



# **Doctrinal Statement for Teaching and Shepherding**





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## PREFACE

At Gospel Hope Church, we have two doctrinal statements: The *Doctrinal Statement for Membership* and the *Doctrinal Statement for Teaching and Shepherd*ing. Each has its own purposes and functions.

The *Doctrinal Statement for Membership* defines the doctrines essential for living life together in the same local church. These essentials include those doctrines that define the gospel as well as that doctrine which is necessary for carrying out the Great Commission together (such as believer’s water baptism). One must heartily believe everything in this doctrinal statement to be a member of Gospel Hope Church.

The *Doctrinal Statement for Teaching and Shepherd*ing is a much larger statement of faith. It defines the doctrines *taught* at Gospel Hope Church – those doctrines heartily embraced by the shepherds (elders/overseers/pastors) of Gospel Hope Church. This doctrinal statement is affirmed by every shepherd at Gospel Hope Church. Teachers, whether in children’s ministry, youth ministry, or any other ministry, may not agree with every point of doctrine in this statement, but they may not contradict these doctrines in their teaching—for the sake of unity in the church. Also, for the sake of unity in the church, members of Gospel Hope Church agree to refrain from causing division within the body over these doctrines.

Our aim with this doctrinal statement is to embrace and teach “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) and to encourage a hearty adherence to the Bible, the fullness of its truth, and the glory of its Author. We believe that the cause of unity in the church is best served, not by downplaying doctrine, but by elevating the value of truth, stating the doctrinal parameters of the church, seeking the unity that comes from the truth, and then demonstrating to the world how Christians can love each other though they may at times differ in their understanding of some doctrines.

We do not claim infallibility for this doctrinal statement and are open to refinement and correction from Scripture. Yet, we do hold firmly

to these truths as we see them and call on others to search the Scriptures to see if these things are so (Acts 17:11).

Finally, we do not believe that all things in this doctrinal statement are of equal weight, some being more essential, some less. We do not believe that every part of this doctrinal statement must be believed in order for one to be saved.

## HIGHLIGHTS

These are highlights from the Doctrinal Statement for Teaching and Shepherding.

- **Creation:** We teach that Genesis 1-3 is the historically accurate account of the creation of all things out of nothing, by the spoken word of God, over six literal days.
- **Premillennialism:** We teach that the second coming of Jesus Christ will precede His earthly reign in fulfillment of the predictions/promises of both OT and NT prophets. A premillennial viewpoint allows for the most consistently literal interpretation of both Old and New Testaments.
- **Elder Governance:** We teach that the local church is to be governed by a plurality of men (elders/overseers/pastors), all equal in authority, that meet the biblical qualifications of Scripture. The congregation is responsible to submit to the God-given authority of the elders.
- **Completionism (Spiritual Gifts):** We teach that the Holy Spirit is no longer writing Scripture and the canon of Scripture is closed. Therefore, the exercise of the revelatory (tongues, prophecy) and miraculous gifts (healing, miracles) as gifts within the church are no longer energized by the Holy Spirit in the church. We affirm the necessity and reality of the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in every area of church and personal life. Additionally, we affirm that God

can and does still work in miraculous ways according to His sovereign purpose and through the prayers of His people.

- **Complementarianism (Gender Roles):** We teach that God created mankind in His image as male and female with equal personhood and worth, but with differences. We teach that God, in His wisdom, appointed unique and complementary gender roles within marriage and in the church.
- **Sovereignty of God in salvation:** We teach that before the foundation of the world God chose who would be saved, and therefore, believers deserve no credit for any aspect of their salvation.

## ABOUT THE BIBLE

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 (the words of Scripture are the breath, or product of God).

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).

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, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently and properly applies the grammatical-historical method of interpretation under 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 believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and plain meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations.

We teach that God gave us His Word in order for His people to become what He has designed them to be, fully able to serve Him faithfully (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God's Word must be the sole authority in ministering to the needs of people because God's word is truth (John 17:17) and man's ideas are inadequate (Isaiah 55:8-9; Proverbs 14:12; 1 Corinthians 1:25; Colossians 2:8-10). Furthermore, God has given us the Scripture for the very purpose of instructing, rebuking, correcting and training us in righteousness (abandoning sinful thinking and behavior). By His Word, God molds us into the kind of people He intends us to be. In this way He equips us to function as He intended us to live (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God's Word is sufficient for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

## **ABOUT 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 worship and obedience.

### **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 Creator of all things, creating the world in six literal days (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 designation within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator He is Father to all men (Malachi 2:10; Acts 17:28-29), but He is spiritual Father only to believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18). For His own glory, He has decreed all things that come to pass (Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11). In His sovereignty He is neither the author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47), nor does He reduce the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17). From eternity past, He has graciously chosen those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:4-6); He saves from sin all who come to Him through Jesus Christ; He adopts as His own all those who come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (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 excellencies, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial (of the same substance or essence), 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 prerogatives 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 represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (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 our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross, and that His death was 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 adopted into 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, and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (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 is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

We teach that Jesus Christ will return to establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9-11; Revelation 20).

