sinful living. [John 3:16-17; Romans 8:16; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 4:7-8; Hebrews 11:1; 1 Peter 1:3-4; 1 John 2:3-4; 3:1; 4:1-4; 5:13,19]

## **J. Separation**

1. Out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God granted to us, and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to God and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. [John 14:23; Romans 12:1-2; 13:12-14; James 4:4; 1 Peter 2:11-12; 1 John 2:15-17]

2. Separation from any association with religious apostasy and worldly sinful practices is commanded of us by God. [Deuteronomy 18:20-22; Romans 16:17-18; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11]
3. Separation from sin does not mean that the believer is restricted from interacting with unbelievers in the normal course of life. [John 2:1-11; 17:15; Acts 28:1-10; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10]

#### **K. Freedom**

1. Believers are in Christ and are thus set free from the requirements of the Law. They are not therefore required to be subject to dietary laws, Sabbath laws, observances of days, or other restrictions on their freedom. [Acts 15:28-29; Romans 8:2-3; 14:4-6,14; Galatians 5:1,13; Colossians 2:16,20-23]
2. Christian freedom is not an excuse to engage in sin. Christians were set free from the Law to take on the law of Christ. Christians are required to love God with their whole being and to love their neighbor as themselves. Since the point of Christian liberty is to set us free from the power of sin, the believer should never let himself be mastered by sin. [John 8:31-32; Romans 6:1-2,12-14; 7:4; 8:1-4; 13:8-10; Galatians 3:1-3; 5:13-14]

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## **VIII. WHAT WE TEACH *About The Church***

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#### **A. General**

1. All who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body, the Church, the bride of Christ of which Christ is the head. [Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12,27; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:23-27; Colossians 1:24]
2. There is but one true universal Church comprised of all true believers. These believers are one spiritual brotherhood having God as their Father. [Romans 12:4-5; Ephesians 4:1-4,12; 5:23-24; Hebrews 12:23]
3. The formation of the Church, the body of Christ, began on the day of Pentecost (soon after Christ ascended into Heaven) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture. [Matthew 16:18; Acts 1&2; 10:44-48; 11:17-18; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18]
4. The Church is a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in this present age, both those in heaven and on earth. [Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:5-7; 4:1-4; Revelation 19:7-8]
5. The Church is distinct from Israel, a mystery not revealed until this age. [compare Acts 1:5 with 11:15-16; Romans 11:25-29; 1 Corinthians 10:32; Ephesians 2:15; 3:4-6; Colossians 1:24-27]

#### **B. The Local Church**

1. A local church is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant, sharing in the common faith and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. [Acts 2:37-47; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1]
2. The establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament. [Acts 5:11; 8:1; 9:31; 13:1-3; 15:4,22; 1 Thessalonians 1:1]

#### **C. Authority**

1. The one supreme authority of the Church is Christ. Christ is the sole head of the Church. [Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-24; Colossians 1:18]
2. All church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are appointed through God's sovereignty as found in the apostles' teaching, which are found solely in the Scriptures. [Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 12:11; 14:37]
3. The local church is autonomous, free from any external human authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations. [Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-3]

## **D. Leadership**

1. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders, who are also called overseers, pastors, and teachers. These terms do not describe different offices in the church but refer to the same elders revealing their different roles in the body of Christ. [Acts 15:2; 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 5:17-20; Titus 1:5-6; 1 Peter 5:1-5]
2. All elder/pastors must meet biblical qualifications, including the ability to teach sound doctrine and refute those who contradict. They must be blameless. They must be one-woman men whose children believe and are under control. They must be characterized as uncontentious, free from the love of money, and under self-control. They must desire the work of an elder and hold its position in high honor. They must not be new in the faith. [1 Timothy 1:6-8; 3:1-7; 2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 1:5-9; 3:10; James 3:1]
3. Elder/Pastors have God-given authority to lead and rule the church as servants of Christ directing the church. They are not to lord their position over the flock but are to shepherd them with eagerness and humility. The congregation is to submit to their leadership. [Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-3]
4. The main duties of elder/pastors are to minister the word through preaching and teaching, to pray for the church, to oversee the church's spiritual health, to set an example to the flock of godly living, and to equip the congregation for ministry. Elders must not let themselves become distracted with the everyday business of the church. [Acts 6:4; 20:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 3:4-5; 5:17; Titus 1:9; James 5:14]
5. Elders should strive to be of one mind in their decision-making in order to preserve the unity of the faith. [1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:3; Philippians 1:27; 2:2]
6. Deacons serve under the elders, assisting the elders in the ministry of the local church, and likewise must meet biblical qualifications. It is not necessary for deacons to be in a position of teaching or ruling. [Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13]

## **E. Discipline**

1. The church, under the leadership of the elders, is to discipline sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture. The four steps of church discipline are: privately confronting the brother who sinned; confrontation by two or three witnesses; confrontation by the church; and removal of the sinning brother from the church. [Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8; 1 Timothy 1:20; 5:19; Titus 3:10]
2. All believers are to help one another grow in godliness. This requires the discipline of confronting one another when necessary—in humility and love—to determine the facts, and to expose sin privately. This exercise of self-control guards against gossip, misunderstanding, and divisiveness. [1 Corinthians 12:24-25; 2 Corinthians 12:19-21; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:25; James 5:19-20]

