



# Principles of Doctrine, Government and Practice

AFFILIATE CHURCHES

## PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

The church exists to glorify God through the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) in the spirit of the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39). The commission is fulfilled as disciples of Jesus Christ are made and grow in their relationship with Him. God is glorified as we manifest His presence as we do His work (2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

# Doctrine

## GOD

We believe in the only true God (John 17:3), the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20). He created all things (Revelation 4:11) and upholds all things by the Word of His power (Hebrews 1:3). In Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). He is a God of truth and without iniquity, He is just and right (Deuteronomy 32:4) and He shall judge the world (Psalm 9:8).

We believe that the Godhead eternally exists in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three are one God, having precisely the same nature, attributes and perfections, and are worthy of precisely the same homage, confidence and obedience (Mark 12:29; John 1:1-4; Matthew 29:19-20; Acts 4:3-4).

## JESUS CHRIST

We believe in the total deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe He is the manifestation of God in the flesh. We believe He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. We believe Him to be true God and true man (John 1:1, 1:14, 1:18; John 14:8-9; 1 Timothy 3:16).

## HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the total deity of the Holy Spirit and that His ministry is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ (John 16:14).

The Holy Spirit regenerates the sinner upon belief in Christ, baptizing the believer into one body of which Christ is the head. The Holy Spirit indwells, guides, instructs, fills, comforts and empowers the believer for godly living (Mark 13:11; John 14:26; John 16:13; Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 3:16). The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, of God's righteousness and of coming judgment (John 16:8-11).

While we believe that the Scriptures do not teach that certain gifts have ceased, they indicate that use of the gifts vary according to the need that each gift meets. Harvest Bible Chapel does not encourage the use of "sign gifts." Instead, we seek to emphasize the more excellent way of love as well as zeal for the more edifying gifts (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, 12:11-13, 12:19; Galatians 5:25; Hebrews 4:1-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

## SCRIPTURES

We believe the Scriptures of the Old Testament and New Testament are verbally inspired by God and inerrant in their original writings. We believe the 66 books of the Old Testament and the New Testament are God's complete and sufficient revelation and therefore carry God's authority for the total well-being of mankind (Psalm 119:97-104; Psalm 119:160; Matthew 5:18; John 5:46-47; John 10:35; 2 Timothy 3:15-16).

## MAN

We believe man was created in innocence under the law of his Maker but, by voluntarily transgressing, fell from his sinless and happy state. Consequently, all mankind is sinful. All people are sinners not only by inheritance, but by their own choice and therefore are under just condemnation without defense or excuse. We believe that without exception every man and every woman is totally depraved and needs a Savior (Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 3:10-19; Romans 1:18, Romans 1:32; Romans 5:1-2).

## SALVATION

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice. We believe that each person who by faith receives Him as personal Savior is justified on the basis of Jesus Christ's shed blood on Calvary. Each person who receives Christ as personal Savior is born again of the Holy Spirit and thereby becomes eternally secure as a child of God. We believe the Holy Spirit baptizes each believing person into the body of Christ at the moment of salvation and that there is no second baptism of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:37-39; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

## RESURRECTION

We believe in the resurrection of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, His ascension into heaven and His present life for us as High Priest and Advocate (Acts 1:3; Acts 1:9; Hebrews 7:25-26).

## HEAVEN, HELL AND THE RETURN OF CHRIST

We believe in the "blessed hope": the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ. His return has a vital bearing on the personal life and service of the believer (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost. The saved are raised to eternal, conscious bliss in heaven (Matthew 25:34; John 14:2; 2 Corinthians 5:1; Revelation 2:7) the lost are raised to eternal torment in hell in conscious separation from God. (Matthew 8:11; Matthew 10:28; Matthew 13:49-50; Mark 9:47-48; Luke 12:5; Revelation 21:8).

## CHURCH

Upon accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, a believer becomes part of His body, which is the church. There is one church universal, composed of all those throughout the world who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The Scriptures command believers to gather in order to devote themselves to worship, prayer, teaching of the Word, observance of the ordinances (baptism and communion), fellowship, service to the body through the development and use of talents and gifts, and outreach to the world in fulfillment of the command of Christ to make disciples of all believers (Ephesians 5:23; Romans 12:1; Acts 2:42-46; 1 Corinthians 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 oversight of elders and other supportive leadership. The church's members are to work together in love and unity, intent on the ultimate purpose of glorifying Christ (Ephesians 4:16).