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

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 will reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31-33), He is the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in 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, underyived, 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 (of the same substance or essence) 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; 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 Holy Spirit was sent from the Father as promised 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, baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ, which is His church (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 (2 Peter 1:19-21). 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; 1 John 2:20, 27).

We teach that the Holy Spirit 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 most holy faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

## **ABOUT MAN**

We teach that God created man in His own 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). Since the fall of man into sin, the image of God in man has been distorted, though not eradicated (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9).

Both male and female equally bear the image of God. Although they share the same essence of being, there are nevertheless functional distinctions and subordinations. These differences, biblically based upon creation and not cultural biases, are significant for both our families and our congregation (1 Corinthians 11:1-16; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1-6).

We teach that God's intention in the creation of man (men and women) 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, he not only fell from his state of innocence into one of separation and alienation from God, but as the representative for all mankind, he also plunged the whole race into sin and death (Romans 5:12-21). All mankind became inherently corrupt and subject to the wrath of God (John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; Ephesians 2:1-3).

We teach that man's depravity (i.e., corrupted sinful nature) is total in breadth (1 Kings 8:46; Psalm 14:1-3; Isaiah 1:2-6, 53:6; Romans 3:9-20) and depth (Ecclesiastes 9:3; Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:14-23). Sin, like a drop of poison deposited in a cup of water, has poisoned the entire cup. Similarly, all the faculties of fallen man's heart (i.e., rational, volitional, emotional, etc.) are morally tainted by sin and perversity (Genesis 6:5; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Ephesians 4:17-19). Thus, fallen man is blind and helpless, utterly incapable of choosing or doing what is spiritually acceptable to God apart from the divine grace of regeneration. Man is wholly incapable of spiritual self-reformation or rescue and is wholly in need of God's salvation (Isaiah 64:5-7; Jeremiah 13:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 1:21-22).

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).

## **ABOUT SALVATION**

We teach that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of 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).

## Election

We teach that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, sanctifies, and glorifies (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 free offer of the blessings of the gospel to all people, the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord, or the responsibility of believers to communicate the gospel to the lost (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 of salvation itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines (Acts 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:24-25; Philippians 1:29; Ephesians 2:8). 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 that God grants to totally depraved sinners is unconditional, i.e., it is not related to any initiative of their own part or to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is freely given by God according to His own purposes (Ephesians 1:4-7; Romans 9:10-16; 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 will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character (Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9).

## 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) when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation. Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works are the proper evidence and fruit of regeneration (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 the time of his death or at Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3).

## Atonement

Jesus Christ died to satisfy the justice of God's nature. He rendered satisfaction to the Father so that we might be spared the just punishment of our sins. Jesus Christ atoned for sin by sacrificing Himself in the place of the offending sinner. Thus, He turned away the Father's wrath and reconciled believing sinners to the Father. Jesus' death on the cross is the one and only atonement that is acceptable to God (Leviticus 17:11; Mark 10:45; Romans 5:6-10, 6:10; 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18; 1 John 4:10).

## Sacrifice and Vicarious Substitution

By offering Himself as a sacrifice in our place, by substituting Himself for us, Jesus actually bore the punishment which should have been ours. To pay the penalty of death that people deserve because of their sins, Christ died as a sacrifice for our sin in our place. He is our substitute, the One who suffered and died instead of

we who are guilty. He has paid the price (His life) for our sin (Isaiah 53; Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 9:26, 10:12).

## **Expiation and Propitiation**

In Christ's death on the cross, He expiated (removed) our sins. He took our sins away when He bore our sins and the penalty for our sins in His death on the cross.

Christ's death propitiates (appeases) God's wrath against sin and turns it away from those whom He saves by grace. Christ's sacrifice appeases God who hates and opposes sin and who is going to destroy it and its agents (Romans 1:18, 2:4-13, 3:25, 5:8-9, 9:22-23; Ephesians 2:3-5, 5:5-6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 5:9; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2, 4:10). Christ took our sin and absorbed the wrath of Holy God on the cross.

