

What We Teach

This **What We Teach** document presents the convictions of Fellowship Bible Church (FBC) regarding the theological truths of the Bible. These convictions are divided up into two categories:

- 1) The essential, fundamental truths of the Christian faith.
- 2) The non-essential, secondary truths of the Scriptures.

Our position on doctrine at FBC is that “doctrinal truth does matter.” We believe that to avoid teaching doctrine for fear that “doctrine divides” or is “controversial” does a great disservice to the people of God. It leaves them as spiritually immature children who are then vulnerable to false teaching. (Ephesians 4:11-14)

However, not all theological truths of the Bible are of the same importance. This is why we believe that the early church father, Augustine, said it well when he stated, “In the essentials—unity, in the non-essentials—liberty, but in all things charity.”

At FBC we encourage a level of doctrinal tolerance. However, there are some essential, fundamental truths of the Christian faith, which a person (or church that FBC would associate with) must affirm if he or she desires to consistently fellowship and minister with our church body. These are listed under **The Fundamentals of the Faith**. They are spelled out in greater detail in the **What We Teach** section of this document.

The non-essential, secondary truths of Scripture are such only because they are not essential and fundamental truths that a person must believe to become a Christian.

However, even strong evangelical scholars throughout the centuries have had differing views on these non-essential, secondary teachings of Scripture. Although the convictions of FBC on these theological issues are given in the **What We Teach** section of this document, our overall position on such issues is to “Agree to disagree in an agreeable way.”

There will be those who choose to fellowship with us at FBC who do not agree in all points with our doctrinal teaching position on these non-essential, secondary truths of Scripture. **We welcome these to participate freely with us!** However, those in a leadership or teaching position in the church who hold to a different view than FBC on a non-essential, secondary issue are not allowed to teach or counsel others contrary to what we believe the Bible communicates.

The central ministry of FBC is the continuous imparting of the biblical truth to the people of God in order that they may know God and serve Him in worship and ministry. It is our prayer that this **What We Teach**

document will encourage our body to greater study of the Word of God, a more accurate understanding of God and a practical application of His truth to their daily lives.

The Fundamentals of the Faith

The following essential, fundamental truths of the Christian faith must be affirmed in order to have consistent unity and fellowship together:

1. We believe that there is one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2. We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, His sinless life, His miracles, His vicarious and atoning death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and His personal return in power and glory.
3. We believe in the deity of the Holy Spirit and His present ministry of indwelling every Christian and enabling them to live a godly life.
4. We believe the Bible is the inspired, inerrant and authoritative Word of God.
5. We believe that all men are lost sinners and must turn to Christ alone in saving faith through regeneration by the Holy Spirit.
6. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both believers and unbelievers; the believers to eternal life with Christ and the unbelievers to eternal punishment in hell.

What We Teach

THE WORD OF GOD

We teach that whereas God has revealed Himself to man **generally** (i.e. in nature and conscience), these avenues are insufficient for salvation (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-2:16), and thus, the Word of God constitutes God's **special revelation** to mankind for salvation. This special revelation was finished with the completion of the New Testament (Hebrews 1:1-2; 2:3-4; Jude 3; Revelation 22:18-19).

We teach that the Bible is God's only written revelation to man, and thus the sixty-six books of the Bible (i.e. the Protestant Canon) is the objective, propositional revelation of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13). No church council or group of men made these books canonical, rather these books were recognized as clearly inspired by God.

We teach the verbal, plenary, inspiration of Scripture—God-breathed equally in all parts and in every word in the original documents (2 Timothy 3:16).

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, backgrounds and different styles of writing (John 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-14; Galatians 1:15-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21); they composed and rendered God's Word to man without error (i.e. inerrant) in whole or in part (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16).

We teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and is sufficient for both salvation and sanctification (Isaiah 40:8; 55:11; Matthew 4:4; 5:17-19; 24:35; John 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12-13).

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 applies the literal grammatical-historical method of interpretation, which recognizes varieties of expression, literary forms and figurative language, under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20).

We teach that the Bible is absolutely authoritative and that therefore it is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. The truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it (2 Timothy 2:15).

We teach that throughout human history in the context of time God revealed more and more of His person, character and will (i.e. **progressive revelation**). Though in history God did modify how he dealt with specific people in line with His sovereign plan, no previous revelation was ever contradicted.

