

# THE CONSERVATIVE BIBLE ASSOCIATION

## I. Mission

It is the mission of The Conservative Bible Association (CBA) to support and strengthen local churches who are the foundation for fulfilling the Great Commission. We believe that local churches are autonomous, and associations do not govern them. In addition, CBA assists para-church organizations and business as mission with training, guidance, and resources to also help support and strengthen local churches. We believe in conserving the authority of the Bible by guarding against man's traditions that may attempt to override the Bible's authority and local church methodology in building the Kingdom of God.

## II. Organization

CBA is a legal "doing business as" name of Christ Centered Homes, Inc., a 501(c)3 located in Atlanta, Texas, USA.

## III. Associational Benefits

- A. CBA members are given access to staff researchers to aid in gaining information.
- B. CBA members are allowed a free education through All Nations Bible Seminary.
- C. CBA members are allowed access to post prayers to the Christ Centered Prayer site.
- D. CBA members are verified and receive the Ministry Verification Seal.
- E. CBA members are represented on the Network153.net site for fundraising.
- F. CBA members are offered the Christ Centered Champions ministry resources for evangelism, discipleship, and multiplication.

\*Links to the above benefits are found on the CBA site under the Hub navigational link.

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## 1. Bible

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It has God for its author, without any error and should be man's main source for instructions on living a Christian life. God's revelation in the Bible has two main messages, the law and the gospel. We hold that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

"Inspiration" is a translation of the Greek word *theopneustos*, which literally means "God-breathed." The meaning is that Scripture has been breathed-out by God. The Bible has been produced by God and hence it should be respected and valued for exactly what it is, God's Word to humanity. Also, the prophetic messages of God's designated spokesmen were spoken revelation, the Bible is God's written revelation. It is God revealing Himself to man and is whole, complete and without error.

*Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Psalms 19:7-10; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 13:10; 16:25-26; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Timothy 3:16*

## 2. Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges given them by His Word, and seeking to fulfill the great commission by taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Its scriptural officers are pastors, elders and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, these offices are limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament church consists of believers coming together, in the same physical space, in the name of Jesus Christ. Coming together in the name of Jesus means gathering together to publicly worship Jesus, serve Jesus, and help others love Jesus. A biblical church worships in song together. The New Testament also speaks of the church as the Body of Christ, which includes all the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, language, people, and nation.

A biblical church maintains corporate holiness through church discipline. Matthew 18:17 says, "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." The church is a place of spiritual protection. Jesus expects his followers to help one another pursue holiness. If a Christian begins to engage in serious sin, Jesus expects the members of his Christian community to lovingly rebuke him. If the person refuses to repent of his sin, the entire church is expected to get involved.

*Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19; 5:18-21; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18*

## 3. Church and Ordinances

There are two ordinances that Christ commands for His body of believers, which is baptism and the Lord's Supper.

A. Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead.

B. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby His church, through partaking of the

bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the body and the blood of Christ, His death and anticipate His second coming.

*Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29*

#### **4. Church and Politics**

We believe that each local church is self-governing in function and must be free from interference by any government or political authority. We further believe that every human being is directly responsible to God in matters of faith and life and that each one should be free to worship God per the dictates of conscience.

The Bible teaches that a leader in the church should be a godly, moral, and ethical person which should apply to political leaders as well. If politicians are going to make wise, God-honoring decisions, they must have a bible based morality on which to base the decisions they make.

Issues such as the size and scope of government and economic systems are not explicitly addressed in Scripture. Bible-believing Christians should support issues and candidates that adhere to Scripture. We can be involved in politics and hold public office. However, we are to be heavenly minded and more concerned with the things of God than the things of this world. No matter who is in office, whether we voted for them or not, whether they are of the political party we prefer or not, the Bible commands us to respect and honor them. We should also be praying for those placed in authority over us. We are in this world but are not to be of this world.