## **F. Ministry**

1. The Church's mission is to carry out the Great Commission to the ends of the earth. [Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-49; John 15:1-17; Acts 1:6-8]
2. Worship is to be directed to God alone. Worship must be enthusiastic and sincere, and it must be based upon the great truths found in Holy Scripture. The primary focus of worship is not what we get out of it, but rather what God gets out of it—for example: praise, thanksgiving, honor, glory, reverence, and submission. [1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 19:14; 100; John 4:23-24; Revelation 4:8,11; 5:9-10]
3. Discipleship is accomplished in the church by the mature exercise of all the spiritual gifts, by the ministry of the word, by prayer, by providing mature examples to follow, by mutual accountability, and by training for ministry. [Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 15:40; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 2 Timothy 2:2; Hebrews 10:24]
4. Evangelism is to be accomplished by prayer, by the godly lives of believers, by the proclamation of the word, and by the loving outreach of the church. Evangelistic methods must be based upon sound theology and godly principles. [John 13:35; 16:8-11; Acts 17:30; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 2:1-3; 7:14; 14:23-25; Colossians 4:3; 1 Peter 3:1-3]

5. The church is responsible to seek to do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith. In this way, Christian love is to be shown to the orphaned, the aged, the helpless, the sick, and the widowed. [Psalm 9:18; Isaiah 41:17; Matthew 25:42-45; Galatians 6:10; 1 Timothy 5:3-16; James 1:27; 2:5]

## **G. Spiritual Gifts**

1. To accomplish God's purposes in the world, God gives spiritual gifts. He gives the Church gifted men for equipping the saints, and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the body of Christ who must develop and exercise them. [1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 4:10]
2. There were two kinds of spiritual gifts given to the early Church: miraculous gifts of divine revelation and healing, given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message; and ministering gifts, given to serve believers for edifying one another. [Acts 5:12; 1 Corinthians 12:27-31; 14:22; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:4]
3. The gift of tongues is the supernatural ability to speak prophetically in a foreign language never learned by the speaker. It was a sign given to confirm to the Jews in the early Church the coming of the Holy Spirit. Being a sign gift, it ceased after the Holy Spirit's intended usage for it. [Acts 2:4-11; 10:44-46; 1 Corinthians 14:21-22]
4. The Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to every believer in the Church. He sovereignly decides who receives which gifts. No believer has all the gifts but is in need of God's gifting of the other believers in the body. [1 Corinthians 12:11,28-30; Ephesians 4:7-11]
5. The purpose of the gifts of the Spirit is to glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is not interested in ostentatious displays of power and miracles. [1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 4:14-16]

## **H. Ordinances**

1. Two ordinances have been committed to the local church by the Lord: water baptism and the Lord's Supper. [Matthew 26:26-29; 28:16-20; Luke 22:14-23; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26]
2. Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. [Matthew 3:16; 28:16-20; Mark 1:9; Acts 2:38; 8:38; Romans 6:3-6]
3. Christian baptism by immersion is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life. Baptism also symbolizes the washing away of sins. Therefore it cannot rightly be offered to children who are too young to understand and believe the gospel resulting in forgiveness of sins, nor have been united to Christ. [Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-6]
4. Baptism is the sign of fellowship and identification with the visible body of Christ and is not salvific. [Acts 8:12-24; Romans 6:3-6; Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Peter 3:21]
5. The Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of Christ's death until He comes. It is both a time of solemn self-examination and a time of joy. [Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:27-31]
6. The elements of bread and the fruit of the vine are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ. Nevertheless, believers share in communion with Christ and with one another in a real way of which the elements are symbolic. [Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:14-20; John 6:52-64]

## **IX. WHAT WE TEACH *About Angels***

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### **A. Elect Angels**

1. Angels are a class of spiritual beings created by God to worship and serve Him. They proclaim God's holiness, execute His judgments, carry His messages, and war against evil. [Psalm 103:20; Daniel 10:12-13; Matthew 13:41-42,49; 28:5-7; Colossians 1:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8; Hebrews 1:13-14]
2. Angels are not to be worshipped or prayed to, and they exercise no mediation in human salvation. [Colossians 2:18; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 1:5-6; Revelation 22:8-9]
3. There are a vast number of angels who are ordered by ranks and classifications. [Daniel 7:10; 10:13; Matthew 25:31; 26:53 Luke 2:13; Ephesians 1:21; Revelation 5:11; 12:7]
4. Angels are intelligent persons who study the works of God and continue to learn. [Matthew 18:10; 1 Peter 1:12; Revelation 5:11-12]

### **B. Satan and Demons**

1. Satan is a created being possessing all the attributes of personality. He is also called Lucifer, the Devil, the Dragon, the Evil One, Beelzebul, our Accuser, the Serpent of Old, Abaddon, Apollyon, and the Prince of the power of the air. [1 Chronicles 21:1; Matthew 4:1; 10:25; Mark 3:22; Ephesians 2:2; 6:11; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 2:13; 5:18-19; Revelation 9:11; 12:9; 20:2]
2. Satan is the author of sin, the father of lies, and a murderer from the beginning. As such, he is active in the world opposing the work of the Church, making sin seem appealing, introducing destructive teachings into the Church, and instigating hatred against God's people. [John 8:44; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10; 1 John 3:8,12]
3. Satan incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator, by taking numerous angels with him in his fall, and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve. [Genesis 3:1,14; Matthew 12:24-28]
4. Satan is the prince of this world who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire. [2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 20:2-3,10]
5. Satan has a vast host of evil angels who followed him in rebellion against God. These angels are called demons and evil spirits in Scripture. [2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Revelation 12:9]
6. Demons work in this world to afflict people with sicknesses, to introduce lies, to propagate false religion, and to oppose the work of the Church. [1 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 5:8-9; 1 John 4:1-4]
7. Demons can and sometimes do possess the bodies of unbelievers bringing upon the unbeliever self-destruction. True believers cannot be possessed by demons. [Matthew 8:28-29; 12:28; 15:22]

