

Complete Doctrinal Statement

This expanded look at theology of Fellowship is our Statement of Belief for Leadership. This statement is a fuller explanation of our views on key doctrinal issues.

The necessity of sound doctrine in the church is a consistent theme of the New Testament (1 Timothy 1:3,10; 4:16; 6:3; 2 Timothy 1:13; 3:16; 4:2; Titus 1:9-11; 2:1). It is essential to our spiritual health (Ephesians 4:14-15); it is the standard by which conduct is evaluated (Titus 2:1); it is the faith for which we contend (Jude 3); it is the truth which we uphold (1 Timothy 3:15-16).

In a very real sense we can say that the Bible is our creed, for right doctrine is an accurate and systematic statement of what the Bible teaches. It is impossible to discern right and sound doctrine without being a student of the Scriptures. Therefore, we affirm our dependence upon the Scriptures for our doctrine, and gladly uphold the Bible as our final authority.

The statement of doctrine outlined below is neither exhaustive nor infallible. Rather, it is a summary of those truths which we hold as foundational to the Christian faith. It has been formulated to fulfill four main functions.

1. To stand as a contemporary confession of our faith.
2. To identify us in a day of varied theologies.
3. To be a standard by which we can evaluate ourselves.
4. To provide a statement to which all leadership agrees or agrees to not contradict.

Bible

We believe the Bible, including both Old and New Testaments, is the verbally inspired Word of God, written by men in God's control, inerrant and infallible in the original manuscripts and the final authority in doctrine and life. (2 Timothy 3:15-17, 2 Peter 1:20-21, Psalm 19:7-9)

God

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; who are identical in essence, equal in power and glory, and possessing precisely the same attributes and perfections. They are, however, distinct in office and activity. (Deuteronomy 6:4, Matthew 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14)

Jesus Christ

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful man. After living a sinless life, He accomplished our redemption by voluntarily giving Himself as a sinless substitutionary sacrifice on the cross,

thereby satisfying God's righteous judgments against sin. After substantiating the accomplishment of that redemption by His bodily resurrection from the grave, He ascended to the right hand of His Father where He intercedes on behalf of those who trust Him. (John 1:1,2,14,18, Luke 1:34-35, Romans 3:24-26, 8:34)

The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the Divine Person, equal with the Father and the Son, who convicts the world of sin. He alone brings new life to those who are spiritually dead, baptizes (or places) all believers into the one true Church, which is the Body of Christ, indwells them permanently, seals them for the day of redemption, gives spiritual gifts to them, fills (controls) those who yield to Him. (John 3:3-8, 16:7-11, 1 Corinthians 12:13, John 14:16-17, Ephesians 4:30, 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, Ephesians 5:18)

Angels

We believe that angels are spiritual beings who were created as sinless personalities who occupied different orders and ranks. They presently exist in both fallen and unfallen states, the former including Satan and his angels (Hebrews 1:13-14, 2 Peter 2:4, Revelation 7:12). We believe that Satan, by his own choice, the enemy of God and of the people of God, is the originator of sin, that he led Adam and Eve into sin and now rules as the god of this world. We believe that he was judged at the cross and that ultimately he will be cast into the Lake of Fire. (Isaiah 14:12-14, Genesis 3:1-19, Hebrews 2:14, Revelation 20:10)

Creation

We believe that God created the heavens and the earth, including all life, "each after its own kind," by direct act, and not by the process of evolution. (Genesis 1:1-2, Colossians 1:16-17)

Man

We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, in innocence and without sin. But in Adam's voluntary sin the race fell, inherited a sinful nature, became spiritually dead, alienated from God and incapable of remedying his lost and depraved condition. (Genesis 1:26, 3:1-24, Romans 3:10-18, 5:12, Ephesians 2:1-3)

Salvation

We believe that salvation is the gift of God's grace. It cannot be gained by meritorious works, but is freely given to all who repent and put their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ at Calvary. All who so trust the Savior are forgiven of their sins and born into the family of God by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 2:8-9, 1:7, John 1:12, 2 Corinthians 9:9-10, Romans 2:4)

Security

We believe that all the saved – those in whom God has accomplished His transforming work of grace – are kept by His power and are, thus, secure in Christ forever. It is impossible for

one born into the family of God ever to be lost. It is their privilege to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation. However, this assurance is not the occasion for sin, for God in holiness cannot tolerate persistent sin in His children, and in infinite love He corrects them. True faith in Christ is expressed by a fruitful, God-pleasing life. (John 10:27-29, Romans 8:29-39, 1 John 5:13, Hebrews 12:6, Matthew 7:20, James 2:20)