Christ propitiated (appeased) God's wrath by expiating (taking away) our sins (Romans 3:23-25).

## **Redemption**

The work of Christ on the cross paid in full the price of releasing sinners from the bondage and judgment of sin and bringing them into a right relationship with God. Jesus Christ Himself is paid as a ransom for the price of human sin that is required by the outraged holiness of God. There is no other price to be paid than the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a result of Christ's payment for sin, the offender is released from bondage to sin and liberated to live a life pleasing to God (Galatians 3:13, 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:7; Titus 2:13-14).

## **Imputation**

In salvation the perfect righteousness of Christ is credited to the believing sinner as a result of being justified (Romans 3:24, 5:9 & 19, 8:1, 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Colossians 2:14).

## **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).

## **Reconciliation**

The work of Christ on the cross completely changes believing sinners personally and in their relationship to God by removing all grounds for their condemnation. As a result, redeemed and justified individuals are reconciled to God and now live in a right relationship with Him (Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Galatians 2:20).

## **Forgiveness**

Through the death of Christ believing sinners have their transgressions put away from them forever. The forgiveness of God is complete and sufficient for all sin (Matthew 26:27-28; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:13-14; Hebrews 9:22 & 10:17).

## **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 progressive sanctification. 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 sanctification 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 believer does battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended (until the believer reaches heaven). All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin in this life is not possible, 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).

## Perseverance

We teach the biblical doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. This doctrine has two parts: [1] God will so work with His people in His grace that they will inevitably be preserved to the end and be saved (1 Peter 1:5; Jude 1:24; John 10:28-30; Philippians 1:6). Thus, no true child of God, born of the Holy Spirit, will ever be lost (Romans 8:29-30). [2] At the same time, it is equally true that no person will be saved without persevering to the end. In order to be saved, believers must persevere to the end in faith and obedience (Mark 13:13; Colossians 1:22-23; Hebrews 3:14, 12:14). The means God uses to bring about our perseverance are His magnificent promises of the

gospel (2 Peter 1:3-4) and His terrifying warnings for all who disobey the gospel (Hebrews 10:26-27).

## ABOUT THE CHURCH

### Existence

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

We teach that the formation of the church, the Body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47). The Church exists both universally (i.e., the total number of genuine believers throughout history, Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 12:13) and locally (i.e., localized assemblies, Matthew 18:15-18; Acts 14:23; 20:17; Galatians 1:2).

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 is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32). It is a mystery, the details of which have not been revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32).

We teach that the establishment and continuity of local 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 directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25).

Although salvation is bestowed and appropriated individually, the scriptural focus is always upon the corporate Body (local church) within which the individual is to be a complementary, contributing member (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-27). Christ establishes and oversees this unity and diversity in order that the local church

might become the main context for worship and service, and a springboard for evangelism (Ephesians 4:1-16). The primary overarching purpose of the Church, whether viewed from the local perspective or the universal, is to glorify God (Ephesians 1:3-14, 3:21; 1 Peter 4:11). The church fulfills her purpose of glorifying 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 the entire world (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:42).

## Governance

We teach that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures.

The Scriptures establish two offices within the local church: overseers (also called pastors or elders; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:1) and deacons. Those who serve in these capacities must be biblically qualified (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5). The overseers are especially accountable for the spiritual welfare of their local congregation. The authority of the overseers is delegated to them by God, not man – not apostles, other elders, deacons, or the congregation (Acts 20:28). Their authority extends over the whole congregation, but it is limited to their local church and to matters of church governance (1 Peter 5:2, 3). As stewards of God’s household, the local church, they are accountable directly to God for their leadership of the church (Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17). Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd, will judge not only the overseers and their guidance of His sheep but also the congregation’s expected submission to their spiritual direction (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7, 17). Deacons, rather than exercising oversight over the church, are official servants within the church, helping to free the overseers from many temporal concerns (Acts 6:1-6). They have a delegated authority, but not delegated directly by God. As their authority is delegated to them by the

overseers (Acts 6:3, 6), it is limited to the specific duty/duties that the overseers determine (Acts 6:3). The delegation of authority, or responsibility, to women deacons is subject to the scriptural teaching concerning the distinctive role of women (see under “Gender Roles in the Church”).

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), as well as the need for reproof and restoring 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 for the presentation and propagation of the faith. 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).