## **X. WHAT WE TEACH *About Last Things***

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### **A. Death**

1. Physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness. At death, the soul of the redeemed is separated from the body and passes immediately into the presence of Christ. [Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:1-6; Philippians 1:23; James 2:26]
2. All mankind will have a bodily resurrection: the saved to eternal life; and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment. [John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:11-15]
3. The souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the second resurrection when the soul and the resurrection body will be united. [Luke 16:19-31; John 8:24]
4. Unbelievers shall then appear at the Great White Throne judgment and shall be cast into Hell, the lake of fire, cut off from the life of God forever. They shall not be annihilated, but shall suffer everlasting conscious punishment in Hell. [Matthew 25:46; Revelation 20:10-15]
5. In the present age, the attitude of either reconciliation or enmity toward God is eternally fixed at death. There is no hope for salvation after death. Prayers for the dead are unscriptural and go unrecognized by God. [Luke 16:19-31; John 8:24; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 9:27]

## **B. Dispensationalism**

1. The Scriptures interpreted in their natural, literal sense, reveal divinely determined dispensations or administrations that define man's responsibilities for that age. Examples include the Age of the Law, the Church Age, and the Millennium. [Genesis 2:15-17; Exodus 28:1-68; Matthew 5:17; Acts 1:6-8; Galatians 3:23-25; Ephesians 1:10]
2. These dispensations do not involve different ways of being saved, and they do not negate some continuity from one dispensation to another. [Matthew 5:18; Romans 4:1-8]

## **C. The Rapture of the Church**

1. Jesus Christ will return personally and bodily before the seven-year tribulation to translate His Church from this earth. [John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17]
2. Between the rapture and the second coming, Christ will reward believers according to their works of faith. [2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:8]

## **D. The Tribulation Period**

1. Immediately following the removal of the Church from the earth, the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon an unbelieving world over a period of seven years. These judgments are the judgments from God, not from Satan. Thus, believers will not experience these judgments. [Isaiah 24:21-22; Daniel 9:24-27; Revelation 3:10; 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:19; 15:1; 16:1,19]
2. These tribulation judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth. [2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Revelation 19:11-21]

## **E. The Second Coming and Millennial Reign**

1. After the tribulation period, Christ will come to earth to occupy the throne of David and establish His Messianic kingdom for a thousand years on earth. [2 Samuel 7:12-16; Revelation 19:11-21]
2. During this time, the resurrected saints will reign with Him over Israel and all the nations of the earth. [1 Corinthians 6:2-3; Revelation 3:21; 5:9-10; 20:4-6]
3. This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and by the removal of Satan from the world, being cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years. [Revelation 20:1-3]
4. The millennial reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness, and long life, and will be brought to an end with the release of Satan. [Isaiah 11:1-10; Revelation 20:1-4]

## **F. The Judgment of the Lost**

1. Satan and his angels will be thrown into the Lake of Fire and brimstone to be tormented forever and ever, whereupon Christ, Who is the judge of all men, will resurrect and judge the great and small at the Great White Throne judgment. [Matthew 25:41; John 5:22; Revelation 20:10]
3. The resurrection of the unsaved dead will be a physical resurrection, whereupon receiving their judgment they will be committed to an eternal conscious punishment in the Lake of Fire in varying degrees of torment according to their works. [Matthew 24:41; Romans 14:10-13; Revelation 20:11-15]

## **G. Eternity**

1. After the closing of the millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers, the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved and replaced with a new earth wherein only righteousness dwells. [2 Thessalonians 1:9; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1,3-7]
2. Following this the heavenly city will come down out of heaven and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will forever enjoy fellowship with God and with one another. Life will be lived in joy without pain, sorrow, or death. [John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 15:26; Revelation 21:2-7; 22:1-6]
3. Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father, so that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever. Amen! [1 Corinthians 15:24-28]

# The Ministry Philosophy

of

Hope  
BIBLE Church



*Discover the Dynamics of God's Word*

October 2005



## The Ministry Philosophy of Hope Bible Church

The central commitment of Hope Bible Church is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. That, ultimately, is *why* we engage in ministry. God establishes and develops local churches as local expressions of the Universal Church, which is Christ's Body and Bride, Christ Himself being her Head. In order to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ we follow the Bible's threefold purpose for the local church (the *what* of our ministry):

- WORSHIP:** To worship God in spirit and truth, praising and thanking Him from our hearts and giving Him all the glory and honor due His name;
- DISCIPLESHIP:** To build up each believer in faith, godliness, and love, motivating the whole body to perform good works and service towards God from a pure heart;
- EVANGELISM:** To reach out to the lost with the Good News about Jesus Christ, speaking the truth in love, calling sinners to turn from their sin and embrace Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Scripture also teaches us *how* those fundamental purposes should be accomplished and what convictions the local church should maintain as it grows and strengthens from generation to generation. This is the basis for the three basic ministries of the local church: the *Ministry of the Word of God*, the *Ministry of Prayer*, and the *Ministry of Christian Fellowship*. Each of these ministries contributes to worship, discipleship, and evangelism, as explained below.

