

Truth Matters to Hope

It is important that Hope Chapel determine certain basic and essential aspects of our beliefs for clarification to those who desire to learn and understand them. We have written these down and make them available to anyone who desires to read them with good intent and honest inquiry. We present three categories: Beliefs, Church Government, and Present Issues. These beliefs are an attempt to simplify and clarify. In the final category, Present Issues, we have chosen certain topics about which we have been often questioned. So these will be updated as the need arises. We have not said everything about everything on these topics which would take too much paper and ink. But we have sought to explain in a forthright manner our particular viewpoint on the chosen topics that we believe deserve further insight pertaining to and for our present culture and society. We are adamant about the essentials of the faith and will not waver from them. Essentials of the faith are those doctrines that must be adhered to in order to enter heaven. But we reserve the right to learn and discuss those non-essential doctrines that encourage a humble approach of continuing evaluations. Please read the following in a manner worthy of your calling with a heart of humility realizing that we are not perfect but are seeking to serve our Master with honesty of soul.

BELIEFS

The Scriptures

We believe the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments to be the full record of God's self disclosure to mankind. Different men, while writing according to their own styles and personalities, were supernaturally moved along by the Holy Spirit to record God's very words, inerrant in the original writings. Therefore, those applying themselves to study its literal, historical-grammatical context can accurately understand God's Word. Scripture is fully trustworthy as our final and sufficient authority for all of life (2Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

The Triune God

We believe in the one living and true God, eternally (John 17:3) existing in perfect unity as three equally and fully divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20). Each member of the Godhead, while executing distinct but complementary roles in redemptive history, has precisely the same nature, attributes,

and being, and is equally worthy of the same glory and honor and obedience (John 1:1-4; Acts 5:3-4).

God the Father

We believe God the Father created all things in six literal days for His glory according to His own will (Revelation 4:11), through His Son, Jesus Christ. He upholds all things by the Word of His power and grace, exercising sovereign headship over all creation, providence, and redemption (Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:3).

God the Son

We believe that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, moved by love in accordance with the will of the Father, took on human flesh (John 1:1, 14, 18). Conceived through the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, He was born of the virgin Mary. He, being fully God and fully man (John 14:8-9), lived a sinless life and sacrificially shed His blood and died on the cross in our place accomplishing redemption for all who place their faith in Him. He arose visibly and bodily from the dead three days later and ascended into heaven, where, at the Father's right hand, He is now Head of His Body the Church, the only Savior and Mediator between God and man, and will return to earth in power and glory to consummate His redemptive mission (1 Timothy 3:16).

God the Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ during this age. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He draws the unredeemed to repentance and faith, and at salvation imparts new spiritual life to the believer, bringing that person into union with Christ and the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit sanctifies, seals, fills, guides, instructs, comforts, equips, empowers, permanently indwells at salvation, and bestows spiritual gifts to the believer for Christ-like living and service (John 16:8; 13:15; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 1:22; 4:11-12; Romans 8:9-17; 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 12:4-5, 11-13, 19; Galatians 5:25; Hebrews 2:1-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

Mankind

We believe that God created mankind—male and female—in His own image and likeness, free of sin, to glorify Himself and enjoy His fellowship. Tempted by Satan, but in the sovereign plan of God, man freely chose to disobey God, bringing sin, death and condemnation to all mankind. All human beings, therefore, are totally depraved by nature and by choice. Alienated from God without defense or excuse, and subject to God's righteous wrath, all of mankind is in desperate need of the Savior (Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 3:10-19; Romans 1:18, 32).

Salvation

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, as the substitutionary atonement in our place, and that salvation is found in none other than Jesus Christ. Before Creation, God chose those who would be saved and granted this unearned grace solely based on His sovereign good pleasure. Jesus Christ's death on the cross was the sole and complete payment for sins, fully satisfying God's righteous wrath, for each person that turns from sin in repentance and places their faith in Christ alone by grace alone. At salvation each person is made a new creation by the Holy Spirit, declared righteous before God, and secured as an adopted child of God forever. Genuine faith continues in obedience and love for Jesus Christ with a life eager to glorify God and persevere to the end (Romans 8:37-39; 2Corinthians 5:21; 1Corinthians 12:13).