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, personal, all-knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons (i.e. Trinity)—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Isaiah 48:16; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)—each equally deserving worship and obedience. Functional subordinations within the Trinity never stand opposed to the full Deity that each of the Persons possesses. God is, but is not limited to:

- Self-Existent (John 5:26; Romans 11:36).
- Eternal (Deuteronomy 33:27; Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 57:15).
- Sovereign (Psalm 115:3; Daniel 4:35; Matthew 19:26).
- Transcendent (Psalm 113:4-5).
- Omnipresent (1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 139:7-10; Jeremiah 23:24).

- Omnipotent (Isaiah 40:28; Jeremiah 32:17).
- Omniscient (Psalm 147:5; Hebrews 4:13).
- Immutable (Psalm 102:25-27; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17).
- Incomprehensible (Isaiah 55:8-9; Romans 11:33-35).
- Perfect (Psalm 18:30; Matthew 5:48).
- Holy (Leviticus 11:44; Isaiah 6:1-3; 57:15).
- Truthful (Numbers 23:19; Romans 3:4; Hebrews 6:18).
- Gracious (Matthew 5:45; Romans 3:24; Ephesians 2:8-9).
- Love (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:8).
- Merciful (Romans 11:32; Titus 3:5).
- Righteous (Psalm 119:137; 145: 17; Habakkuk 1:13).
- Just (Romans 1:18; 2:6-8).

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 (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; Ephesians 1:3-14). His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity (John 2: 16; 17:5, 24; Acts 13:33; Ephesians 1:3), and His relationship with mankind. As Creator He is Father to all men (Acts 17:28-29; Ephesians 4:6), but He is spiritual Father only to believers (Matthew 6:8-9; Romans 8:14-15; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 4:6).

We teach that God the Father has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11; Daniel 4:35). In His sovereignty He is neither author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; 1 Peter 1:16-17), nor does He diminish the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17). He has graciously chosen from eternity past 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 attributes of God, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (John 1:1-3, 14; 10:30; 14:9; 20:28; Hebrews 1:3).

We teach that God the Father created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them 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 there are preincarnate appearances of the Son of God in the Old Testament where He is referred to as “LORD” (Genesis 18:1-2, 22; 19:24;) and as “the Angel of the LORD” (Genesis 16:7; 22:1-12; Exodus 3:2-6; Judges 13:18-22). There are several instances in the Old Testament where Christ took on the physical form of a man (Genesis 18:1-2, 32:24-30; Joshua 5:13-15).

We teach that Jesus Christ fulfilled various Old Testament prophecies (e.g. Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; 52-53; Micah 5:2; Psalm 2; 22; 118:22; Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:44-45).

We teach that in the incarnation (i.e. Hypostatic Union) the eternally existing second person of the Trinity (i.e. Jesus Christ) became man and that He represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness being 100% God and 100% man (Micah 5:2; John 1:1, 14; 5:23; 14:9-10; 17:5; Colossians 2:9), and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, to redeem men, and rule over God’s kingdom (Psalm 2:7-9, Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; 3:16; 6:51; 2 Corinthians 8:9; 1 Peter 1:18-21).

We teach that in the incarnation Christ voluntarily took upon Himself the form of a bond-servant and laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of the attributes of deity (Kenosis), yet surrendering nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind (Philippians 2:5-8).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26-35), and lived a sinless life (Luke 1:35; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood (i.e. His sacrificial death on the cross—1 Peter 1:18-19), and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15-18; 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 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 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 our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He has ascended in His glorified body to the right hand of the Father, where He 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 the Lord Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man (Ephesians 2:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5), is the Head of His body, the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the coming universal King who will return with His bride and reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31-33).

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one to whom every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11), and through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22-23):

- Believers (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10)
- Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return, i.e. the Second Coming of Christ (Matthew 25:31-46)
- Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15).

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

We teach that the Holy Spirit is a divine person (John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 5:3-4), eternal (Hebrews 9:14), underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), 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 with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-56; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and 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 a unique work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost when He came 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 (Titus 3:5), baptizing all believers into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:4). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, illuminates, empowers for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13; 3:16; 1 John 2:20, 27).