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### *The Ministry of the Word of God*

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All worship, discipleship, and evangelism must be conducted according to the word of God. The Scriptures must be preached, taught, applied, and proclaimed—regularly, systematically, deeply, practically, and accurately. The Bible instructs believers how to worship God properly, how to grow strong in the Christian faith, and how to be a godly witness to unbelievers. Ignorance of the Bible and its message weakens these three central purposes and therefore weakens the church. The result of a poor commitment to the Scriptures is that the Lord Jesus is not honored the way He deserves. This is why Hope Bible Church is committed to the ministry of the word of God.

#### **WORSHIP**

The ministry of the Word of God is critical for Biblical worship, for it is in the Scriptures that God has revealed the truth about Himself and about us. We are able to worship God in spirit and truth only to the extent that we know Him as He has revealed Himself to us in His word.

**Expository Preaching** on Sunday mornings fosters this. It is preaching designed to bring out the life-changing meaning of the Bible by carefully explaining each passage of Scripture to the listener. An “exposition” of a passage of Scripture is simply an exposing or opening of the meaning of the passage to the hearers. Such a clear exposing of the passage on Sunday morning can occur only if the preacher has first spent the long hours researching the passage in the original languages, discovering its history, context, flow of thought, syntax, style, and meaning. This is called exegesis. Exegesis simply means extracting from the passage the author's intended meaning rather than inserting into the Bible an assumed meaning due to denominational tradition, theological presumption, the pastor's favorite teaching, personal unskilled interpretations, or popular modern teachings.

During the preaching of the message, those same exegetical discoveries must be impressed upon the congregation in a clear, forceful, and relevant way, allowing each person to hear God's word the way the human author and God intended it to be understood. The congregation should be able to understand not only what the preacher is communicating, but the origin of that teaching in the Bible. Only as the listener's mind grasps the meaning of the passage, and is convinced of its correct interpretation, can the will be moved to apply the word correctly to his or her life.

As a spiritual leader, the preacher is to help the congregation see the relevance of each passage of Scripture to modern life (Ephesians 4:11-16). Also, as each Scripture passage is explained, its meaning is impressed upon the church with conviction by the Holy Spirit in order to motivate the congregation to apply the message to their lives. Since all of us are in constant need of reminders, rebukes, exhortations, and corrections, expositional preaching allows us to hear those truths God most emphasizes in His word. In other words, it is the best way to make sure that God—not man—is speaking to the congregation week by week.

Since expository preaching is the only form of preaching that does full justice to the content of the word of God, it is crucial to the spiritual life of the church. Indeed, this is what Paul meant when he commanded Timothy to “preach the word” in 2 Timothy 4:2. To “preach the word” is to preach the meaning of the word accurately and relevantly (2 Timothy 2:15). This type of preaching was the dominant practice of the early church (1 Timothy 4:13). Nehemiah 8:1-8 reveals that expositional preaching and teaching were also practiced in Old Testament times. Even though Jesus often spoke on His own authority and sometimes brought new teaching not found in the Old Testament using parables and conversational teaching, He Himself also modeled for us expositional teaching from the Scriptures on many occasions: Matthew 19:4-6; 22:36-40; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:17-18; 24:44-47. The apostles and early church teachers also wrote expositionally in their letters as they explained the meaning of Christ and the fulfillment of Scripture: John 12:37-41; Acts 7:1-53; Romans 3:9-20; 4:1-12; 9:14-18; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Galatians 3:6-14; Hebrews 3:5-19; 1 Peter 2:4-12.

Unfortunately, most churches today, regardless of their denomination, do not practice true expositional teaching and preaching. Some choose not to because they mistakenly think such preaching is irrelevant to the modern church, opting for skits, plays, story telling, humor, and multimedia presentations to entertain people and reach the modern generation. While there certainly is some use for these creative presentations of the Word of God, nothing feeds the sheep in Christ's church better than a constant, thoughtful exposure to the word of God itself. Expositional preaching is more effective in changing lives because it offers more than sound bites and entertainment; it renews the mind and more deeply impacts the soul. It calls on the listener to take his walk with Christ seriously and to be responsible to internalize the word.

There are types of preaching that claim to be expositional but do not fully preach the text. This type of preaching falls short of communicating the full counsel of God. These types of preaching include: using a text of Scripture to launch into a subject unrelated to the text, turning every text into an evangelistic sermon which it was not designed to accomplish, glossing the surface and avoiding the difficulties in the text, reading the text but spending most of the time talking about a favorite subject, telling stories related to the text, speaking eloquently about one topic in the text while avoiding the others, preaching the application of the text without first proving the meaning of the text, and speaking above the text— that is, speaking truth but not carefully explaining where it came from in the Bible.

Some people have wrongly concluded that expositional preaching must always be verse-by-verse. Expositional preaching is really topical preaching because every text of Scripture deals with at least one topic. The topics arising from expositional preaching can be enhanced by a multitude of illustrations, cross references, and applications. There are many different styles of expositional preachers because each preacher brings to the text a unique way of presenting the same material.

