

The

Truths We Teach



Savoring the Supremacy of God
Studying the Word of God
Shaping the People of God
Spreading the Gospel of God

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Doctrine and Ministry

The Elders, Clearcreek Chapel

Summary

The following doctrinal statement is meant to be a summary of what the Bible teaches. It in no way is exhaustive. We have attempted to frame the central truths of the Scripture and to further speak to those truths that we hold dear.

General

The objective of the *Truths We Teach* is to expand on and to explain the Scriptures as we understand them. This serves as a standard of doctrine for those who teach and serve as office bearers here at the Chapel. This statement is under the Word of God. Our commitment is to clarify and update and reword this document as God gives us light on the Scriptures. The philosophy of ministry articulates our understanding of our mission and ministry at this time in redemptive history.

Things We Affirm and Teach

The following is adapted from the *Things We Teach* of Grace Community Church, L.A., California. We have copied it freely and have adapted it to our own understanding of the Scriptures. We have freely changed the original to reflect our New Covenant theology rather than their dispensational approach. We want to fully acknowledge our indebtedness to the fine work done by the elders there.

The Scriptures

We teach that the Bible is God's written revelation to man, and thus the sixty six books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit constitute the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:7-14; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

We teach that the Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13), verbally inspired in every word (2 Timothy 3:16), absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God-breathed. They are fully self-authenticating, not relying on any external proof for their claims.

We teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12-13; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21). The Scriptures are our complete sufficiency for life and godliness (1 Peter 1:2-11) and should not be adulterated by mixture with human schemes of thought.

We teach that God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man (2 Peter 1:20-21) without error in the whole or in the part (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16).

We teach that the Scriptures are to be interpreted in their natural, grammatical and historical sense recognizing their literary genre and their place in the unfolding of redemptive history. For example, therefore, the opening chapters of Genesis present a fiat creation in six literal days (Genesis 1:31; Exodus 31:17).

We teach that the meaning of a text of Scripture is also determined by the meaning given it by later texts. The redemptive-historical, grammatical, genre-aware interpretation will yield the meaning as understood by the original

human author. In the progressive unfolding of revelation, later texts may explain, expound, and understand earlier texts. New Testament authors see Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament (Luke 24:25-27, 44-49). The New Testament's use, interpretation and understanding of the Old Testament is true, accurate, authoritative and illustrative of how to understand the unfolding meaning and application of the Old Testament texts.

We teach that the Scriptures may have several applications. The full meaning and application of Scripture also requires the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of all believers, and especially the elders, to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, making proper applications to the current generation. The precepts or commands of the New Testament are the will of God for Christians and binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it.

God

We teach that there is but one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 1 Corinthians 8:4), an infinite, all-knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)—each equally deserving holy and glad worship and obedience from the heart.

God the Father

We teach that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6). He is the Architect and Creator of all things (Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9). As the only absolute and omnipotent Ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36). His fatherhood involves both His role within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As their Creator He is Father to all men (Ephesians 4:6), but He is spiritual Father only to believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18). He has decreed all things that come to pass will be for His own glory (Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11). In His sovereignty He is neither author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47), nor does He diminish the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17). In love and grace, He has chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:4-6); He saves them from sin's penalty, power and eventual presence, by grace causing them come to Him through Jesus Christ. He regenerates his chosen by imparting to them eternal life by the Holy Spirit so that they are born into His family; and they become, upon adoption, sons in full standing (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5-9).

God the Son

We teach that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine attributes, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9).

We teach that God the Father created all things according to His own will, through His Son, Jesus Christ, by whom all things continue in existence and in operation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2).

We teach that in the incarnation (God becoming man) Christ surrendered only the rights of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind. In His incarnation, the eternally existing second Person of the Trinity

accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God Man (Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9).

We teach that Jesus Christ embodies humanity and deity in indivisible oneness forever (Micah 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9-10; Colossians 2:9).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26-35); that He was God incarnate (John 1:1, 14); and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom (Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

We teach that, in the incarnation, the second person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives and free exercise of His divine power and authority. He took on an existence characterized by being a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes (Philippians 2:5-8). The miraculous works of Jesus were done in the Father's will and through the power of the Spirit (Acts 10:36-38; Matthew 12:28; Luke 4:18-21; John 1:32-33; 3:34).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the outpouring of His life in the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was real, voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24).

We teach that on the basis of the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is declared righteous, given eternal life, and given the status as a son in the family of God (Romans 3:25; 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

We teach that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead. In His resurrected, glorified body, He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest and rules and reigns in His Kingdom (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-31; Romans 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

We teach that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that God has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Jesus' bodily resurrection moves believers from the realm of the flesh into the realm of the spirit and guarantees a future bodily resurrection to life for all believers (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10; Ephesians 2:5-7; Colossians 1:13; 2:8-15; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

We teach that Jesus Christ will return to gather the church, which is His Body, unto Himself. His eternal kingdom will be brought to culmination in the new heavens and new earth (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20).

We teach that the new creation broke into this old creation through Jesus' resurrection. Through the new birth by the Holy Spirit, the new creation is begun in those God has chosen and given the gifts of faith and repentance. We teach that this new creation life is both an already accomplished reality and a not yet completed in its fullness.

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22-23):

- Believers as a reward (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10)

- Living inhabitants of the earth and the unbelieving dead at His glorious return and at the Great White Throne. (Matthew 25:31-46)

As the Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), the Head of His Body the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the coming universal King, who reigns on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 2:29-36), He is the final Judge of all who reject Him as Lord and Savior (Matthew 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31).