Things to Come

We believe in and expectantly await the glorious, visible, personal, pre-millennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The blessed hope of His return has vital bearing on the personal life, service, and mission of the believer (1Thessalonians 4:13-18). We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost. The lost will be raised to judgment and experience eternal wrath in hell. The saved will be raised to eternal joy in the new heaven and new earth in the manifested presence of God (Acts 1:3, 9; Hebrews 7:25-26).

Baptism and Communion

We believe that Christian baptism is a public declaration of the believer's salvation in Christ, identifying with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection symbolized by immersion in water. The Lord's Supper is the united commemoration by believers of Christ's death until He comes and should be preceded by a careful self-examination (Acts 2:41; Romans 6:3-6; 1Corinthians 11:20-29).

The Church

We believe that upon placing one's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, the believer is made part of the Body of Christ, the one universal Church, of which Jesus Christ is the Head. The Scriptures command believers to gather locally in order to devote themselves to worship, prayer, teaching of the Word, fellowship, the ordinances of baptism and communion, service to the local body through the development and use of talents and spiritual gifts, and outreach to the world to make disciples (Ephesians 1:22-23; Acts 2:42-46; 1Corinthians 14:26; Matthew 28:18-20). Wherever God's people meet regularly in obedience to this command, there is the local expression of the Church under the watchful care of a plurality of elders. A church's members are to work

together in love and unity, intent on the ultimate purpose of glorifying Christ (Ephesians 4:16).

Missions

We believe it is the aim, duty, and privilege of every believer and local church fellowship to glorify God by responding as active participants in the Great Commission call of Jesus Christ to go and make disciples of all nations. We believe the primary focus and priority of this call is centered on efforts that establish, strengthen, and reproduce biblically-based churches, which will then plant churches that plant churches for future generations and God's glory.

Christian Living (Concerning Conduct)

The Bible teaches that all believers are saints, set apart unto God and are thus responsible to live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Savior and Lord (Romans 21:1-2; 1Peter 1:14-19; 2Timothy 2:19; Titus 2) lest the Word of God be blasphemed (1Timothy 6:1; Titus 2:5). As Christians we should obey the Word of our Lord, seek the things which are above, walk as He walked, and accept as our responsibility the duty and privilege of bearing the Gospel to a lost world (1John 2:3; Colossians 3:1; Ephesians 5:23; Matthew 29:19-20). A victorious and fruitful Christian life is possible only for those who have presented themselves wholly to Christ and walk by the power of the Holy Spirit, which all believers are called to do (Romans 12:1,2; Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:18; Romans 6-7).

Church Government

Hope Chapel is committed to the Bible's teaching that men who hold the office of Elder are to oversee various functions of the local church. Deacons are to implement ministry in the church.

The Bible's teaching on the subject of two church offices is found in 1Timothy 3:1-16 and Titus 1:5-9. Although there are three terms used for the offices of the church, i.e. bishop, elder and deacon, analysis of these terms indicates that bishop and elder are used interchangeably.

Elder Qualifications

Above reproach, able to teach, husband to one wife, not addicted to wine, temperate, not antagonistic, prudent, uncontentious, respectable, free from the love of money, hospitable, manages own household well, not a new convert. (Titus 1:6-9)

Elder Duties

The Scriptures show that the Elders “serve by leading” and that their responsibility involves the general oversight of the congregation and particularly over the spiritual aspects. All Elders are equal in authority but not necessarily equal in influence.

The Elders’ Primary Responsibilities

1. Doctrine: Ensuring that the doctrine of the church is biblical; all doctrinal issues in the church will be settled by the Elders;
2. Direction: Ensuring that the direction of the church is consistent with Hope Chapel statement of purpose and the four pillars;
3. Discipline: Administering in love and humility the process of church discipline as outlined in Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1-4; Titus 3:10; 2Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1Timothy 5:17-25; 1Corinthians 5; 2Corinthians 2:5-11 and Romans 16:17.

Plurality of Elders

The Scriptures teach that a plurality of elders governed individual New Testament churches (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5; Philippians 1:1). The Scripture does not mention any congregations featuring a stand-alone pastor and leader. A plurality of godly elders, exercising their individual gifts, squares with the Scripture’s teaching that wisdom is found in a multitude of godly counselors (Proverbs 11:4; Proverbs 12:15; Proverbs 15:22; Proverbs 19:20; Proverbs 24:6). This truth does not eliminate the possibility and likelihood that one or more elders will stand out from the others as more public in their ministries or more influential in their workings on the Elder Board.

Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor serves as an Elder and, because of his public presence and responsibility before the congregation continues on the Elder board as a member without intermittence. His leadership is essential to the harmonious and healthy function of the Elders and is equal to all other Elders. The Senior Pastor should be gifted primarily as a preacher/teacher, visionary, and as a leader. He is worthy of double honor because he labors in “word and doctrine.” (1Timothy 5:17)

Deacons

The Bible teaches that Deacons “lead by serving” (Acts 6, 1Timothy 3). The Deacons serve under the authority of the Elders in various capacities within the church. The qualifications for Elders and Deacons are the same regarding an individual’s character, but they differ in aptitude. The elders are to be “able to teach” while the deacons are to be “able and proved as servants.” Both men and women of the church may be part of the Deacon Ministry under that Authority of the Elders. All will be called Deacon. (Romans 16:1)

Deacon Qualifications

Individuals of dignity, above reproach, not double tongued, first tested as servants, not addicted to wine, spouses must be faithful, dignified, temperate, not fond of sordid gain, holding to the mystery of faith with a clear conscience, husband of one wife, manages household well. (1Timothy 3:8-12)

PRESENT ISSUES

Assimilation and Church Membership

We believe in the importance of serving the body of Christ by offering clear paths for people to start and develop healthy and growing relationships with others in the church body. We value an intentional plan to help every interested person enjoy godly relationships in the church. Church membership is a byproduct of people who are growing in Christ and who grasp the importance of serving the Lord by using their gifts to serve others in the local church.

Charismatic Movement

Hope Chapel is an evangelical fellowship that welcomes all who know Jesus Christ as their Savior and all who are seeking Him. We are not anti-charismatic. Defining this movement is difficult because there are multiple groups housed under its title. Those who claim to possess the gift of tongues and other sign gifts are welcome to worship and fellowship with us if they are willing to be a source of unity rather than division within our church body. We believe that the Christian life is supernatural and that the Lord continues to perform miracles. We also believe that current displays of sign gifts can divide rather than unify any church. For example the gift of tongues may distract from the main task of the local church, which is to glorify God through the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

Hope Chapel seeks to prevent the propagation of doctrines that would cause divisions within an individual church. Therefore, members and attendees of Hope Chapel are not to propagate the teachings and emphases of any movement that can harm our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ. We do not “forbid to speak in tongues” (1Corinthians 14:39) so we do not control personal, individual interactions with the Lord in this. The Lord can do anything that He wants to do and we will follow His will and word in all matters for the church. Where God has obviously displayed His power through a miraculous healing, we will rejoice in it but we will not place the miracle or other sign gifts above the glory of God through exalting those involved.

Church Planting

The church exists to glorify God through the fulfillment of the Great Commission, and in the spirit of the Great Commandment (Matthew 28:19-20, Matthew 22:37-38). The Great Commission is fulfilled as disciples of Jesus Christ are made and grow in their relationship with Him and likeness to Him. God is glorified as we manifest His presence as we do His work (2Timothy 2:2; 1Corinthians 10:31).

In seeking to act upon the church's purpose, we recognize the extraordinary value in multiplying the reach of His ministry by planting local churches and by associating with existing, like-minded local churches. God is glorified when Hope Chapel and other like-minded churches associate with one another in order to foster relationships that edify, protect, encourage, support, and admonish.

The governing members, serving as directors of the Hope Chapel Elders Council, lead the association of Hope Chapel and affiliating churches and oversee church planting. The Elders Council assists affiliate churches to more effectively spread the Word of God and the ways of God in order to build His kingdom. The Elders Council desires to bless all affiliate churches through the mutual exchange of pulpit and music ministry, consulting services, research, conferences, and seed money devoted to church planting and pastoral education programs.

Counseling Philosophy

The Lord changes lives and accomplishes His purposes directly through reading and applying the Scriptures, meditating on the truths of the Scriptures, and prayer. The Lord also uses those who minister His Word as they encourage, exhort, admonish, edify, implore, reprove, rebuke, and console others toward godliness. God needs no new or unique insight into the human condition in order to change lives, regardless of whether that insight is gained through psychology or some other tool of human origin. Problems that are approached by integrating the Scriptures with psychological theories tend to deceive individuals into diminishing the God of the Scriptures and into believing that He

has not provided and cannot provide sufficient truth, insight, and wisdom that will change their lives (Colossians 2:8-10).