God's preparation and gifting of the preacher is also important to the presentation of the word to His people. [For more reading we recommend *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, by John MacArthur and The Master's Seminary faculty (Word Publishers).]

## DISCIPLESHIP

Closely related to the ministry of the word through expository preaching is our commitment to discipling each member of the congregation into a growing and fulfilling relationship with Jesus Christ. This commitment to discipleship comes from a desire to help fulfill our Lord's Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, where He commanded the making of disciples in all the earth. All true believers are called "disciples" in Scripture. However, the term "discipleship" has come to refer to the on-going process whereby true believers are helped to mature in Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote of the process of discipleship that he practiced and that he wanted the churches to practice. He wrote, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you," (Colossians 3:16). "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also," (2 Timothy 2:2). "And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ," (Colossians 1:28). Our discipling incorporates the ministry of the word of God in numerous contexts, such as Systematic Teaching, a detailed Doctrinal Statement, Specialty Instruction, Small Group Discipleship, Family Discipleship, Biblical Counseling, and Leadership Training.

**Systematic Teaching** takes place during our Sunday morning Bible Training Classes and in Saturday Study Seminars. Like expositional preaching, systematic teaching also seeks to be expositional, but the approach is more interactive and often allows for the presentation of a fuller body of knowledge not appropriate in a sermon format. During systematic instruction the learners are encouraged to share from their knowledge of God's word and ask important questions as they study the material. The teachers gear their instruction to include hands-on training and application. This kind of instruction allows for the use of written materials and charts, and a slow and careful movement through important and often complicated subjects. Classes and courses are often arranged in a systematic way, one class built upon another. (1 Corinthians 12:28-29; Ephesians 4:11; Colossians 1:28; 1 Timothy 3:2; 4:11; James 3:1)

**A Doctrinal Statement** is often neglected as a way to minister the word of God to the people of God. Most churches have a doctrinal statement, but the average member of the church knows little about it. It exists not as a teaching tool, but as a means to keep certain false teachings out of the church. Our *What We Teach* was written with the conviction that a doctrinal statement of a church should be a carefully written document that defines what the church believes and actually teaches believers from Scripture. Rather than attempting to achieve unity by minimizing truth, Hope Bible Church seeks to bring about true Spirit-led unity that flows from a careful objective analysis of the Spirit's written word. (John 17:11-23; Ephesians 4:14; 1 Timothy 4:6; 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:7-9; 2:1-10)

Since our church is nondenominational, and is therefore not restricted to follow any denomination's tradition, we teach from a doctrinal statement that was independently fleshed out through hard exegesis of Scripture. We also had the liberty to borrow from other carefully written confessions and creeds from a variety of denominations and other sources. Though not inspired and not above Scripture, this doctrinal statement gives our church a strong foundation for life and ministry. This *What We Teach* is used to train leaders in the church, challenge newcomers to a greater understanding of the Bible, and extend the message preached in the worship service. To understand further how the doctrinal statement is used in our church, please pick up a copy of *What We Teach* and read it along with its Preamble.

**Specialty Instruction:** Recognizing that God brings various groups of people to our local church, Hope Bible Church is committed to meeting the teaching needs of those groups. These groups include, but are not limited to, men's and women's groups, those needing parenting and family instruction, Spanish-speakers, youth and singles, and children. Specialty instruction allows the church to isolate particular topics and relevant teaching needed by these different groups in our congregation. Ministry leaders, in touch with their groups, choose topics and present solid Biblical teaching to benefit those in that group. We consider this form of teaching to be supplementary to the other more foundational ministries of teaching. (1 Corinthians 7:1-40; Ephesians 5:22-6:9; Colossians 1:28; Titus 2:2-10; 1 John 2:12-14)

**Small Group Discipleship** complements the preaching and teaching ministry of the church and helps to fulfill the Great Commission. In small groups members can grow in their walk with the Lord through various personal means, including studying God's word with someone who knows them personally in order to ensure that it is being properly applied. Small group discipleship strengthens each member's application of Christ's teachings so that he will mature in the Christian life. It challenges each member to grow in faith and obedience to God's word by relying on the living Christ to produce His character of truth, love, and holiness in Him. Christ-like character in the life of the believer is of utmost importance to God. Knowledge that does not result in greater daily obedience is of no benefit to the believer and never pleases God. Indeed, God's very purpose in salvation is to call out a people from this world to worship Him in spirit and truth, loving Him with all their being and loving their neighbors as themselves. He accomplishes this by recreating us, indwelling us, and then living the new life through us (John 15:1-6). Therefore, the Christian is to be characterized by speaking the truth, walking in love, and abstaining from sin. The Christian is to work at His spiritual growth, disciplining himself in cooperation with the Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:17-32; 1 Timothy 4:7-10; 1 Peter 1:13-16; 1 John 3:3).

**Family Discipleship** encourages Christian families to be strong testimonies for our Lord in the midst of the sea of sinful and broken homes in our society. Through family-oriented small groups, marriage enrichment, and parenting classes, the word of God is used to build strong marriages and wise parents who fulfill God's distinct role for the family in our world. The Scriptures are also used to honor men and women in the distinct roles given to them by their Creator. Men are to learn to lead their homes in love and patience, and women are to learn the beauty and value of thoughtful submission. Strong churches are not possible without strong families; likewise, families are strengthened by strong churches. Harmonious homes that pass on the wisdom of God from generation to generation are not only possible, but are commanded by our Lord (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 78; 127:3-8; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:1-4).