God the Holy Spirit

We teach that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternality (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13-14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13). In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17).

We teach that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind. We recognize His sovereign activity in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2 Peter 1:20-21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5-7).

We teach that the work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost when He came from the Father as promised in the New Covenant (Ezekiel 36:26-27) and by Christ (John 14:16-17; 15:26) to initiate and complete the building of the Body of Christ, which is His church (1 Corinthians 12:13). The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7-9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign Agent in regeneration, immersing or placing (baptizing) all believers into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher, who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible. Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 John 2:20, 27).

We teach that the Holy Spirit dispenses and administers spiritual gifts to the church. The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18). We teach, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today. We teach that spiritual gifts had both temporary and permanent activities. Though all gifts may still be active through the work of the Spirit, no gift is presently giving inspired, authoritative

revelation nor is authenticating divine revelation or messengers. (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:1-4).

Man

We teach that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9).

We teach that God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

We teach that in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence; incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death; became subject to the wrath of God; and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost. Man's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8).

We teach that because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12).

Salvation

We teach that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the completed work of redemption by Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Regeneration

We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24). It causes the sinner to be repentant, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, to respond by God's gift of faith to trust solely in the divine provision of salvation. 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 (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10), and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Such conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3).

Election

We teach that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those for whom Christ would die as their substitute; these and these alone, He would sovereignly redeem, call,

regenerate, quicken, reconcile, justify, save, sanctify and glorify (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2).

We teach that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17). 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. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith and all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).

We teach that the unmerited favor and enabling power that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part nor to God's anticipation or prior knowledge of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that 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 (Romans 9:11-16). This sovereignty will always exalt the glory of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9).

Justification

We teach that justification before God is an act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). By this means God is enabled to "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

Sanctification

We teach that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and 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 growth in holiness. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that there is also by the work of the Holy Spirit a progressive transformation by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the standing the believer positionally enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17,19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23).

In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but full provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit operating in us by faith in God's promises (2 Peter 1:2-11). The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. Total sinlessness is not possible in the life of this flesh,

but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

Security

We teach that all the redeemed once saved are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24).

We teach that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (Romans 6:15-22; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, 25-26; Titus 2:11-14).

Holiness

We teach that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-2), should be separated from sin (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness that reflects the teaching of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2-12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:1-10). The practical holiness of the believer is a matter of grace enabled faith lived out in the world and in the community of the church (Galatians 6:1-10).

The Church

We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-8), of which Christ is the Head (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18).

We teach that in fulfillment of the New Covenant the formation of the church, the Body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

We teach that the church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11-3:6). The church did not exist in the Old Covenant and is not ethnic Jews (1 Corinthians 10:32). She is a mystery foreshadowed in type by Israel but not revealed until this New Covenant eschatological age (Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32) and that the church and Israel are formed into one new man in Christ.

We teach that the establishment and continuity of local gathered churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) and that the members of the one spiritual Body are to form in a community together in local visible assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25).

We teach that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ whose authority is mediated through the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18). Church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated officers in the assembly are elders (also called overseers, bishops, pastors, shepherds, and pastor-teachers) (Acts 20:28;

Ephesians 4:11) and deacons (servants), both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5). We teach that the elders lead or govern as shepherds under Christ (1 Timothy 5:17-22) and, as a body, have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17). We teach that the deacons are the servants in the church and that they are to serve in capacities delegated to them and authorized by the elders (Acts 6:1-7).

We teach the importance of discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matthew 18:5-14), joining together in the mission of the Kingdom, as well as the need for the discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16).

We teach the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5). We teach that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other, sharing in the mission of the church. Each local church, however, through its elders and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should be the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation. The elders should determine all other matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government as well (Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

We teach that the purpose of the church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Ephesians 4:13-16), by instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17), by fellowship (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42) and by advancing and communicating the gospel to all the people groups (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:42).

We teach the calling of all believers to the work of service (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12; Revelation 22:12).

We teach the need of the church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts. First, He gives people chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:7-12), and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

We teach that the gifts of the Spirit are given to the church to empower the people of God to accomplish the mission of the church. Some gifts were used in the revelatory giving of the Word of God (2 Corinthians 12:12). Some gifts also functioned to confirm the authenticity of the apostles' message (Hebrews 2:3-4). After the completion of the canon, this aspect or use of some gifts stopped while the gift itself continues to function (1 Corinthians 14). Now, the Scriptures are the sole test of a man's message. We teach that the present Charismatic use of the gifts of knowledge, tongues, interpretation of tongues never were and are not the true expression of those gifts. We also teach that there is no gift of being able to heal, only receiving the healing of afflictions (1 Corinthians 12, 14). Satan also counterfeits the miraculous gifts so as to deceive even believers (Revelation 13:13-14).

We teach that no one possesses a miraculous power to heal but that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1-6; John 5:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15).

We teach that the focus of the Spirit's gifts in the church is on the speaking and serving gifts (1 Peter 4:10-11).

We teach that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38-42). Christian baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer publicly professing faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:1-11). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible Body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42).

We teach that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes, (1 Corinthians 11:28-32). We also teach that whereas the elements of Communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ who is present in a unique way, fellowshiping with His people (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Heavenly Beings

We teach that the Scriptures describe and differentiate between at least three types of heavenly beings created by God. There are cherubim who are particularly related to the throne and presence of God (Genesis 3:24; Exodus 37:7-9; Isaiah 37:6; Ezekiel 10; Hebrews 9:5) and the seraphim (Isaiah 6:2, 6) and the angels.