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 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21). 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 (i.e. controlled by) the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 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, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the faith (John 16: 13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

MAN

We teach that God directly and immediately created man in His image and likeness on the 6th day of creation (Genesis 1:26-31; 2:7). Man was created free of sin with intelligence, emotion, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (2:15-25). Even after the fall of man into sin, no matter how thoroughly distorted that image has become, it has not been eradicated (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9)

We teach that God's intention in the creation of man 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 Adam, as our representative, by his one act of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, plunged the whole human race into sin, resulting in spiritual and physical death (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; Romans 5:12-21). Consequently, 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 inherently corrupt, unholy, and stand condemned from conception by nature (Psalm 51:5; Ephesians 2:1-3), by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalms 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 1:18-3:23).

We teach that because man is morally stained by sin in all of his capacities (i.e. rational, volitional, emotional, etc.) he is therefore hopelessly lost, and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace (Isaiah 53:6; 64:6; Jeremiah 17:9; Psalm 14:1-3; Mark 7:21-23; John 3:36; Romans 3:9-23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14).

We teach that whereas God has given man the capacity to choose (Deuteronomy 30:19-20; Matthew 11:28; John 17:7), nevertheless because of his sin no unregenerate man desires God (Psalm 14:1-3; Romans 3:10-18; 8:7-8; 1 Corinthians 2:14) until the Holy Spirit changes his heart (Jeremiah 31:33-34; Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 6:37, 44, 65; Ephesians 2:1-10; 2 Timothy 2:24-26). Therefore, man is responsible before God for all of his choices (John 5:40).

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; Romans 9:16; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:18-19). God gets all the credit for the believers salvation and that the unbeliever is responsible for his rejection of salvation. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Works are not the way to salvation, but the result of salvation.

We teach that Christ's atonement is both **general** in that Christ died for all men (2 Corinthians 5:19; 1 Timothy 2:6; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:2), and **particular** in that Christ's death has special reference to the elect (John 10:11; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25). Therefore, Christ's saving work on the cross was "sufficient for all, effectual for the elect" (John 3:16; 1 Timothy 4:10).

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; 1 Peter 1:23). It is instantaneous (2 Corinthians 5:17) and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24; Romans 10:17), when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation.

We teach that genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works will be its proper evidence and fruit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10; James 2:14-26), 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 Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3).

PREDESTINATION/ELECTION/REPROBATION

We understand that there has always been much debate and controversy over these doctrines. The use of different definitions for these terms has only added confusion to the debate. Therefore, we define what we mean by each term as we teach the following:

The **doctrine of predestination** in its widest sense refers to the fact that God, before the foundation of the world, in eternity past, sovereignly predestined or foreordained (i.e. predetermined) whatsoever shall happen in history according to His own plan and purpose (Isaiah 46:10; Acts 4:27-28; 15:18; 1 Peter 1:20; Ephesians 1:11). However, in its narrower sense it refers to God from eternity past sovereignly predestining two things:

1) God **positively** and **actively** “elected” or “chose,” out of the mass of fallen and justly condemned humanity, a body of undeserving people for Himself in Christ whom He graciously regenerates, saves and sanctifies (Acts 13:48; Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2; Revelation 17:8). This is the **doctrine of election**. God does not “elect” any to damnation.

2) At the same time, God **negatively** and **passively** predestined to “pass over” (i.e. preterition) the rest of sinful humanity (i.e. the reprobate— the non-elect who reject God’s free gift of salvation) by withholding His work of grace in their lives and leaving them to continue in their own chosen and self-determined sinfulness to ultimate eternal punishment (Exodus 9:16; Proverbs 16:4; Romans 9:17, 22; 1 Peter 2:7-8; Jude 4).

Whereas the Bible teaches that the eternal destiny of both the elect and the reprobate is settled by the eternal foreordination of God (i.e. double predestination), we reject any distorted view of predestination that states that God works in the same way and same manner in the lives of the reprobate as He does in the lives of the elect (i.e. “double election”).

We teach that in the lives of the **elect**, God *changes* an evil, unbelieving heart (e.g. Jeremiah 31:33-34; 32:38-40; Ezekiel 36:22-27; Acts 16:14) justifying the ungodly (Romans 4:5). Note that He does not do this apart from faith on the elects’ part (Romans 3:21-28; Ephesians 2:8-9). In the lives of the **non-elect** (i.e. reprobate), God *does not change* a neutral or believing heart into an unbelieving heart (John 3:18; Romans 3:23). Though God may harden the hearts of unbelievers and “give them over” (e.g. John 12:37-40; Romans 11:7-12; Exodus 9:12, 16; Romans 9:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12; Romans 1:24, 26, 28), He is but simply leaving them to their own desires, sealing their condemnation by confirming them in their current state of sin and unbelief (John 12:35-36; Romans 11:3; Exodus 7:13-14, 22; 8:15, 32; 9:7; 2 Thessalonians 2:10; Romans 1:24-32). Man is not lost because he is hardened; he is hardened because he is lost due to sin (imputed, inherited, and personal).