There are issues the Bible does explicitly address. These are spiritual issues, not political issues. Two popular issues that are explicitly addressed are abortion and homosexuality and gay marriage. For the Bible-believing Christian, abortion is not a matter of a woman's right to choose. It is a matter of the life or death of a human being made in God's image. The Bible condemns homosexuality and gay marriage as immoral and unnatural.

*Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6; Exodus 21:22-25; Leviticus 18:22; Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:5; Romans 1:26-27; 13:1-7; 1 Corinthians 6:9; Colossians 3:1-2; 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 2:13-17; 1 John 2:15*

#### **5. Church and Women**

Women in ministry is an issue upon which some Bible-believing Christians disagree. The point of disagreement centers on the passages of Scripture that forbid women to speak in church or "assume authority over a man". The disagreement stems on whether those passages were relevant only to the era in which they were written. We hold to the belief that 1 Timothy 2:12 still applies today and that the basis for the command is not cultural but universal, being rooted in the order of creation.

First Peter 5:1-4 details the qualifications for an elder. *Presbuteros* is the Greek word used sixty-six times in the New Testament to indicate a "seasoned male overseer." It is the masculine form of the word. The feminine form, *presbutera*, is never used about elders or shepherds. Based on the qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, the role of an elder is interchangeable with the bishop/pastor/overseer. And since, per 1 Timothy 2:12, a woman should not "teach or exercise authority over a man," it seems clear that the position of elders and pastors, who must be equipped to teach, lead the congregation, and oversee their spiritual growth should be reserved for men only.

However, elder/bishop/pastor appears to be the only office reserved for men only. Women have always played a significant role in the growth of the church. There is no scriptural precedent that forbids women

from serving as worship leaders, youth ministers, children’s directors or other ministries in the local church. The only restriction is that they do not assume a role of spiritual authority over adult men. The concern in Scripture appears to be the issue of spiritual authority rather than function. Therefore, any role that does not bestow such spiritual authority over adult men is permissible.

*1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12-14; 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4*

## 6. Church Leadership

The New Testament mentions two official positions in the church: deacons and elders (also called pastors, bishops, or overseers).

The words *elder* (sometimes translated “presbyter”), *pastor* (which may be translated “shepherd”), and *overseer* (sometimes translated “bishop”) are used interchangeably in the New Testament. Even though these terms often mean different things among various churches today, the New Testament seems to point to one office, which was occupied by several godly men within each church. The following verses illustrate how the terms overlap and are used interchangeably:

In Acts 20:17–35, Paul is speaking to leaders from the Ephesian church. They are called “elders” in verse 17. Then in verse 28 he says, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God.” Here the elders are called “overseers” and their pastoral/shepherding duties are implied as the church is called the “flock.”

In Titus 1:5–9, Paul gives the qualifications of elders (verse 5) and says these qualifications are necessary because “an overseer must be above reproach” (verse 7). In 1 Timothy 3:1–7, Paul gives the qualifications for overseers, which are essentially the same as the qualifications for elders in Titus.

Furthermore, we see that every church has elders (plural). Elders are supposed to rule and teach. The biblical pattern is that a group of men (and elders are always men) is responsible for the spiritual leadership and ministry of the church. There is no mention of a church with a single elder/pastor who oversees everything, nor is there any mention of congregational rule (although the congregation plays a part).

The office of deacon focuses on the more physical needs of the church. In Acts 6, the church in Jerusalem was meeting the physical needs of many people in the church by distributing food. The apostles stated, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables”. To relieve the apostles, the people were told “to pick out” from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word”. The word *deacon* simply means “servant.” Deacons are appointed church officials who minister to the more physical needs of the church, relieving the elders to attend to more spiritual ministry. Deacons are to be spiritually fit, and the qualifications of deacons are given in 1 Timothy 3:8–13.

In summary, elders lead and deacons serve. These categories are not mutually exclusive. Elders serve their people by leading, teaching, praying, counseling, etc.; and deacons may lead others in service. In fact, deacons might be the leaders of service teams within the church.