Holy Angels

We teach that angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they are created to serve God and to worship Him (Luke 2:9-14; Hebrews 1:6-7, 14; 2:6-7; Revelation 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9).

Fallen Spiritual Beings

We teach that Satan is a cherub (Ezekiel 28:11-19), a created being and the originator of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19), by taking numerous angels with him in his fall (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:1-14), and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (Genesis 3:1-15).

We teach that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Isaiah 14:13-14; Matthew 4:1-11; Revelation 12:9-10); the prince of this world, who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20); and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

Eschatology

We teach that a Biblical Eschatology is essential to life of the church (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 2:19-20; 3:11-13; 4:13-17; 5:23-24). The church's present existence, ministry priorities, and self-expression are the outworking of one's eschatology. Eschatology is more than just "future things." It is the articulated understanding of God's purpose and program throughout redemptive history, from the creation to the consummation.

We teach that a general understanding of Eschatology is required of all believers (in fact, all believers actually have some implicit eschatology); specific agreement over schemas and details should not be tests of fellowship, but subjects of on-going openness in study and discussion.

Theology of Fulfillment

We teach that God has been working through redemptive history to bring about the fulfillment of His purposes to glorify Christ in the church (Ephesians 1:9-10; 3:21; Romans 16:25-27). The Old Covenant was fulfilled and finished by the coming and sacrificial death of Jesus, the Messiah (Galatians 3:1–4:7 [note esp. 3:23-29] Hebrews 8:1–11:25). In His Incarnation, the Kingdom of God was begun among men as Jesus was the new Israel (Matthew 11:13; Luke 16:16-17). In His death and resurrection, the New Covenant was inaugurated (Jeremiah 31:27-37; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:1-11; Hebrews 8:8-13). The Messianic Age has begun to unfold with the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the formation of Body of Christ, the church (Acts 1:3-11; 2:15-39; 3:13-26; 4:23-31; 5:29-32). In this one Body, God has brought Jew and Gentile together (Ephesians 2:11-15) so that both together are fellow-citizens, God's household (Ephesians 2:16-22), joint-heirs, one Body, partakers of the promise (Ephesians 3:4-12), a holy Temple, a holy nation, a people, a new race of humanity, (1 Peter 2:9-10; Colossians 1:25-29). What God has begun with Christ in the church will reach its consummation in the New Heavens and New Earth (Revelation 21:1–22:17) when God will tabernacle among men amid all things made new (Revelation 21:1-6a) and it is done.

Things to Come

We teach that Daniel's 70th week is yet future, a period through which God brings to culmination His wrath upon the world who has followed Satan in the person of the Anti-Christ. At the end of that period, the Lord will come in great glory, gather His people from whole earth when they will receive their glorified bodies. The Lord Jesus Christ crushes Satan's final rebellion against the Lord. After defeating and casting Satan into hell, the final judgement, the great White Throne judgement takes place where the lost of all ages receive the sentence of their eternal punishment in the lake of fire.

Death

We teach that physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Revelation 6:9-11), that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8), that there is a separation of soul and body (Philippians 1:21-24), and that, for the redeemed, such separation will continue until the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17), which initiates the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6), when our soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35-44, 50-54). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8).

We teach the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Romans 8:10-11, 19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:13-15).

We teach that the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the second resurrection (Luke 16:19-26; Revelation 20:13-15), when the soul and the resurrection body will be united (John 5:28-29). Satan will

be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10) whereupon Christ, who is the Judge of all men (John 5:22), will judge the great and small at the Great White Throne judgment. They shall then appear at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) and shall be cast into hell, the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41-46), cut off from the life of God forever (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9) in an eternal conscious punishment.

We teach that this resurrection of the unsaved dead to judgment will be a physical resurrection, whereupon receiving their judgment (Romans 14:10-13), they will be committed to the lake of fire for eternal, conscious punishment away from the presence of God.

Eternity

We teach that after the judgment of unbelievers (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:7-15), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, the elements of this earth having been dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth wherein only righteousness dwells (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 20:15, 21-22). The heavenly city having come down out of heaven (Revelation 21:2) will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another (John 17:3; Revelation 21-22). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28) that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:28).

Philosophy of Ministry

Its Biblical Principles

These are the overarching, unchanging, trans-cultural teaching of the Word of God on the ministry of the church. We owe a great debt to the elders of Bethlehem Baptist Church in articulating this shared philosophy of ministry.

The Church

The church exists to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21). The church is the redeemed people of God placed into the Body of Christ between Pentecost and the 2nd Coming of Christ. The church is also the people of God gathered together in localities: to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) as the Kingdom of God in this world (Colossians 1:13-14) and to meet regularly together in an outward worship that expresses inward and spiritual truths (John 4:23-24; Hebrews 10:19-25; 12:18-29). See further the section in the doctrinal portion on the church.

The church has three major purposes:

- **Exaltation** – Our *doxological* purpose. Exaltation is all we do in terms of pursuing God in worship. This is the overarching purpose of the church. The church exists to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.
- **Edification** – Our *discipleship* purpose. Edification is all we do to know God better, to please him in every facet of life, to learn, to believe, to understand and to obey the Scriptures fully and to love God and one another in each sphere of life as we grow in Christ-likeness.
- **Evangelism** – Our *declarative* purpose. Evangelism is all we do to proclaim the gospel to every people group in order to see all of God's elect brought into the Kingdom.