Although God’s elective decree focuses on those He chooses for salvation, God, having foreordained all things, also uses the reprobate to bring to pass His sovereign purposes (Genesis 50:20; Psalm 76:10; 105:25; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; Romans 9:17-22; 11:25-32).

Any view of predestination that makes God the author of sin who punishes men for doing what He irresistibly forces them to do is unbiblical. God does not force any man to sin (Psalm 5:5; James 1:13).

We teach that the doctrine of election provides mercy for the elect while the passing over of the rest (i.e. preterition) provides justice for the non-elect. Therefore, God shows mercy sovereignly and unconditionally to some, and gives justice to the rest. Because God is under no obligation to grant mercy to all men no one is the victim of injustice. Thus, God receives all the credit for salvation (Romans 9:15, 16; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31), whereas man is totally responsible for his own damnation (John 5:40; 8:24).

We teach that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part, nor to God’s anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (John 1:13; 5:21; Romans 9:15-16; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:2). Since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines. However, sovereign election does not contradict nor negate the total responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Ezekiel 18:23; 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 10:8-13; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17). 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). The goal of election is that the believer will be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29-30), and that we should be to the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14).

We teach that due to the depravity of man, a correct understanding of the doctrine of predestination is the only basis of hope for success in the preaching of the gospel. Therefore, this should stimulate evangelism and missions, not lead to fatalism (Ezek. 33:11; Acts 18:10; Romans 10:13-15; 1 Corinthians 3:5-9; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:10).

In the final analysis there is still an element of mystery and incomprehensibility concerning election and reprobation (Rom. 9:19-20; 11:33-36). Though we may never be able to fully reconcile all of these things (i.e. predestination, foreordination, election, reprobation, preterition, human responsibility, etc.) with our finite minds, we must live with the unresolved tension and leave the rest to God (Deut. 29:29; Isa. 55:8-9). We do know that God does all things in perfect conformity to His own attributes (e.g. omniscience, righteousness, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, love, etc.), bringing everything to pass sovereignly by means of His active or permissive will.

JUSTIFICATION

We teach that justification before God is an instantaneous act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Isaiah 55:6-7; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10) and receive Him as Savior and Lord (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5). This righteousness from God is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6; Philippians 3:9) and is based on His placing our sins on Christ at Calvary (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24), and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us at the moment of salvation (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; 1 Peter 3:18).

SANCTIFICATION

We teach that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is identified as a saint. This sanctification is **positional** and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This positional 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 present state of the believer is brought closer to the perfect standing the believer positionally enjoys through

justification (2 Corinthians 3:18). Biblical Christianity is discipleship (Luke 9:23-26; Acts 11:26). Because all true believers are disciples, the Lord intends all of His disciples to grow to Christlike maturity (Ephesians 4:13; Colossians 1:28).

We teach that 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 new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Whereas eradication of sin is not possible, the indwelling Holy Spirit does provide adequate provision 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).

GLORIFICATION

We teach that every believer will one day be glorified and perfectly conformed into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29-30; 1 John 3:2).

ETERNAL SECURITY/ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

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 security of their salvation on the basis of the testimony of God's Word. The believer will enjoy the assurance of their salvation as they are walking in obedience to God's Word under the control of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16). However, the Scriptures clearly forbid 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). And because a holy God cannot overlook the sin of His children, He will lovingly discipline them if they persistently sin (1 Corinthians 11:27-32; Hebrews 12:5-11).

SEPARATION

We teach that the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last day's apostasy and worldliness shall increase and that God commands separation from any association with religious apostasy, as well as from worldly and sinful practices (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11).

We teach that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-2) and affirm that our Christian life should be a continual pursuit of holiness in our attitude and actions (Matthew 5:2-12; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:1-10).

THE CHURCH

We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 4:14-16), the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-8), 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) and that Christ is in the process of building His church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).

We teach that the church is 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), a mystery not 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 (i.e. the universal church—the total number of believers throughout church history) are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25).

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.