## MISSIONS

Realizing that the cause of Christ extends beyond any one local fellowship, we commit ourselves to an ongoing ministry of extending the call of Christ to make disciples around the world (Matthew 28:19-20).

# ISSUES FOR CLARIFICATION

## 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 by-product 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.

## BAPTISM AND COMMUNION

We believe that Christian baptism by immersion in water is a public identification with Jesus Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. Although baptism is not required for salvation, it is commanded of all believers and is for believers only (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38, 41; Acts 18:18). Scripture shows that a person was baptized after personally receiving forgiveness of sin by accepting Jesus Christ. The waters of baptism are a symbol of death, burial, and resurrection to newness of life that happens when a person becomes a new creation in Christ (Colossians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:1-4). Communion is the commemoration by believers of Christ's death and a reminder—through the bread and the juice—of the Savior's broken body and shed blood. Communion is to be a time of confession of sin and should be preceded by careful self-examination (Acts 4:13; Romans 6:3-6; 1 Corinthians 11:20-29).

## 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; 2 Timothy 3:15-16) and are infallible in their instruction (Proverbs 6:32; 2 Peter 1:19), eternal in duration (Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 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 19:14-17; 2 Timothy 3:16).

## CREATION, EVOLUTION AND GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

We believe God created the universe 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 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; 1 Corinthians 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; 1 Corinthians 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).

## SALVATION AND SECURITY

It is God's divine decision to save a person (John 6:37; John 6:44; John 6:65; Romans 8:29-30; Romans 9:11-18; Acts 13:48; Acts 16:14; Ephesians 1:4-6; Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Peter 1:3) and it is God's kindness, forbearance and patience that lead that person to repentance (Romans 2:4). The Bible also teaches that each person is responsible to embrace or reject Jesus as Savior and Lord and that God welcomes all who come to Him by faith apart from works (Matthew 22:1-14; Luke 15:7; Luke 20:9-18; John 6:37; John 7:37; Romans 10:9-13; Acts 16:30-34; Acts 17:30). Both of these two truths—God's sovereignty in salvation and man's decision to embrace Christ—are taught in the Scriptures. Their co-existence is a mystery and is completely understood only in the mind of our omniscient God.

All glory for the salvation of every believer belongs to God alone (Romans 3:21-31; Ephesians 1:7-9; Ephesians 2:8-9, Jude 1:24-25).

Those who are born of God's Spirit through Jesus Christ persevere in the faith (Matthew 13:13; John 15:4-8; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 2:10-13; 1 John 4:13; 2 John 9). God is faithful to His people, empowering them to persevere in the faith (1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 1 John 2:19-20).

We believe that everyone who is born of God's Spirit through Jesus Christ is assured of salvation from the moment of conversion (Ephesians 1:13-14). This assurance relies on God's decisive and faithful 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), and His seal of the believer by the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 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 (2 Corinthians 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 (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). This assurance is absolutely certain, reserved in heaven, protected by God's unlimited power (1 Peter 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, worship of Him and work 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 (2 Timothy 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).

## WORSHIP

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; 2 Samuel 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 (John 4:22-26; John 12:32; John 14:6);
- lead God's people to lift their hearts and voices to Him, giving Him praise and thanks in music and lyric (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);
- pursue excellence in worship, knowing that God is worthy of our best (Exodus 12; Deuteronomy 17:1; Psalm 33:3, 1 Timothy 4:14-15; Hebrews 11:4).

## CHURCH PLANTING PHILOSOPHY

The church exists to glorify God through the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) in the spirit of the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-38). The commission is fulfilled as disciples of Jesus Christ are made 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 (2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

In seeking to act upon the church's purpose, we recognize the extraordinary value in multiplying the reach of the ministry by planting local churches and by associating with existing local churches. God is glorified when Harvest Bible Chapels and other churches associate with one another in order to foster relationships that edify, protect, encourage and support. A governing body—the Elders Council—leads Harvest Bible Fellowship. The Elders Council oversees church planting and the relationships with member churches so they may more effectively spread the Word of God and the ways of God in order to build His kingdom.

The Elders Council is comprised of:

- the Senior Pastor of six Harvest Bible Chapels, selected on a rotating basis at the discretion of the Executive Director of Harvest Bible Fellowship.
- a Harvest Bible Chapel member who serves as Executive Director of Harvest Bible Fellowship and is responsible to execute the vision, mission and directives of the Elders Council.

The Elders Council desires to bless all Harvest Bible Fellowship member churches through the mutual exchange of pulpit and music ministry, consulting services, research, conferences, printed materials and seed money devoted to church planting and pastoral education programs.



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