The Scriptures

The Bible is the sole, sufficient and supreme authority for the church (2 Timothy 3:14-17). The Bible is how Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd, King and Head of the church mediates His authority (1 Timothy 1:17). The Bible then will be the subject matter of our faith, our worship, our teaching, our preaching, our evangelism, our edification, our admonition, and our counsel. Further, to be truly Bible-centered we must also be Christ-centered. All that we do with the Scriptures must bring us to God Himself.

The Gifts

The mission and ministry of the church is carried on, not by fleshly strength, but by divine enablement through the grace of spiritual gifts (Ephesians 4:1-16; Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:39). The gifts may be broadly categorized as public ministry and personal ministry gifts (1 Peter 4:10-11), are to be exercised for the glory of God, under the rule of God and for the good of the church (1 Corinthians 14:12).

The primary gifts a believer has define the primary sphere of their ministry. That does not exclude other ministries, but it is primarily how the Holy Spirit is enabling that person to serve God and build-up the Body. A person's godly character, talents, abilities and experience all help give outward shape to the inward enablement.

A church knows what ministries God is enabling her for by the mix of spiritual gifts given her in her people.

The Elders

God has given the oversight or governing of His gathered congregations to a body or council of men known as elders (Acts 14:21-23; 15:2; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). These men are also called shepherds (pastors) and overseers (bishops) (Acts 20:17, 27-28; Ephesians 4:11). The elders are to oversee (govern) the church through the shepherding care of the church (1 Peter 5:2).

The church is to be shepherded by a plurality of godly men qualified according to the Scriptures. All elders share the authority equally and together. No elder is above the others in authority. No elder exercises independent authority.

The primary model for the elders is that of a shepherd. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd, and thus is truly "the pastor" of the church. We are all under-shepherds serving the Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). All pastor-elders shepherd the flock. As soon as there is a plurality established, each shepherd should be assigned a smaller group to care for, know well, to instruct privately and to be accountable for (Acts 20:28-30).

Since all elders must be given to or be able to teach, then the teaching of the Word of God and the responsibility for the doctrine of the church is entrusted to the elders (1 Timothy 3:2; 4:13,16; 5:17; Acts 20:27). Some elders will be more gifted in teaching and thus will bear a greater burden for the public and private ministry of the Word.

In the church, elders who rule or govern well may be supported vocationally. Among those who are to be supported, special effort is to be extended to support those who work hard at preaching and teaching (1 Peter 5:17-18). Therefore there will be elders who support themselves (Acts 20:34, is an example) and those who are supported partially or in full by the church. Priority for vocational support of elders is to be given first to those whose gifts and role is that of preaching and teaching and then to those who gift and role is that of ruling (governing, administering).

Each elder in the Body will have a unique blend of gifts, abilities, character and experience. These unique blends mix together to provide stability, breadth of perspective and long-term continuity to the oversight of the church. Therefore, in a Biblically functioning eldership, individual weaknesses should be offset by the union of a plurality of strengths. From God's giving of men to the church whose gifts are stronger emerges the responsibility to identify roles among the elders. The Bible clearly identifies at least two roles among the elders that are to be distinguished by their function, their relation to the elders and their vocational emphasis. These roles are preaching-teaching and administrating.

The primary objective of the ministry of the elders is established in Ephesians 4:11-16. We are to equip each believer for their work of ministry and holiness so that the Body is built up into the standard of maturity established by Christ. The criteria for maturity is stability in doctrine, discernment of error, truth spoken in love, and the full exercise of all the interrelated and interdependent ministries represented by the people.

The Ministry

The ministry of the elders involves no less than the following activities:

- The studying of the Word of God to be believed, understood, and obeyed. This study should develop a growing body of doctrine personally and corporately.
- The public preaching and teaching of the Word of God to the congregation as a whole. This public ministry of the Word must involve the regular, systematic exposition of extended portions of the Word of God with heart-piercing, life-changing applications. It must, as needed, also expose error and the prevailing dangers threatening the church.
- The private teaching, exhorting and admonishing by the Word of God in one-on-one counseling and small group interaction. This ministry must interact with individuals, families and flocks in the real problems of life with holiness as its chief aim.
- The proclaiming of the gospel to the lost. This may be done in public forums, in church settings or in private discourse with a view to fulfilling the great commission.
- Extended prayer and communion with God because prayer is the visible engine of ministry and to cultivate a genuine passion for God.
- The exercise of the spiritual care of the congregation as a community together and as a flock in all the providential dealings of God. This is to be done on one level by every member and, additionally, by the elders.
- The administration of the church in all that is required to oversee its ministries and activities. This includes the delegation of much day-to-day management and tasks to deacons and other people gifted for those tasks.
- The incorporation of new members into the community of the church and the equipping of the people for their work of service.
- The leading in the observance of the ordinances.

Its Personal Manifestation

This is how the above principles are fleshed out in the matrix of our church culture, spiritual gifts, abilities and experience. It speaks to what motivates us and what methodologies are consistent with the Word and flesh out the gospel in our time in redemptive history.

Vision

By God's grace and through His Word, we will cultivate in the hearts of God's people a passion for the supremacy of God *magnified* in love for Him and *manifested* in love for one another.

- **Savoring the supremacy of God** – Our vision is to magnify God as the all-satisfying object of the believer's life in worship and service, here and forever.
- **Studying the Word of God** – Our vision is to work out both the large picture and the immediate texts in Holy Spirit enabled exposition and application in the public and private ministry of the Word of God.
- **Shaping the people of God** – Our vision is to see minds, affections, and wills transformed by the Word of God so that God is magnified by an obeying faith in every sphere of life.
- **Spreading the gospel of God** – Our vision is to see the gospel proclaimed to all the people groups so that God is glorified in every tribe, language, and people group.