So, where does the congregation fit in to the pattern of church leadership? In Acts 6, it was the congregation who chose the deacons. Many churches today will have the congregation nominate and the elders ratified those that were chosen by the laying on of hands.

The basic pattern found in the New Testament is that every church should have a plurality of godly male

elders who are responsible for leading and teaching the church. Also, godly deacons should be responsible for facilitating the more physical aspects of church ministry. All the decisions made by the elders should be with the congregation's welfare in mind. However, the congregation will not be or hold the final authority over these decisions. The final authority belongs to the elders/pastors/overseers, who answer to Christ.

*Acts 6; 20:17–35; 1 Timothy 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9*

## **7. Education**

An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to form a complete spiritual program for Christ's people. In Christian education, the freedom of what a teacher teaches in a church, Christian school, college, or seminary is limited and held accountable by Christ's headship and the authority of His Scriptures.

*Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17*

## **8. Evangelism and Missions**

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the Gospel of Christ.

*Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 1 Peter 2:4-10*

## **9. Evangelism and Social Issues**

Even though evangelism is our duty and privilege, social issues cannot be neglected. It would be careless to only take evangelistic Scriptures and base all our works upon it. The full Gospel of Christ also included taking care of those in need. Because of this, each individual and church must seek guidance from the Holy Spirit to get direction on how to allocate resources in caring for spiritual and physical needs of the people they serve.

*Isaiah 58; Matthew 28:19-20; James 1:27*

## **10. Family**

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression per biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

*Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Peter 3:1-7*

## **11. Finances**

Christians have a holy trusteeship to the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Christ with their time, talents, and material possessions. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Christ's cause on earth.

We believe both the old and new testaments teach tithing, which is 10% of our gross incomes (first fruits) to be given to the local church (Malachi 3:10, Matthew 23:23). In addition, the Holy Spirit may prompt believers to give additional amounts over and above the tithe. These amounts are called offerings.

*Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4, 19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21, 42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19*

## **12. Gifts of the Spirit**

There are three biblical lists of the "gifts of the Spirit," also known as spiritual gifts found in the New Testament. They are found in Romans 12:6–8, 1 Corinthians 12:4–11, and 1 Corinthians 12:28. We could also include Ephesians 4:11, but that is a list of offices within the church, not spiritual gifts, per se. The spiritual gifts identified in Romans 12 are prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leadership, and mercy. The list in 1 Corinthians 12:4–11 includes the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in languages and the interpretation of languages. The list in 1 Corinthians 12:28 includes healings, helps, governments, diversities of languages.

We acknowledge that there are three main interpretations of 1 Cor. 13:10 which refers to "when the perfect comes" that the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge will be done away. One clear clue to its interpretation is that something is coming to us, not that we are going anywhere to find the perfect, completed, or mature thing as stated in verse 10.

CBA agrees that the Biblical Canon View is the only view that agrees with the grammar, structure, and context of verse 10. However, disagreements in this view will not prevent churches or para-church organizations from joining the association.

### **A. The Biblical Canon View**

This view states that with the completion of the Biblical Canon, the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge were done away with. This view maintains that with the completion of the canon of Scripture there was no longer the need for gifts that brought authenticity to the apostle's ministry in the first century church. This view holds that the perfect "came" to believers.

### **B. The Eschatological View**

This view states that these gifts will be done away upon Christ's return at the Second Coming after the Tribulation Period. Since Christ does not return to the earth at the rapture this view would hold that the gifts remain after the church is in heaven during the tribulation period. The major problem with this view is that in context of 1 Cor. 13 there is no mention of us leaving and going to heaven.

### C. The Maturity View

This view maintains that the gifts will continue to function until we go to heaven and we have received ultimate maturity in spiritual understanding. This view holds that either death or the rapture of the church would take us to heaven. The main problem with this view is that one would have to not agree with the grammar and structure of verse 10 that the perfect comes to us, but that we will go to the perfect.