When psychology and other social sciences step beyond observing human behavior and seek to explain the causes of human behavior, they enter spiritual territory. Only the God of the Scriptures can explain causes and offer solutions that lead to godliness and a fruitful, joyful life. God has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2Peter 1:3). He changes us as we discipline ourselves through obedience to the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit (1Timothy 4:7; 2Peter 1:5-11).

Each Christian's passion should be to become more like Christ and fulfill the Great Commandment to love the Lord with the entire heart, soul, mind, and strength (Romans 8:29; 1John 3:2, Deuteronomy 6:5; Mark 12:30; Matthew 22:37-38).

The Christian who learns and applies the Word becomes mature and, in turn, can help others mature (2Timothy 2:2).

Creation, Evolution, and God's Sovereignty

We believe God created the universe in six twenty-four hour days and that before He created the universe, nothing except God existed (Genesis 1; Exodus 31:17; Psalm 33:6-9; Acts 17:24; Hebrews 11:3; Colossians 1:16).

God chose to create the universe and all that is in it to reveal His glory, divine nature, eternal power, infinite wisdom, and supreme authority (Isaiah 43:7; Psalm 19:1-2; Jeremiah 10:12; Romans 1:20; Revelation 4:11).

We deny the theory of evolution, which states that nonliving substances gave rise to the first living material, which then reproduced and diversified to produce all living creatures. We believe that all people are descendants of Adam and Eve, whom God created personally and individually and as complete human beings (Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 2:7; Genesis 2:21-22; 1Corinthians 11:8-9). The fall of Adam and Eve infected all people with sin and death, but the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ gives the opportunity to receive God's gift of eternal life (Romans 5:18-19; 1Corinthians 15:21-22).

God rules over His creation and cares about and is involved in the lives of individual people (Job 12:10; Acts 17:25; Acts 25:28; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:13; Ephesians 4:6).

Eternal Security of the Believer

It is God's divine decision to save a person and it is God's kindness, forbearance, and patience that lead that person to repentance (Romans 2:4). All glory for the salvation and security of every believer belongs to God alone (Romans 3:21-31; Ephesians 1:7-9;

Ephesians 2:8-9, Jude 1:24-25). We believe that everyone who is born again by the Spirit through Jesus Christ is eternally assured of salvation from the moment of conversion. This assurance relies on God's decisive grace rather than on the works of the Christian. Obedience, good works, and fruit-bearing do not earn or retain the believer's salvation but indicate the reality of the person's love of Christ and profession of faith (Luke 6:46; John 14:21; James 2:17-18).

Eternal security in salvation relies on the Lord's guarantee of each believer's adoption as His son or daughter (Galatians 4:4-7), His seal of the believer by the Holy Spirit (2Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13-14), and the conviction that God gives the Holy Spirit to each believer as a down payment toward future bliss in heaven (2Corinthians 1:21-22). A person who professes genuine faith in Christ immediately becomes His possession (Luke 23:42-43; Acts 2:40-41; Acts 16: 30-34), and nothing can snatch that person out of His hands (John 10:27-29). Having been bought with the price of Jesus Christ's crucifixion as complete payment for sin, Christians are not their own. They are Christ's possession (1Corinthians 6:19-20). This assurance is absolutely certain, reserved in heaven, protected by God's unlimited power (1Peter 1:4-5).

Process of Sanctification and Maturity

Mature disciples walk with Christ, worship Christ, and work for Christ. A person committed to a relationship with Christ focuses on a personal walk with Him, worshipping Him, and working for Him. That person will experience significant growth in personal sanctification and, therefore, will experience a closer personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and will become "complete in Christ" (Colossians 1:28). We are committed to multiplying the godly characteristics of leaders' lives into others (2Timothy 2:2). This multiplication of ministry is key to the healthy growth of the church. We believe the disciples of Jesus Christ should minister to one another in the local church, rather than one or a small number of professional pastors bearing total responsibility to care for the entire congregation. God has given spiritual gifts to all of His people to provide mutual ministry in the context of the healthy and strong local church (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Spiritual Warfare

Satan and his demonic servants viciously oppose the work God performs in and through His people (1Peter 5:8; Genesis 3:1-7; Ephesians 6:12). God, who by His nature is infinitely more powerful than Satan, in due time will have complete and total victory over Satan (1John 4:4; Revelation 20:1-10).