Values

These are the values that drive and motivate us in ministry. We have taken these from a Mission and Vision Statement Pastor Russ spent 18 months developing. Even down to the wording, it has largely been influenced by Dr. John Piper, Dr. John MacArthur and Pastor Dick Lucas. We have thought through it again together in our present ministry context and the unique mission and ministry of Clearcreek Chapel.

Values Relating to Spiritual Atmosphere

- Magnifying the worth of God in everything that we do.
- Going hard after God as an all-satisfying goal in Himself.
- Being shaped by the Scripture as the fully sufficient and trustworthy revelation of God.
- Making prayer the visible engine of all our efforts in worship and ministry.
- Being humble and teachable by the Word of God so that we are constantly being stretched and sharpened in our grasp of God's Word and truth.
- Recognizing the role suffering, self-denial and self-discipline must have in refining and maturing for effective ministry.

Values Relating to our Life Together

- Increasingly visible, authentic, practical ways of loving one another.
- Eager openness to new people and organized efforts to incorporate them in the life and ministry of the church.
- The importance of small groups (Flocks) for building caring, faith-sustaining relationships and accountability.
- Building lasting friendships as partnerships in cultivating holiness, ministry, and maturity.

- Giving attention and emphasis to bringing up children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- Developing youth through a discipleship that excites and equips them for mature Christian living.
- Providing Bible teaching for adults in a class setting that stimulates Bible reading, memory, and learning.
- Building strong marriages that model the relationship between Christ and the church.
- Emphasizing the mentoring role of the mature saints.
- Being engaged with skilled elders and Christian leaders who sharpen, stretch, challenge and further our understanding of God and His Word.

Values Relating to Corporate Worship

- A public worship form that communicates the supremacy of God in all of life.
- A sustained sense of lingering worship connected to fervent Biblical exposition and practical application attended by the unction of the Holy Spirit.
- Music in our worship which is both God-centered and Godward and is an expression of the diversity of believers among us.
- Being a singing people who, by the Word and the Spirit, make a joyful noise to the Lord.
- Understanding that in singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, we are to edify, encourage and admonish one another.
- Being vulnerable and transparent in our imperfections so as to encourage candor and openness.

Values Relating to Church Ministry

- The spiritual shepherding and governance by the elders.
- The diaconal care of our people and service-related ministries.
- The importance of Biblical Counseling for all of life and particularly in the life and ministry of Clearcreek Chapel.
- Use of all the spiritual gifts represented by the members of the congregation in ministries of worship, discipleship, service and evangelism.
- Efficient administrative structures shaped by the Word and sustained by prayer.
- Openness and integrity in the wise use of the financial resources given by God's people.
- Full participation in the stewardship of proportional giving by every household.

Values Relating to Christian Mission

- Continuous evangelism through the network of relationships God has brought us into.
- Periodic evangelism through special events designed to make contact with the community and create opportunity for the gospel message.
- Regular evangelism through the public preaching of the Word in the context of the worship of God's people.
- Continual development of our Biblical Counseling Center as a place to train effective Biblical counselors, offer hope and help to sin-laden people.
- Enabling people to be salt and light at all levels of society.

- Supporting missionaries locally, nationally and globally who affirm our doctrinal distinctives and evangelize the lost, edify God's people, or equip God's people for ministry.
- Supporting ministries who serve to support and strengthen the work of God worldwide.
- Sharing with other churches our vision and doctrine to encourage their efforts in Biblical ministry.

THE CONFESSIONS WE EMBRACE

In the battle for truth, each age must identify the strategic fronts along which the enemy of our souls is waging war by bringing forth error. Therefore, we affirm the following as needed in our own day to draw the line between that which is truth and that which is error.

The Cambridge Declaration

Evangelical churches today are increasingly dominated by the spirit of this age rather than by the Spirit of Christ. As evangelicals, we call ourselves to repent of this sin and to recover the historic Christian faith.

In the course of history words change. In our day this has happened to the word "evangelical." In the past it served as a bond of unity between Christians from a wide diversity of church traditions. Historic evangelicalism was confessional. It embraced the essential truths of Christianity as those were defined by the great ecumenical councils of the church. In addition, evangelicals also shared a common heritage in the "solas" of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation.

Today the light of the Reformation has been significantly dimmed. The consequence is that the word "evangelical" has become so inclusive as to have lost its meaning. We face the peril of losing the unity it has taken centuries to achieve. Because of this crisis and because of our love of Christ, his gospel and his church, we endeavor to assert anew our commitment to the central truths of the Reformation and of historic evangelicalism. These truths we affirm not because of their role in our traditions, but because we believe that they are central to the Bible.

Sola Scriptura: The Erosion Of Authority

Scripture alone is the inerrant rule of the church's life, but the evangelical church today has separated Scripture from its authoritative function. In practice, the church is guided, far too often, by the culture. Therapeutic technique, marketing strategies, and the beat of the entertainment world often have far more to say about what the church wants, how it functions and what it offers, than does the Word of God. Pastors have neglected their rightful oversight of worship, including the doctrinal content of the music. As biblical authority has been abandoned in practice, as its truths have faded from Christian consciousness, and as its doctrines have lost their saliency, the church has been increasingly emptied of its integrity, moral authority, and direction.

Rather than adapting Christian faith to satisfy the felt needs of consumers, we must proclaim the law as the only measure of true righteousness and the gospel as the only announcement of saving truth. Biblical truth is indispensable to the church's understanding, nurture and discipline.