## **Gender Roles in the Church**

The men’s role in the church is to serve as the leaders, both in serving and teaching, of the local church (1 Timothy 3:1-13). Men are to be noted for prayer in the church (1 Timothy 2:8). Older men are to be wise and dignified examples to the younger men and the rest of the congregation (Titus 2:2). Younger men are to be wise examples of good deeds, with purity in doctrine and speech (Titus 2:6-8). The women’s role in the church is to utilize their spiritual giftedness in ministry to the Body (1 Corinthians 12:7). One of the primary avenues of ministry is for older women in the church to

teach younger women (Titus 2:3-5). It is also appropriate for certain women who have proven their faithful service to serve as women deacons (1 Timothy 3:8, 11; Romans 16:1). In the delegation of responsibilities to women deacons by the Overseers, women are not to teach or exercise authority over men in the church (1 Timothy 2:12).

## Spiritual Gifts

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. He gives men 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). Certain spiritual gifts were energized by the Holy Spirit for only the early stage of the church. The spiritual gift of working miracles was given for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth (Hebrews 2:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12). Since there are no living apostles today (Ephesians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 15:8-9), the Holy Spirit does not energize the gift of miracle-working (performing miracles directly through a human agent) in the church today. The spiritual gift of speaking in tongues was given primarily to be a sign to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22) that God was building an international church (God was no longer focused primarily on the nation of Israel, but was now building a church made up of people from all nations and tongues). Since the New Testament has fully revealed the international nature of the church, it is now impossible to use the gift of tongues according to its God-given purpose. The spiritual gift of prophecy was a gift given by the Holy Spirit for the foundation stage of the church (Ephesians 2:20) and has been “done away” (1 Corinthians 13:8-10) since the revelation of the New Testament mysteries is complete (Ephesians 3:1-6). God forbids men from adding to His body of prophecy (Revelation 22:18-19).

We teach that no one possesses the gift of healing today, 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).

## **Ordinances**

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 into water (Acts 8:36-39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (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 and should always be preceded by solemn self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28-32). We also teach that, whereas the elements of Communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, participation in the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ, who indwells every believer, and so is present, fellowshiping with His people (1 Corinthians 10:16).

## **ABOUT THE FAMILY**

### **Marriage**

We teach that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime (Genesis 1:27; 2:24). Marriage is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:31-32). The marriage relationship is to model the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, protect, and lead his family (Ephesians 5:25-29). Within the marriage, the woman is called to lovingly submit to her husband. This is not blind obedience, but

rather loving service, cooperation and prayer, united with volitional submission to the husband's God-ordained role as leader and head. She is to mirror the church's joyful and voluntary submission to Christ (Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Peter 3:1-6). The wife is to serve as her husband's helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation (Genesis 2:20-23; 1 Timothy 2:15; Titus 2:4-5).

## Parenting

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. 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. The primary responsibility for spiritual instruction has been given by God to fathers. Fathers must not surrender this responsibility to their wives, another adult, or to any organization (church, Christian school, etc.) (Ephesians 6:4). Mothers are equally important as they share the labors alongside fathers in the administration of his great task. Children are to honor and obey their parents. (Genesis 2:18-25; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalms 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 13:24; 14:1; 22:6,15; 31:10-31; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7).

## The Church and the Family

Since the local church is a community of believers with a variety of gifts, this necessary vehicle for spiritual growth must be accessed by parents in the training of their children. The Christian family is a part of the local church and cannot fulfill its God-given design without being actively involved in one. The church is responsible to equip and encourage families (Ephesians 4:11-13, 16). Individuals are to submit to elders (Hebrews 13:17). Believers are to minister their gifts (1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 12:7). In the local assembly, God has given both authority and responsibility to elders to shepherd the flock (Acts 20:28-34). Within the family, authority and responsibility has been given to fathers (1 Cor. 11:3-16; Eph. 6:4). Fathers are to be



under the authority of the elders while having God-given authority to parent their children. These will not be in conflict with each other so long as the principles of the Word of God are upheld. Elders must refrain from overstepping their biblical prescribed authority. Fathers are primarily responsible for the spiritual welfare of their own children and this training must occur in the context of the local church.

## **ABOUT ANGELS**

### **Holy Angels**

We teach that angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshiped. Although angels are supernatural beings with greater power than man (yet still limited in power) and being incapable of death, they are subject to God – 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; Matthew 28:2; Daniel 10:13; Luke 20:36).

### **Fallen Angels**

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); that he is 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).