Family discipleship is also enhanced by our commitment to have families worship together on Sunday mornings, and to include the children in small groups. As children worship and learn right along with their parents, their faith and commitment is greatly enhanced. We believe that the most powerful way to influence children for Christ is by having children see their parents' genuine faith at work. Separating families during their participation at church is one of the great mistakes the modern church has made. The number of children in Christian homes who are going the way of the world seems greater than the number embracing a life of commitment to Christ. The way to reverse this trend is to disciple families as the unit God intended them to be, allowing the dad and mom to be the primary spiritual teachers and guides for their children.

**Biblical Counseling** also depends on ministering the word of God to disciple believers. This ministry seeks to solve man's moral problems solely by the wisdom of God, and not by mixing man's theories with God's answers. By doing this we uphold the best solutions for man, not confusing or weakening people with the speculations of modern man about his problems and needs. God's word applied by the Spirit of God under the sovereign direction of Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father is our sufficient counselor (Psalm 19:7-9; Romans 15:14; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3).

Many churches claim to have Christian counselors and Biblical counseling, yet many who claim so are really providing a mixture of man's psychology and Scriptural truths. Hope Bible Church believes that integrating God's perfect all-wise word with man's sin-tainted ideas is not Christian counseling. It only compromises the power and effectiveness of God's word in our lives. The results have been an unhealthy emphasis on personal fulfillment and self-esteem contrary to the Biblical teachings of repentance from sin, self-denial, humility, and godliness.

Errors in modern-day Christian counseling are abundant and discernment among Christians is not easy to find. Blame for problems is often put on one's upbringing, emotional type, circumstances, or family. In contrast, Biblical counselors understand the implications of the depravity of man, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the meaning of sanctification.

The Bible, either by direct instruction or derived principle, under the illuminating ministry of the Spirit of God, is our all-sufficient teacher. No matter what the problem (unless, for example, it is truly biological in nature), the Bible provides both the correct assessment of the underlying problem (including the distinction between that problem and its symptoms), and the solution to the problem. God will help us with our anxiety, fears, timidity, anger, emotions, lack of self-control, depression, bad habits, lusts, pride, self-image, attention, and motivation if we come humbly to Him through His word believing His promises and activating His principles for living in our lives. The power of Christ in the believer is never to be underestimated by thinking it needs to be supplemented in order to be effective. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for *every* good work," (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Biblical counseling, therefore, is a wise, compassionate application of the word of God to the lives of people who need a more intensive form of discipleship. It is to be done in the context of the local church by men and women filled with the wisdom of God's word.

**Leadership Development** is another important discipleship ministry in the church. One thing that has hindered the ongoing impact of many churches has been a failure to pass on the torch of ministry to other people, or to do so without adequately training them. On the other hand, ministries that multiply their leadership through discipleship will also multiply their harvest of righteousness. Therefore, we take leadership development seriously at Hope Bible Church. Specifically, we seek to develop and train new leaders in five broad areas: strong Bible study, personal character, family discipleship, theology, and ministry skill (2 Timothy 2:2).

## **EVANGELISM**

Our church is committed to reaching the lost in a God-honoring way, calling men to repent of their sins and embrace Christ as Lord just as Jesus and the apostles practiced in the Bible (Romans 10:9). We believe evangelism is to be accomplished in a manner that demonstrates the greatness of God (Romans 1:16).

Our goal is to involve every member in our church in personal evangelism. Scripture does not leave this responsibility only to those who are gifted in evangelism; rather, they are to help equip the others for the work of service (Ephesians 4:11-16).

Bringing people to Christ is a supernatural work and must be done by God. No human can save people and lead them into the Body of Christ. Only God can lead people to Himself (John 6:44), give them faith to believe (Ephesians 2:8-9), and grant repentance from sin (Acts 11:18). The word of God is what the Spirit of God uses to impart faith to the spiritually dead and to convict them of their sin (Romans 10:11-17). It must be taught with patience, passion, and clarity. This means that

salvation will not usually come the first time the word of God is spoken to a person. It will usually take time before the unbeliever grasps the gospel. It also means that our evangelism must consist primarily of reading and explaining Scripture. (Note also the role of the ministry of prayer in evangelism, as discussed in that section.)

The godly life of a Christian can powerfully draw unbelievers to Christ. The Scriptures teach that as a person observes the righteous and loving life of a true believer in Christ, God can use that to draw him to repent and embrace the God he sees through that person (Matthew 5:16). However, although the life of Christ as portrayed in the life of a Christian can help lead people to Himself, they must still hear the gospel to be saved (Romans 10:17).

Since the message of the cross of Christ is inherently offensive to many people, it must never be watered down to make it appear more palatable. The watering down of the gospel occurs when churches either make it less central to the message they preach, alter it to be man-centered, (e.g., too much emphasis on improving one's quality of life) or fail to explain the implications of belief in it—such as repenting from sin and obeying the Lord Jesus. Understood this way, many churches that claim not to be compromising the gospel are in fact doing just that.

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### *The Ministry of Prayer*

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The ministry of prayer works together with the ministry of the word and the ministry of fellowship. Prayer is used by God to impress the Bible's teachings on the heart of His people and to strengthen them for service together. Failure to pray therefore weakens the ministry of God's people and dishonors the Lord Jesus. This is why Hope Bible Church is committed to the ministry of prayer.