Scripture must take us beyond our perceived needs to our real needs and liberate us from seeing ourselves through the seductive images, clichés, promises, and priorities of mass culture. It is only in the light of God's truth that we understand ourselves aright and see God's provision for our need. The Bible, therefore, must be taught and preached in the church. Sermons must be expositions of the Bible and its teachings, not expressions of the preachers opinions or the ideas of the age. We must settle for nothing less than what God has given.

The work of the Holy Spirit in personal experience cannot be disengaged from Scripture. The Spirit does not speak in ways that are independent of Scripture. Apart from Scripture we would never have known of God's grace in Christ. The biblical Word, rather than spiritual experience, is the test of truth.

Thesis One: Sola Scriptura

We reaffirm the inerrant Scripture to be the sole source of written divine revelation, which alone can bind the conscience. The Bible alone teaches all that is necessary for our salvation from sin and is the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured. We deny that any creed, council or individual may bind a Christian's conscience, that the Holy Spirit speaks independently of or contrary to what is set forth in the Bible, or that personal spiritual experience can ever be a vehicle of revelation.

Solus Christus: The Erosion Of Christ-Centered Faith

As evangelical faith becomes secularized, its interests have been blurred with those of the culture. The result is a loss of absolute values, permissive individualism, and a substitution of wholeness for holiness, recovery for repentance, intuition for truth, feeling for belief, chance for providence, and immediate gratification for enduring hope. Christ and his cross have moved from the center of our vision.

Thesis Two: Solus Christus

We reaffirm that our salvation is accomplished by the mediatorial work of the historical Christ alone. His sinless life and substitutionary sacrifice¹ alone are sufficient for our justification and reconciliation to the Father.

We deny that the gospel is preached if Christ's substitutionary work is not declared and faith in Christ and his work is not solicited.

Sola Gratia: The Erosion Of The Gospel

Unwarranted confidence in human ability is a product of fallen human nature. This false confidence now fills the evangelical world; from the self-esteem gospel, to the health and wealth gospel, from those who have transformed the gospel into a product to be sold and sinners into consumers who want to buy, to others who treat Christian faith as being true simply because it works. This silences the doctrine of justification regardless of the official commitments of our churches.

God's grace in Christ is not merely necessary but is the sole efficient cause of salvation. We confess that human beings are born spiritually dead and are incapable even of cooperating with regenerating grace.

Thesis Three: Sola Gratia

We reaffirm that in salvation we are rescued from God's wrath by his grace alone. It is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to Christ by releasing us from our bondage to sin and raising us from spiritual death to spiritual life.

We deny that salvation is in any sense a human work. Human methods, techniques or strategies by themselves cannot accomplish this transformation. Faith is not produced by our unregenerated human nature.

¹ Originally *atonement*

Sola Fide: The Erosion Of The Chief Article

Justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. This is the article by which the church stands or falls. Today this article is often ignored, distorted or sometimes even denied by leaders, scholars and pastors who claim to be evangelical. Although fallen human nature has always recoiled from recognizing its need for Christ's imputed righteousness, modernity greatly fuels the fires of this discontent with the biblical Gospel. We have allowed this discontent to dictate the nature of our ministry and what it is we are preaching.

Many in the church growth movement believe that sociological understanding of those in the pew is as important to the success of the gospel as is the biblical truth which is proclaimed. As a result, theological convictions are frequently divorced from the work of the ministry. The marketing orientation in many churches takes this even further, erasing the distinction between the biblical Word and the world, robbing Christ's cross of its offense, and reducing Christian faith to the principles and methods which bring success to secular corporations.

While the theology of the cross may be believed, these movements are actually emptying it of its meaning. There is no gospel except that of Christ's substitution in our place whereby God imputed to him our sin and imputed to us his righteousness. Because he bore our judgment, we now walk in his grace as those who are forever pardoned, accepted and adopted as God's children. There is no basis for our acceptance before God except in Christ's saving work, not in our patriotism, churchly devotion or moral decency. The gospel declares what God has done for us in Christ. It is not about what we can do to reach him.

Thesis Four: Sola Fide

We reaffirm that justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. In justification Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as the only possible satisfaction of God's perfect justice.

We deny that justification rests on any merit to be found in us, or upon the grounds of an infusion of Christ's righteousness in us, or that an institution claiming to be a church that denies or condemns sola fide can be recognized as a legitimate church.

Soli Deo Gloria: The Erosion Of God-Centered Worship

Wherever in the church biblical authority has been lost, Christ has been displaced, the gospel has been distorted, or faith has been perverted, it has always been for one reason: our interests have displaced God's and we are doing his work in our way. The loss of God's centrality in the life of today's church is common and lamentable. It is this loss that allows us to transform worship into entertainment, gospel preaching into marketing, believing into technique, being good into feeling good about ourselves, and faithfulness into being successful. As a result, God, Christ, and the Bible have come to mean too little to us and rest too inconsequentially upon us.

God does not exist to satisfy human ambitions, cravings, the appetite for consumption, or our own private spiritual interests. We must focus on God in our worship, rather than the satisfaction of our personal needs. God is sovereign in worship; we are not. Our concern must be for God's kingdom, not our own empires, popularity or success.

Thesis Five: Soli Deo Gloria

We reaffirm that because salvation is of God and has been accomplished by God, it is for God's glory and that we must glorify him always. We must live our entire lives before the face of God, under the authority of God and for his glory alone. We deny that we can properly glorify God if our worship is confused with entertainment, if we neglect either Law or Gospel in our preaching, or if self-improvement, self-esteem or self-fulfillment are allowed to become alternatives to the gospel.