We teach that demons are fallen angels who act as Satan’s emissaries to extend his power and activities, ultimately to promote Satan’s purpose to ruin God’s plan (Ephesians 6:11-12; Daniel 10:10-14; 1 John 4:1-4).

### **Spiritual Warfare Against Satan and Demons**

We teach that though there are occasions recorded in the Scriptures where demons were cast out of people (by Jesus: Matthew 4:24, 8:16, 8:28-34, 9:32-34, 12:22, 12:43-45, 15:21-28, 17:14-21; Mark 1:23-34, 3:11, 3:22-30, 5:1-20, 7:24-30, 9:14-29; Luke 4:33-41, 6:18, 7:21, 8:2,

8:26-40, 9:37-43, 11:14-26, 13:10-21; by the apostles and their associates: Matthew 10:7-8; Acts 5:12-16, 8:7, 19:11-20) there are no commands or instructions to believers given in the Scriptures to cast out demons.

Scripture never attributes a person's sin to demon possession (or, "demonization"). In Scripture, people are held fully responsible for their own sinful choices and demons are not portrayed as causing someone to sin. When Scripture shows us how to overcome sin, there is no mention of casting out demons.

Casting out demons was a sign of an apostle (2 Corinthians 12:12). It is referred to as "healing" in the NT (Matthew 4:24; Acts 5:12-16); it was part of the original commission given to the apostles (Matthew 10:5-8); and, the record of the NT shows only apostles or close associates of apostles casting out demons.

The Scriptures give clear instructions for engaging in spiritual warfare against Satan and his demons. We teach that the Christian's spiritual warfare against Satan and demons is in the realm of temptation to sin. Not all temptation is the direct work of the devil. Our own sinful nature tempts us to sin (James 1:14-15). We fall into temptation because our flesh is predisposed to please itself (cf. James 4:1-2). Beyond our sinful nature as humans, Satan has built a world system to make the most of our weaknesses. He is the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4) and he works through the tools of the world, "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life" (1 John 2:16). In this way Satan moves to deceive us into sin. Satan is our adversary who seeks to devour us through temptation (1 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Peter 5:8). Yet our response to our adversary is to resist him, firm in our faith (1 Peter 5:9). As Christians, we have overcome the evil one based upon God dwelling in us (1 John 2:13-14; 4:4). As we grow in our faith in Christ, we will grow in our ability to resist the devil and thus see this positional victory over Satan through Christ become more and more manifested in our daily lives.

The New Testament does not encourage mystical formulas or instruct us to say the right words to Satan. The equipment for spiritual warfare is available to every Christian, for it is the basic Christian life of knowing and prayerfully applying the truth of God's Word (Ephesians 6:13-18). Christians must be aware of their enemy; stand firm when attacked; and, arm themselves with God's battle supplies (belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, etc.).

## **ABOUT LAST THINGS**

### **The Tribulation Period**

We teach that a seven-year period of tribulation will come upon the earth. During this time the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon an unbelieving world (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 9:27; 12:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 16), and these judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth (Matthew 24:27-31; 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12). This period is the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24:15-31; 25:31-46).

### **The Second Coming and the Millennial Reign**

We teach that, after the tribulation period, Christ will come to earth to occupy the throne of David (Matthew 25:31; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 1:10-11; 2:29-30) and establish His messianic kingdom for 1,000 years on the earth (Revelation 20:1-7). This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and by the removal of Satan from the world (Daniel 7:17-27; Revelation 20:1-7).

We teach that the kingdom itself will be the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel (Isaiah 65:17-25; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Zechariah 8:1-17) to restore them to the land that they forfeited through their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). The result of their disobedience was that Israel was temporarily set aside (Matthew 21:43; Romans 11:1-26), but will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:22-32; Zechariah 12:10-13:1; Romans 11:25-29).

We teach that this time of our Lord's reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness, and long life (Isaiah 11; 65:17-25; Ezekiel 36:33-38; Zechariah 14:8-21), and will be brought to an end with the release of Satan (Revelation 20:7).

## The Judgment of the Lost

We teach that following the release of Satan after the 1,000-year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:7), Satan will deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and "the beloved city," Jerusalem, at which time Satan and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:9). Following this, 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 resurrect and judge "the great and small" at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 21:12).

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 an eternal conscious punishment in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:11-15).

## Eternity

We teach that after the closing of the millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:7-15), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God. The saved will live with new bodies on a new earth, wherein only righteousness dwells (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 20:15; 21:1-27; 22:1-21). The New Jerusalem will be the capital city of the new earth where God will dwell among His people (Revelation 21:2-3). 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).