Although it is appropriate to pray in Jesus' name for protection against demonic activity, the Scriptures do not instruct the Christian to "bind Satan in Jesus' name." Rather, the Scriptures instruct the Christian to combat Satan by:

- Humbly drawing near to God, knowing that He will give grace, mercy, and strength (2Corinthians 12:7-9; Hebrews 4:15-16; James 4:8; 1 Peter 5:6-10).
- Resisting Satan's temptations (James 4:7; 1Peter 5:8-9).
- Rightly applying the truth of the Scriptures (Matthew 4:1-11; John 8:44; Ephesians 4:24-27).
- Forgiving offenses (2Corinthians 2:10-11).
- Putting on the armor of God's truth, righteousness, readiness to share the Gospel, faith, salvation, and prayer (Ephesians 6:11-20).
- Demonstrating faithfulness to the Lord by enduring trials (Revelation 2:10; Revelation 2:13; Revelation 3:9-10).

Sufficiency of Scripture

We believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures and that they contain all the words of God that we need in order to completely trust and obey Him. The Scriptures are inerrant in their original writings (Psalm 119:97-104; Psalm 119:160; Matthew 5:18; John 5:46-47; John 10:35; 2Timothy 3:15-16), and are infallible in their instruction (Proverbs 6:32; 2Peter 1:19), eternal in duration (Isaiah 40:8; 1Peter 1:23-25); the final authority and the standard for faith and practice (Matthew 4:4; Psalm 119); and sufficient for counsel in every issue of life (Psalm 19:7-14; 2Timothy 3:16). We believe that the very words of Scripture in the original Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic are inspired by God. Therefore, we believe that the Bible versions which translate God's

Word most literally into modern English should be preferred.

Women in Ministry

Hope Chapel affirms the God-ordained and significant role that women should play in establishing and leading the local church. Every leadership opportunity is open to women except those that are excluded by Scripture. The Scriptures clearly state that men are to serve in the office of Elder and that women are not to serve in church positions in which they exercise authority over men or in which they teach doctrine to men (1Timothy 2:12; 1Timothy 3:1-2; Titus 1:6-9). We do not see this as an issue of equality, for men and women are equal under God. The Bible is clear that men and women do not have the same roles. Qualified women should serve in any leadership position that is not forbidden in the Scriptures. We believe that women are able to serve as deacons since Paul gives that designation to a woman. (Romans 16:1) He also makes room for women to function within this ministry in the qualifications for deacons. (1Timothy 3:11)

Worship and Music

The chief purpose of mankind is to glorify God by loving Him with the entire heart, soul, mind, and might (Deuteronomy 6:5; Isaiah 43:7; Matthew 22:37). All believing men, women, and children are to glorify God and thus fulfill the purpose of their existence. Worship glorifies God through adoration (Psalm 95:6), praise (Psalm 99:5), prayer (Daniel 6:10-11), thanksgiving (Nehemiah 12:46), and a complete yielding to Him (Romans 12:1). Worship declares His worth, pays Him homage, and celebrates Him in a life of devotion. We seek to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth (Exodus 15:1-21; 2Samuel 6:14-16; Psalm 5:7; John 4:23-24; Revelation 4:11; 5:12).

Several tenets guide our worship. We seek to:

- Lift high the name of Jesus Christ through vibrant, holy praise involving the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual parts of the worshipper (John 4:22-26; John 12:32, 14:6).
- Lead God's people to lift their hearts and voices to Him, giving Him praise and thanks in music and lyrics (Nehemiah 12:45-46; Psalm 66:1-4; Psalm 95:1-2).
- Prepare hearts to hear the Lord speak through the proclamation of Scripture (Psalm 95:6-9; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42).
- Emphasize fresh and contemporary expressions while retaining traditional elements that recognize the richness of our heritage in the faith (Deuteronomy 32:7; Psalm 33:3; Isaiah 46:8-9; Matthew 13:32, Ephesians 5:19; Revelation 5:9).
- Pursue excellence in worship, knowing that God is worthy of our best (Exodus 12; Deuteronomy 17:1; Psalm 33:3; 1Timothy 4:14-15; Hebrews 11:4).
- Encourage the writing and singing of new songs, as commanded by the Lord, with lyrics that focus on His glory, the use of all instruments, the open, loud enjoyment of enthusiastic worship, and the humble response to our God (Psalm 33:3, 47:1-3; 150)