A brief description of each gift follows:

**Prophecy** – The Greek word translated “prophecy” in both passages properly means “a speaking forth.” According to *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*, the word refers to “discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproving and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden; especially by foretelling future events.” To prophesy is to declare the divine will, to interpret the purposes of God, or to make known in any way the truth of God that is designed to influence people.

**Serving** – Also referred to as “ministering,” the Greek word *diakonian*, from which we get the English “deacon,” means service of any kind, the broad application of practical help to those in need.

**Teaching** – This gift involves the analysis and proclamation of the Word of God, explaining the meaning, context and application to the hearer’s life. The gifted teacher is one who has the unique ability to clearly instruct and communicate knowledge, specifically the doctrines of the faith.

**Encouraging** – Also called “exhortation,” this gift is evident in those who consistently call upon others to heed and follow God’s truth, which may involve correction or building others up by strengthening weak faith or comforting in trials.

**Giving** – Gifted givers are those who joyfully share what they have with others, whether it is financial, material, or the giving of personal time and attention. The giver is concerned for the needs of others and seeks opportunities to share goods, money, and time with them as needs arise.

**Leadership** – The gifted leader is one who rules, presides over, or has the management of other people in the church. The word literally means “guide” and carries with it the idea of one who steers a ship. One with the gift of leadership rules with wisdom and grace and exhibits the fruit of the Spirit in his life as he leads by example.

**Mercy** – Closely linked with the gift of encouragement, the gift of mercy is obvious in those who are compassionate toward others who are in distress, showing sympathy and sensitivity coupled with a desire and the resources to lessen their suffering in a kind and cheerful manner.

**Word of wisdom** – The fact that this gift is described as the “word” of wisdom indicates that

it is one of the speaking gifts. This gift describes someone who can understand and speak forth biblical truth in such a way as to skillfully apply it to life situations with all discernment.

Word of knowledge – This is another speaking gift that involves understanding truth with an insight that only comes by revelation from God. Those with the gift of knowledge understand the deep things of God and the mysteries of His Word.

Faith – All believers possess faith in some measure because it is one of the gifts of the Spirit bestowed on all who come to Christ in faith (Galatians 5:22-23). The spiritual gift of faith is exhibited by one with a strong and unshakeable confidence in God, His Word, His promises, and the power of prayer to effect miracles.

Healing – Although God does still heal today, the ability of men to produce miraculous healings belonged to the apostles of the first century church to affirm that their message was from God. God still heals but it is not at the hands of people with the gift of healing. If they did, the hospitals and morgues would be full of these “gifted” people emptying beds and coffins everywhere.

Miraculous powers – Also known as the working of miracles, this is another temporary sign gift which involved performing supernatural events that could only be attributed to the power of God (Acts 2:22). This gift was exhibited by Paul (Acts 19:11-12), Peter (Acts 3:6), Stephen (Acts 6:8), and Phillip (Acts 8:6-7), among others.

Distinguishing (discerning) of spirits – Certain individuals possess the unique ability to determine the true message of God from that of the deceiver, Satan, whose methods include purveying deceptive and erroneous doctrine. Jesus said many would come in His name and would deceive many (Matthew 24:4-5), but the gift of discerning spirits is given to the Church to protect it from such as these.

Speaking in tongues – The gift of tongues is one of the temporary “sign gifts” given to the early Church to enable the gospel to be preached throughout the world to all nations and in all known languages. It involved the divine ability to speak in languages previously unknown to the speaker. This gift authenticated the message of the gospel and those who preached it as coming from God. The phrase “diversity of tongues” (KJV) or “different kinds of tongues” (NIV) effectively eliminates the idea of a “personal prayer language” as a spiritual gift. In addition, we see that the gift of tongues was always a known language and was not gibberish or an ecstatic utterance. We agree with the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 14:10-15 that whether we sing or pray we are to do so with understanding of what we are saying with our minds and will not speak like a barbarian or foreigner, but our language will be understood.