Call To Repentance And Reformation

The faithfulness of the evangelical church in the past contrasts sharply with its unfaithfulness in the present. Earlier in this century, evangelical churches sustained a remarkable missionary endeavor and built many religious institutions to serve the cause of biblical truth and Christ's kingdom. That was a time when Christian behavior and expectations were markedly different from those in the culture. Today they often are not. The evangelical world today is losing its biblical fidelity, moral compass and missionary zeal.

We repent of our worldliness. We have been influenced by the "gospels" of our secular culture, which are no gospels. We have weakened the church by our own lack of serious repentance, our blindness to the sins in ourselves which we see so clearly in others, and our inexcusable failure adequately to tell others about God's saving work in Jesus Christ.

We also earnestly call back erring professing evangelicals who have deviated from God's Word in the matters discussed in this Declaration. This includes those who declare that there is hope of eternal life apart from explicit faith in Jesus Christ, who claim that those who reject Christ in this life will be annihilated rather than endure the just judgment of God through eternal suffering, or who claim that evangelicals and Roman Catholics are one in Jesus Christ even where the biblical doctrine of justification is not believed.

The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals asks all Christians to give consideration to implementing this Declaration in the church's worship, ministry, policies, life and evangelism.

For Christ's sake. Amen.

ACE Council Members

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Rev. Alistair Begg
Dr. James M. Boice
Dr. W. Robert Godfrey
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The Danvers Statement

The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

There has risen a massive need in the church to respond to “Evangelical Feminism”. We affirm the Danvers Statement as a necessary element in recovering biblical manhood and womanhood.

Rationale

We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:

1. The widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
2. The tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;
3. The increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
4. The widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
5. The growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
6. The upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;
7. The emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness;
8. The increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts;
9. The consequent threat to Biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;
10. And behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical Biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

Purposes

Recognizing our own abiding sinfulness and fallibility, and acknowledging the genuine evangelical standing of many who do not agree with all of our convictions, nevertheless, moved by the preceding observations and by the hope that the noble Biblical vision of sexual complementarity may yet win the mind and heart of Christ's church, we engage to pursue the following purposes:

1. To study and set forth the Biblical view of the relationship between men and women, especially in the home and in the church.
2. To promote the publication of scholarly and popular materials representing this view.
3. To encourage the confidence of lay people to study and understand for themselves the teaching of Scripture, especially on the issue of relationships between men and women.
4. To encourage the considered and sensitive application of this Biblical view in the appropriate spheres of life.
5. And thereby to bring healing to persons and relationships injured by an inadequate grasp of God's will concerning manhood and womanhood,
6. to help both men and women realize their full ministry potential through a true understanding and practice of their God-given roles,
7. and to promote the spread of the gospel among all peoples by fostering a Biblical wholeness in relationships that will attract a fractured world.

Affirmations

Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood.
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart.
3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin.
4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women.
 - In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
 - In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women. Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community.
6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
 - In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership.

- In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men.
7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission—domestic, religious, or civil—ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin.
 8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries. Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
 9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world.
 10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

The "Danvers Statement" was prepared by several evangelical leaders at a CBMW meeting in Danvers, Mass., in December, 1987. It was first published in final form by the CBMW in Wheaton, Ill., in November, 1988. We grant permission and encourage interested persons to use, reproduce, and distribute the Danvers Statement.

A Definition of Biblical Counseling

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Christianity today has been taken over by psychology. We live in a therapeutic culture and we have allowed pagan philosophies and religions to take over the care for souls. Therefore, we affirm this proposed definition of Biblical Counseling as we implement a Biblical Discipleship in our Care and Cure for Souls at the Chapel.

True knowledge about people and counseling practice

WE AFFIRM that the Bible is God's self-revelation in relation to His creatures, and, as such, truly explains people and situations.

WE DENY that any other source of knowledge is authoritative for explaining people and situations.

WE AFFIRM that the Bible, as the revelation of Jesus Christ's redemptive activity, intends to specifically guide and inform counseling ministry.

WE DENY that any other source of knowledge is authoritative to equip us for the task of counseling people.

WE AFFIRM that wise counseling requires ongoing practical theological labor in order to understand Scripture, people, and situations. We must continually develop our personal character, case-wise understanding of persons, pastoral skill, and institutional structures.

WE DENY that the Bible intends to serve as an encyclopedia of proof texts containing all facts about people and the diversity of problems in living.

WE AFFIRM that the ideas, goals, and practices of counseling must cohere explicitly with the historic creeds, confessions, hymns, and other wise writings that express the faith and practice of the church of Jesus Christ.

WE DENY that the wisdom of the past sufficiently defines the issues of counseling ministry for today, as if the requisite wisdom were simply a matter of recovering past achievements.

The givens of the human condition and the scope of biblical truth

WE AFFIRM that human beings are created fundamentally dependent on and responsible to God. People can only be understood when these realities control the counselor's gaze.

WE DENY that any form of autonomy severs people from dependency on God.

WE DENY that any form of determinism neuters moral accountability to God.

WE AFFIRM that the ideal for human functioning is faith working through love. Such love for God and neighbor is the standard against which to specifically understand what is wrong with people. It is the goal to which counseling must specifically aspire.

WE DENY that any other standard or goal is true.

WE AFFIRM that evil, done by us and happening to us, is the fundamental and pervasive problem in living. Our own sin, in all its facets and dimensions, is primary and self-generating. The circumstances that happen to us provide

both provocative context (“trials and temptations”) and just consequences (“reap what you sow”) for our moral response, but do not determine the quality of our moral response.