#### **WORSHIP**

Prayer is central to worship because through prayer we express ourselves directly to God. We are to be praying continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17), even as every aspect of our lives is to be lived as service and worship unto the Lord (Romans 12:1). Corporate worship in the local church is likewise dependent on believing, fervent prayer. Such prayer can take many forms, such as pastoral prayers from the pulpit (reflecting the truths of Scripture that have been read, as well as timely intercessions), silent prayers by the congregation while the pastor prays, and songs of praise, confession, and supplication.

Our church is committed to **God-centered worship** that seeks to keep God central in all our worship services. Much of what is considered worship today is done for man's enjoyment. Our church desires to have worship services that give God enjoyment. Worship is primarily a ministry to God. Worship should be designed to express what God wants to hear from hearts that love Him. Though various forms of worship are allowed and encouraged in Scripture, only those forms that aid the believer to worship in spirit and truth in his own cultural context should be used. Therefore, for example, we incorporate a variety of music styles that clearly enhance the Spirit's worship, rather than those that appeal to fleshly excitement (which would be self-centered worship).

God is the focus of every part of our worship service: the singing of songs, hymns, and spiritual songs; the reading of His word; the silent meditations; the special music; the giving of announcements; the receiving of His message; the prayers offered; giving to God from our time, talent, and treasures; giving testimony of God's work in our lives; sharing in the Lord's Supper; and the closing benediction. We do our best to keep man-centered comments out of our worship service, and to focus our thoughts on the greatness, majesty, holiness, love, and wisdom of our God

and Savior, and our duty to adore Him. (Exodus 20:2-6; 24:1; Deuteronomy 6:13; Psalms 29:2; 33:1-3; 96:9; 99:5,9; 132:7; Matthew 4:9-10; Hebrews 9:1-7; Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9)

Our church is also committed to **labor in prayer** for the accomplishment of God's work on earth. God's work must be done with God's tools and His power. Knowing this compels our church to devote ourselves on Sunday mornings, in our small groups, and in our homes to petition God to work His will in our midst.

## **DISCIPLESHIP**

We seek to provide an environment that encourages personal on-going intercessory prayer by every member for the needs of every member in the church. There is no power and progress in Christian ministry apart from a committed, praying people. All the activity in the church is meaningless without the power of God working to transform lives. Prayer is the sign of a people humbled and dependent on God. Prayer requests must reflect the priorities God gives in His word, not simply the worldly desire of people to avoid pain and discomfort in living. As the saints pray together, that also excites and deepens the personal quiet times of each member. (Acts 2:42; Romans 8:26; 12:10-13; Ephesians 6:18-19; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2-3; 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; 1 Timothy 2:1, 8; 4:5; James 5:13-18; 1 Peter 4:7)

Small group discipleship fosters that kind of prayer. In small groups members spend time together in prayer in order to bring God's presence and power into the process of discipleship. Likewise, prayer is critical in our families, in our counseling, and in our training, for in every sphere, it is God who works in people's hearts, and He often does so in response to our prayers.

## **EVANGELISM**

Since bringing people to Christ is a supernatural work of God whereby He leads people to Himself, gives them faith to believe, and grants them repentance from sin, and since no human can save people and lead them into the Body of Christ, prayer is absolutely essential if souls are going to come to Christ. No technique can replace the importance of prevailing intercessory prayer in the winning of the lost. Indeed, prayers of faith are the true labor that God uses to bring conversion to the hearts of those He would save. We must talk to God about men before we talk to men about God! Such prayers are sometimes focused on specific individuals whom we ask God to draw to Himself (Romans 10:1). Other times our prayers are more general for the salvation of souls around us and around the world (2 Thessalonians 3:1). Still other times we pray for God to make circumstances conducive to effective evangelism (Colossians 4:3). We also need to pray for boldness in our evangelism (Ephesians 6:19). And, of course, we are in a constant state of prayer as we (or those we are with) are sharing the gospel with others. Apart from prayer, we could very easily be deceived into thinking that people's response to our evangelism depends on our methods and eloquence.

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### *The Ministry of Christian Fellowship*

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Like the ministry of the word and the ministry of prayer, the ministry of Christian fellowship permeates all that we do as a church. The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia*, which refers to our common life together in the local body of believers. Fellowship is too often equated solely with times of food and fun together. Biblically, fellowship is much broader—being reflected in our worship together, our discipling one another, and our evangelism.

## WORSHIP

Corporate worship is fellowship. When we all come together to join our voices in praise and thanksgiving to God (Psalm 149:1), when we assemble for the preaching of God's word (Acts 2:42), when we speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19), when we observe the Lord's Supper together (1 Corinthians 11:18-34), when we alert the body of ministry needs and opportunities (Romans 16:1-2), and when we combine our offerings to the Lord (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), we are participating in fellowship—the common life of the body. Although corporate worship in a large congregation may involve very little interaction between most of the worshippers (and can therefore allow some people to be isolated from others), there are many opportunities for people to take a more active (rather than passive) role in corporate worship: greeting, ushering, singing, playing musical instruments, giving testimonies, giving announcements, serving as a prayer counselor, etc. Furthermore, times of corporate worship in small groups allow even greater opportunities to participate. God certainly desires that we worship Him alone on a regular, on-going basis. However, He also enjoys, expects, and deserves our corporate worship (Psalm 111:1; 149:1).