Interpretation of tongues – A person with the gift of interpreting tongues could understand what a tongues-speaker was saying even though he did not know the language that was being spoken. The tongues interpreter would then communicate the message of the tongues speaker to everyone else, so all could understand.

Helps – Closely related to the gift of mercy is the gift of helps. Those with the gift of helps are those who can aid or render assistance to others in the church with compassion and grace. This has a broad range of possibilities for application. Most importantly, this is the unique ability to identify those who are struggling with doubt, fears, and other spiritual battles; to move toward those in spiritual need with a kind word, an understanding and compassionate demeanor; and to speak scriptural truth that is both convicting and loving.

*Matthew 24:4-5; Acts 2:22; 19:11-12; 3:6; 6:8; 8:6-7; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11,28; 13:10; 14:10-15; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:11*

### **13. God**

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

#### **a. God the Father**

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

*Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; Galatians 4:6; 1 John 5:7*

#### **b. God the Son**

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

*Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3 Ephesians 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 13:8; 19:16*

#### **c. God the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

We also believe that the baptism by the Holy Spirit occurs once upon salvation. The Bible tells us to be filled by the Holy Spirit and never commands us to be baptized by the Holy Spirit. In

Scripture, when reference is given regarding the baptism of the Holy Spirit, it was a special occurrence given to believers for the purpose of service and witnessing.

We seek to obey the Lord's command in Eph. 4:3 to "be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". Upon salvation, the Holy Spirit baptizes all believers, and gives them at least one gift to be used for the edification of the church and not for ourselves. The sign gifts were given to authenticate Jesus, the apostles, and the Scriptures. The Scriptures teach that the Bible is His completed written Word, is sufficient, and thoroughly equips us for every good work. Knowing these truths, we desire to preserve the unity of the church by asking members and visitors to not openly practice or teach as doctrine the sign gifts in any of the churches services whether on or off campus. These practices include speaking unintelligible words and new revelations of God.

*Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Psalms 51:11; Isaiah 61:1-3; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18; John 4:24; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 10:44; 13:2;19:1-6; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:3, 30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16*

#### **14. Homosexuality**

When examining what the Bible says about homosexuality, it is important to distinguish between homosexual *behavior* and homosexual *inclinations* or *attractions*. It is the difference between active sin and the passive condition of being tempted. Homosexual behavior is sinful, but the Bible never says that temptation is a sin. Simply stated, a struggle with temptation may lead to sin, but the struggle itself is not a sin.

Romans 1:26–27 teaches that homosexuality is a result of denying and disobeying God. When people continue in sin and unbelief, God "gives them over" to even more wicked and depraved sin to show them the futility and hopelessness of life apart from God. One of the fruits of rebellion against God is homosexuality. First Corinthians 6:9 proclaims that those who practice homosexuality, and therefore transgress God's created order, are not saved.

In 1 Corinthians 6:11, Paul teaches them, "That is what some of you *were*. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (emphasis added). In other words, some of the Corinthians, before they were saved, lived homosexual lifestyles; but no sin is too great for the cleansing power of Jesus. Once cleansed, we are no longer defined by sin.

The temptation to engage in homosexual behavior is very real to many. People may not always be able to control how or what they feel, but they *can* control what they do with those feelings (1 Peter 1:5–8). We all have the responsibility to resist temptation (Ephesians 6:13). We must all be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). We must all "walk by the Spirit" so as not to "gratify the desires of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

Finally, the Bible does not describe homosexuality as a "greater" sin than any other. All sin is offensive to God.

*Romans 1:26–27; 12:2; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 6:13; 1 Peter 1:5–8*

#### **15. Kingdom Living**

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor

that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the widowed, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness.

*Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2*

## **16. Last Things**

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, at the 2nd coming, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

*Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 20:1-22*

## **17. Man**

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherited a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

*Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Matthew 16:26; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29*

## **18. Mary Mother of Jesus**

Jesus was born of a virgin — that Jesus was miraculously conceived in Mary's womb through the work of the Holy Spirit. We agree with the theological conclusion of the Council of Ephesus (AD 431) that Mary is the "mother of God" (*theotokos*). Still, Mary was "blessed" and "favored" in having the privilege of giving birth to the God-man (Jesus), the second person of the Trinity.

Following are the four main points of Protestant belief regarding Mary:

### 1. Perpetual Virginity

We agree that Jesus was virginally conceived in Mary's womb, but the notion that Mary's virginity was preserved intact during birth is heresy because Christ was also fully human. Furthermore, Matthew says that Joseph didn't have sexual relations or know Mary "until" she had given birth.

### 2. The Assumption of Mary

The assumption of Mary into heaven "body and soul" should be rejected. We have no scriptural text to support such a teaching. And when we look at history, we see that the doctrine developed quite late, and wasn't declared to be authoritative until 1950. Certainly, as a believer in Christ, Mary will be raised from the dead, but we have no basis for thinking she was raised before other believers.

### 3. Immaculate Conception

The notion of the immaculate conception (Mary being made sinless and perfectly clean upon conception) should be rejected. There are no Scriptures to back this theory up. Of course, Mary was a godly woman, but she was godly because God's grace rescued her from her sins based on Christ's atoning work. The only sinless human being was Jesus.

### 4. Queen of Heaven

Most problematic of all is the idea that believers should pray to Mary, and venerate her as the Queen of Heaven. No scriptural evidence supports this idea that she functions in some way as a mediator or a benefactor for the people of God. The "one mediator" is "the man Christ Jesus" and there is not even a whisper of Mary playing such a role in the New Testament.

*Matthew 1:18-23; John 8:46; 1 Timothy 2:5*

## 19. Polygamy

The Bible presents monogamy as the plan that conforms most closely to God's ideal for marriage. The Bible says that God's original intention was for one man to be married to only one woman: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife [not wives], and they will become one flesh [not fleshes]". In the New Testament, Timothy and Titus give "the husband of one wife" in a list of qualifications for spiritual leadership. The phrase could literally be translated "a one-woman man." Ephesians speaks of the relationship between husbands and wives. When referring to a husband (singular), it always also refers to a wife (singular). "For the husband is the head of the wife [singular] ... He who loves his wife [singular] loves himself.

*Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Timothy 3:2,12; Titus 1:6*

## 20. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. Salvation is a gift from God and there are no works which any man can do to earn this gift of Salvation.

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with God giving each man the free will.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and

bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

### **a. Regeneration**

Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

### **b. Justification**

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

### **c. Sanctification**

Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

### **d. Glorification**

Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

### **e. Non-Calvinistic Doctrinal Views**

We acknowledge that there are many ways to define exactly what Calvinism means. We will not attempt to define these views with a blanket answer. However, we do choose to clarify what we believe. We provide these beliefs to hold steadfast to sound doctrine. We do not allow these doctrines to be preached or taught in any of our services except to teach the difference in what we believe and the tenants of Calvinism.

#### **1. Total Depravity of the Sinner**

We believe that God commanded all men everywhere to repent and that God would not command this if He made it impossible for men to repent (Acts 17:30, John 1:9, John 12:32,33). We disagree with many Calvinists who believe that God has predestined many to Hell, unable to repent.

#### **2. Unconditional Election**

We believe that election simply means that God knows who will trust Him when they hear the Gospel and chooses them to be carried through till they are conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:28-30). We believe no man can know beforehand whom God will save. Therefore, all men are commanded to preach the Gospel to all nations. We disagree with many Calvinists who believe that God compels some to be saved, and damns some whom he has decided He does not wish to save.

#### **3. Limited Atonement**

We believe Christ died for everyone (John 1:29, 2:2, 3:16, 1 Tim. 4:10). We disagree with many Calvinists who believe that Christ did not die for all men and made no provision for them so they could possibly be saved.