WE DENY that any other diagnostic system is valid, universal, or penetrating.

WE DENY that the nature and/or nurture determine the quality of our moral response.

WE AFFIRM that the Scripture defines and speaks to the gamut of problems in living for all people in all situations.

WE DENY that biblical truth is limited to a narrow sphere of “religious” or “spiritual” beliefs, activities, persons, emotions, and institutions, separated from the other spheres of daily life.

WE DENY that any particular realm of human life can be sectorized off as the unique province of the theories, practices, and professions of the modern psychologies.

The solution to the sin and misery of the human condition.

WE AFFIRM that the Bible teaches, invites, warns, commands, sings, and tells the solution for what troubles humankind. In the good news of Jesus Christ, God acts personally. In word and deed, He redeems us from sin and misery through the various operations of His past, present, and future grace. God uses many means of grace, including the face-to-face conversations of wise counseling.

WE DENY that any other solution or therapy actually cures souls, and can change us from unholy to holy, from sinners to righteous, from insanity to sanity, from blindness to sightedness, from self-absorption to faith-working-through-love.

WE AFFIRM that God’s providential common grace brings many goods to people, both as individual kindnesses and as social blessings: e.g., medical treatment, economic help, political justice, protection for the weak, educational opportunity. Wise counseling will participate in and encourage mercy ministries as part of the call to love.

WE DENY that such goods can cure the soul’s evils. When they claim to cure the human condition, they are false and misleading, competing with Christ.

WE DENY that Christless counseling—whether psychotherapeutic, philosophical, quasi-religious, or overtly religious—is either true or good. Their messages are essentially false and misleading, competing with Christ

The nature and means of change

WE AFFIRM that the growth process for which counseling must aim is conversion followed by lifelong progressive sanctification within every circumstance of life. Our motives, thought processes, actions, words, emotions, attitudes, values—heart, soul, mind, and might—increasingly resemble Jesus Christ in conscious and evident love for God and other people.

WE DENY that there is a method for instantaneous or complete perfection into the image of Jesus Christ. The change process continues until we see Him face-to-face.

WE DENY that the processes and goals labeled self-actualization, self-fulfillment, healing of memories, meeting of psychological needs, social adaptation, building self-esteem, recovery, individuation, etc., describe valid aims of counseling, though they may evidence analogies to elements of biblical wisdom.

WE AFFIRM that the Bible explicitly teaches the fundamentals of counseling method by precept and example. Through speaking the truth in love, we act as tangible instruments of God's grace in the lives of others.

WE DENY that the modern psychotherapies rightly understand or practice wise counseling methodology, though they may evidence analogies to elements of biblical wisdom.

The social context and scope of counseling ministry

WE AFFIRM that the Spirit and the Word create the church of Jesus Christ, and that the people of God should provide the personal, social, and institutional loci for speaking the truth in love.

WE DENY that the mental health professions and their institutions have the right to claim any sector of problems in living as their particular prerogative. Even those who suffer mentally-disabling medical problems need godly counseling.

WE AFFIRM that the aims, content, and means of counseling ministry are of a piece with public ministry, the spiritual disciplines, and mercy ministry. These are different aspects of the one redemptive ministry of Christ.

WE DENY that the persons and problems addressed by the activity termed "psychotherapy" fall outside the intended scope of the ministry of Christ in word and deed.

WE AFFIRM that the primary and fullest expression of counseling ministry occurs in local church communities where pastors effectively shepherd souls while equipping and overseeing diverse forms of every-member ministry.

WE DENY that the institutional forms and professional roles of the mental health system provide a normative and desirable framework for counseling ministry.

WE DENY that current forms of church life and conceptions of the pastoral role are necessarily adequate and normative as vehicles to train, deliver, and oversee effective counseling ministry. The body of Christ needs institutional reformation, development, and innovation.

WE DENY that parachurch and other cooperative forms of counseling ministry in the body of Christ are inherently wrong.

God's providence and the interplay between His common grace and the intellectual-practical effects of sin

WE AFFIRM that numerous disciplines and professions can contribute to an increase in our knowledge of people and how to help them. Scripture teaches a standpoint and gaze by which believers can learn many things from those who do not believe.

WE DENY that any of these disciplines and professions can align and constitute a system of faith and practice for wise counseling.

WE AFFIRM that a commitment to secularity distorts disciplines and professions fundamentally and pervasively. People who do not think and practice in submission to the mind of Christ will misconstrue the things they see most clearly, and will miscarry in the matters about which they care most deeply and skillfully.

WE DENY that secular disciplines and professions are entirely benighted by the intellectual, moral and aesthetic effects of sin. The operations of God's common grace can cause unbelievers to be relatively observant, caring, stimulating, and informative.

WE AFFIRM that the personality theories are essentially false theologies, and the psychotherapies are essentially false forms of the cure of souls. Even the more descriptive and empirical psychologies are significantly skewed by secular presuppositions, and their findings need to be reinterpreted by the biblical worldview.

WE DENY that psychological research, personality theories, and psychotherapies would be viewed as "objective science," as that term is usually understood. Neither should they be seen as extensions of medicine and medical practice.

Good news for psychologized people in a psychologized society

WE AFFIRM that mature, presuppositionally consistent, loving, and efficacious biblical counseling will be a powerful evangelistic and apologetic force in the modern world.

WE DENY that the most important part of the church's interaction with the modern psychologies is to discover what can be learned from them.

The Elders

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