## DISCIPLESHIP

Through Christian fellowship the members of Hope Bible Church are committed to encouraging one another to obey God. We are committed to forgiving one another and helping one another. Our commitment to one another is taken seriously as we seek to serve one another, work with one another, and enjoy each other in Christian brotherhood. The Membership Covenant of the church stresses our commitment to one another to attend the main activities and commitments of the church and to be devoted to one another in brotherly love. (Acts 2:42-47; Romans 12:10; 14:13; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Galatians 5:15, 26; Ephesians 4:25, 32; Colossians 3:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 10:25)

To enhance Christian fellowship, we share together in worship, in learning the word, in personal discipleship, and in prayer. We also enjoy sharing meals together. The church also gets together informally for various other purposes. Sometimes a member hosts a party and invites other church families. At other times someone calls for a workday to help a member with repairs or maintenance around the house, or a move. Youth outings are designed to include the whole family while at the same time providing meaningful activities for the teens.

Small group discipleship is particularly geared to fellowship in the broadest sense. In small groups, members can grow in their walk with the Lord through:

- Modeling of the Christian life by a more mature Christian;
- Spending time together in prayer;
- Getting to know each other and deepening relationships;
- Choosing spiritual goals and receiving accountability in order to fulfill the will of God individually;
- Encouraging each other to stay spiritually and rightly motivated;
- Correcting each other so that we recognize what changes need to be made to draw closer to the Lord.

Small group discipleship is the body life in a miniature and more personal form. It is the context in which much of the “one another” commands of Scripture can be carried out (Romans 12:10, 16; 14:19; 15:5-7, 14; 16:16; 1 Corinthians 12:24-25; Galatians 5:13; 6:2; Ephesians 4:2, 25, 32; 5:19, 21; Philippians 2:3; Colossians 3:9, 13, 16; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9, 18; 5:11-15; Hebrews 10:24-25; James 5:16; 1 Peter 4:8-10; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11-12). Indeed, the church is *dynamic*—ever growing and maturing as each member grows in obedience and service to Christ and to His body (Ephesians 4:11-16).

## EVANGELISM

Although Hope Bible Church seeks to equip and motivate each member to be an effective witness for Christ among family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc., we also sponsor outreaches that we participate in together. These provide unique opportunities for sharpening and encouraging one another in fellowship, and to be a community of believers amongst unbelievers. Indeed, the corporate witness of the body of Christ is an even greater testimony than the witness of an individual Christian (John 13:35; 17:23).

Unfortunately, a growing number of evangelicals have turned that on its head by viewing the weekly gathering of the saints as the best time to reach out to the lost, who are characterized as “seekers.” However, the Bible consistently portrays the local church as a body of *believers* who gather for corporate worship and discipleship. Biblical evangelism can take place within the local assembly, but it most often occurs *outside* of the assembly in the personal contacts of its members. Since the local church is primarily for believers—not for unbelievers—the church must not be organized entirely (or even substantially) with the unbeliever in mind. In this sense we believe that “seeker churches” have drifted away from the Biblical instruction concerning the nature and purpose of the church. Some provision of hospitality and invitation is necessary, but we must not fashion the church to please the unbeliever. Christ’s church must carry the priorities that God said the church must pursue, including the exposition of God’s word, devotion to prayer, and the fellowship of the saints so that we would worship God more genuinely, disciple one another more fully, and evangelize the lost more effectively. Focusing our services on discipling believers rather than reaching out to unbelievers does not weaken our evangelism. It strengthens it! We do not need to change God’s pattern for church. It works.

The church, therefore, must not try to act less devoted to God or more human-centered to attract unbelievers to Christ. Indeed, this may attract them to the church, but not to Christ. Greater numbers in the church are not desirable if those numbers are not willing to serve and obey Christ from the heart. A strategy that attracts lots of people because of curiosity, intrigue, entertainment, or personal pampering will not yield a pure church. Rather, it will make the application of church discipline (as commanded by Christ) impossible (Matthew 18; 1 Corinthians 5). The methods yielding those results are not biblical or even desirable. Therefore, the principle in evangelism cannot be, “Whatever works should be used.” On the contrary, the method itself must be biblical. Pragmatism and marketing strategies must not be accepted. Obedience to God’s will is the guide.

We teach that the believer must be willing to go to places where the lost are in order to share the gospel with them. The example Christ gave us of associating with the lost illustrated His role as a teacher, healer, and Savior—not as a buddy, partner, or playmate. The believer must pursue the unbeliever as Christ did—not with friendship as the goal, but with the desire to lead him out of his spiritual blindness and unbelief.

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### *Conclusion*

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A local church’s philosophy of ministry matters! It is not enough to have sound doctrine, as though the Bible is clear about *what* to believe, but is not clear about *how* to implement it personally or in the life of the church. As Paul made clear in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, God gave us the Scriptures not just for sound doctrine, but also to reprove us, to correct us, and to train us in right living “so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for *every* good work.” That is the substance of a church’s philosophy of ministry: putting sound doctrine into practice. And the Scriptures are totally sufficient for that task. There are certainly many aspects of ministry about which the Scriptures allow us freedom to develop forms of ministry that are suited to our culture and era.

However, none of these can be in conflict with the greater commands and principles for ministry that we have attempted to outline in this overview. May we always be humble and teachable to recognize any extent to which our philosophy of ministry departs from Scripture, and to return to the Bible as our handbook for ministry!