#### 4. Irresistible Grace

We believe that man has the choice to refuse God's grace (2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:1-4, Matthew 23:37). We disagree with many Calvinists who believe that all who are elected to be saved will be saved, that they cannot resist this special grace limited to them but will be saved when God calls.

#### 5. Perseverance of the Saints

We believe that salvation does not come by works nor can we keep salvation by works. We also believe in the eternal security of the believer. It is God Himself that holds and keeps us saved (John 5:24, 10:27-29, 2 Timothy 1:12). We disagree with many Calvinists who believe those whom God has called into communion with Himself will continue in faith until the end. Those who apparently fall away never had true faith to begin with.

*Genesis 3:15; 12:1-3; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7, 19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:18-26; 21:28-45; 24:22, 31; 25:34; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:11-14, 29; 3:3-21, 36; 5:24; 6:44-45, 65; 10:9, 27-29; 15:1-16; 17:6, 12-18; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18, 29-39; 10:9-15; 11:5-7, 26-36; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2, 18, 30; 6:19-20; 15:10, 24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-22; 3:1-11; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10, 19; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8, 14; James 1:12; 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:6-2:19; 3:2; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5*

#### 21. Use of Alcohol

The Bible is clear that drunkenness is sin. Ephesians 5:18 says, "Do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit." It is interesting that this verse contrasts the power of alcohol with the power of the Holy Spirit. It is saying that if we want to be controlled by the Spirit of God we cannot also be controlled by alcohol. As Christians, we are to always "walk in the Spirit". So, drunkenness for a Christian is never an option on any occasion because there is no occasion when we should not be walking in the Spirit.

Alcoholism is a form of idolatry, as is any addiction. Anything we are using besides God to meet or medicate deep heart needs is an idol. God views it as such and has strong words for idol worshipers. Alcoholism is not a disease; it is a choice. God holds us accountable for our choices.

Followers of Christ should strive to love their neighbors as themselves, regardless of the problems or addictions those neighbors may have (Matthew 22:29). But contrary to our modern idea that equates love with tolerance, real love does not tolerate or excuse the very sin that is destroying someone. To enable or excuse alcohol addiction in someone we love is to tacitly participate in their sin.

There are several ways Christians can respond in Christ-like love to alcoholics:

1. We can encourage the alcoholics in our lives to get help. A person caught in the trap of addiction needs help and accountability.
2. We can set boundaries in order not to in any way condone the drunkenness. Minimizing the consequences that alcohol abuse brings is not helping. Sometimes the only way addicts will seek help is when they reach the end of their options.
3. We can be careful not to cause others to stumble by limiting our own alcohol use while in the

presence of those struggling with it. It is for this reason that many Christians choose to abstain from all alcohol consumption in order to avoid any appearance of evil and to not put a stumbling block in a brother's way.

We must show compassion to everyone, including those whose choices have led them into strong addiction. However, we do alcoholics no favors by excusing or justifying their addiction.

*Exodus 20:3; Isaiah 5:11; Proverbs 23:20-21; Habakkuk 2:15; Matthew 22:29; Romans 14:12; 1 Corinthians 8:9-13; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:22*

## **22. Worship**

We believe that all believers should have the opportunity to worship Almighty God with liberty and freedom. The congregation is encouraged to worship with lifted hands if so desired, with verbal praises that respects others worship, and with opportunities of concerts of prayer and praise.

We believe that God is a God that demands our worship in an orderly manner. Not worshipping orderly would include actions such as ungodly dancing, jumping pews, or running around the sanctuary. Godly dancing is worshipful, God-focused, praiseworthy, and congregationally edifying. Worshipers are allowed to praise God with their voices by saying Amen, Hallelujah, Glory, Praise the Lord, and other statements giving God glory. Worshipping God with voice or with lifted hands is a private choice and should never be coerced by any other individual.

*2 Samuel 6:14-16; Psalm 30:11; 149:3, 150:4; 1 Corinthians 14:33-40*