Sanctification

We believe that sanctification, which is a setting apart unto God, is positional, progressive, and ultimate. Positionally it is already complete since the believer is in Christ and is set apart unto God as Christ is set apart unto God. Since he retains his sinful flesh, however, there is need for progressive sanctification as he grows in grace by the power of the Spirit. Ultimately, the child of God will be set apart from sin in his practice as he is now in his position in Christ when he is taken to be with Christ. (John 17:17, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 5:25-27, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 10:10, 14)

The Church

We believe that the Church, the Body and Bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism, made up of all persons who have trusted Jesus Christ for salvation in this present age. We believe that the Church began at Pentecost, is distinct from Israel and that a believer is placed into the Church by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:22-23, 5:25-27, 1 Corinthians 12:13, 10:32). We believe that the local church is an assembly of professed believers in Jesus Christ who voluntarily join together in one locale for the purpose of worship, study of the Word of God, celebration of the ordinances, Christian Fellowship, and equipping for Christian service. (Acts 2:42-47, 1 Corinthians 1:1-2, Ephesians 4:11-13)

Baptism & Lord's Supper

We believe that Christ instituted the ordinances of water baptism and the Lord's Supper which are to be observed by believers until He returns. We believe that by water baptism a believer is publicly identified with His Savior and that infants of believing parents may be dedicated to the Lord but not baptized (Acts 2:38, 8:26-38). We believe that the Lord's Supper is a memorial of Christ's death until He returns, the elements being symbols of His body and blood. We believe that every Christian has a right to partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper but that participation should always be preceded by serious self-examination. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Return of Christ

We believe in the personal, imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His Church, and His subsequent premillennial return to earth to establish His kingdom (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Zechariah 14:4-11, Revelation 19:11-16, 20:1-6)

Eternal State

We believe that at death the souls of those who have trusted Christ for salvation pass immediately into His presence and there remain in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the body at His coming for the Church, when soul and body reunited shall be associated with Him forever in glory. We believe that the souls of unbelievers remain after death in conscious misery until the final judgment of the great white throne at the close of the millennium, when soul and body reunited shall be cast into the lake of fire, not to be annihilated, but to be separated from God forever in conscious punishment. (Luke 16:19-26, 2 Corinthians 5:8, Philippians 1:23, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, Revelation 20:11-15).

Spiritual Gifts

We believe that every believer has at least one spiritual gift sovereignly given by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11). When each believer exercises his gift in the Body he contributes to the working and maturing of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-31, Ephesians 4:1-16). Therefore, we strongly encourage the discovery and exercise of each believer's giftedness.

Also, we recognize that some brothers and sisters in Christ exercise what are commonly known as the revelatory gifts and sign gifts (e.g., speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, prophesying, apostleship, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, working miracles, gifts of healing). We believe these gifts to have been foundational in their purpose (Ephesians 2:20), revelatory in their nature, and confirmatory in their function for the generation of apostolic witnesses (Hebrews 2:1-4). Whether or not these gifts are still operable today is a raging debate, which many times produces more heat than light and over which evangelical scholars of comparable scholarship and spirituality line up on opposite sides. Because of this lack of interpretative consensus we stop short of saying that these gifts have ceased but do require that if they are employed, it be done in private and not in any of the public meetings of FBC. Also, if an individual is going to teach on the subject of spiritual gifts the Elders require an explanation ahead of time of what will be taught.

Divorce & Remarriage

God's intention for marriage never included divorce. But when sin entered human experience, God's intention was distorted and marred. God allowed divorce to become a reality because of man's sinfulness (Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Matthew 19:7-8).

Divorce is never commanded. Forgiveness and reconciliation are always to be preferred (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). Divorce is an alternative of last recourse which carries with it painful consequences and complications. There are two circumstances in which divorce is permitted according to Scripture. Jesus refers to long-sustained infidelity as one case in Matthew 19:9. Paul mentions desertion of a believing partner by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:15-16) as the other situation. By inference remarriage is allowable when divorce occurs due to the circumstances of infidelity and desertion.

In the age of grace, the church community desires to extend forgiveness and acceptance to others. As a result, people who are divorced and/or remarried are accepted into the family of Fellowship Bible Church. In the case of Elders, Deacons and Missionaries who have a divorce in their backgrounds, the following supporting statements must be applied:

- No divorced person should be approved for eldership who has not demonstrated a responsible, repentant attitude toward his involvement in the divorce.
- No divorced person should be approved for eldership who isn't acting responsibly with his children and wife from the former marriage. This would include carrying nurturing responsibilities for his children as circumstances would allow, and meeting all court ordered financial obligations.
- No divorced person should be approved for eldership who hasn't lived long enough in his present marriage to demonstrate the long-term success of this marriage. Though it is impossible to put an exact time to "long enough," a reasonable minimum time would be seven to ten years.
- An effort should be made to check out necessary information through sources other than the candidate and his present wife to safeguard the role.