We teach that there are two biblically designated offices in the church: **Elders** and **Deacons** (Philippians 1:1), both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

- We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Chief Shepherd and Head of the Church, directs the affairs of the local church through His under-shepherds called **Elders**. The Elder (also called bishop) is the same

as a pastor, shepherd and overseer (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2). While some Elders are financially supported by the church (i.e. vocational Elders— 1 Corinthians 9:9-14; 1 Timothy 5:17-18), others are self-supporting (i.e. non-vocational Elders).

- We teach that the Elders rule as servants of Christ (Matthew 20:26; 1 Timothy 5:17-22; 1 Peter 5:3) and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17). The Elders should determine all matters of church membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government as outlined in the Fellowship Bible Church Bylaws.
- We teach that the **Deacons** (i.e. servants) are men who assist the Elders in the general needs of the church body as directed by the Elders (Acts 6:1-7).

We teach the importance of discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2), and mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matthew 18:5-14).

We teach that each local church is independent or autonomous, 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. However, “likeminded churches” (i.e. those churches that agree with the essential, fundamental truths of the Christian faith listed above) may fellowship with each other and work together for the advancement of God’s kingdom (John 13: 34-35; 17:21; Acts 15:6-34; Ephesians 4:3; Philippians 2:1; Colossians 3:14). The Elders of Fellowship Bible Church will determine the extent and method of this church’s cooperation.

We teach that the purpose of the church is to bring glory to God (Ephesians 3:21) by:

- Exalting Christ (Matthew 22:37-38; Romans 15:6; Revelation 5:12).
- Encouraging People (Matthew 22:39; Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 John 1:3).
- Evangelizing Unbelievers (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:11,18-21).
- Establishing Believers (Matthew 28:20; Ephesians 4:13-16; Colossians 1:23,28).
- Equipping Servants (Ephesians 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Peter 4:10).

We teach the need of the church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, the Lord Jesus gives the church spiritual gifts. First, He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:7-12). Second, He gives spiritual gifts to each member of the body of Christ to minister by doing “the work of service” (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; Ephesians 4:12; 1 Peter 4:10-11). Christ establishes and oversees this unity and diversity in order that the local church might fulfill its purpose.

We teach that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: **baptism** and the **Lord’s Supper** (Acts 2:38-42):

- We teach that **Christian baptism** is only for those who have placed their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Baptism is not a saving ordinance, but is an act of obedience. It is a demonstration whereby the believer gives testimony before all of his or her faith in, and identification with, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We believe that baptism by immersion is the only Scriptural mode (Acts 8:36-39) and symbolizes the believer's dying, being buried and raised to newness of life (Romans 6:1-11). It is also a sign of identification with the visible body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42).
- We teach that the **Lord's Supper** (i.e. Communion) was given to the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ as a memorial (Matthew 26:26-39; Luke 22:19-20). It is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes, and should be always preceded by solemn self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:26-32). This is a non-sacrificial, non-saving ordinance. We do not believe that the elements used are transformed into the literal body of Christ (transubstantiation), nor that the real presence of Christ is in the elements (consubstantiation), but rather that the elements symbolize Christ's body and His blood shed for us (1 Corinthians 11:24-25).

ANGELS

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ created spirit beings called angels within the six-day creation and has Sovereign authority over them. Because angels are created beings they are not to be worshipped, but to serve God and to worship Him (Genesis 1:1-31; Exodus 20:11; Job 38:6-7; Luke 2:9-14; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:6-7, 14; Revelation 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9). Angels are rational, moral, and immortal beings (1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 2:4; Luke 24:34-36) and currently have greater powers than man (Psalm 8:4-5; Hebrews 2:6-7; 2 Peter 2:11).

We teach that there are various hierarchies of angels: archangels (Jude 9), special attendants (Genesis 3:24; Isaiah 6:2,6), and designations in series (Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 3:10; 1 Peter 3:22). One day redeemed people will judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3).

We teach that angels may be classified under two categories: holy or elect angels (Mark 8:38; 1 Timothy 5:21) and fallen angels or demons (Matthew 25:41).

HOLY ANGELS

We teach that holy or elect angels properly exercise all that they were created by God to do, including ministering on behalf of elect people (Hebrews 1:14). They also have a role in the Second Coming of Christ (Mark 13:27; 2 Thessalonians 1:7).

FALLEN ANGELS

We teach that all angels were created holy, yet some rebelled against God and these fallen beings, of which Satan is the leader, are called demons. Satan and many of his demons are active in the world (Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8), while some of the demons are presently bound (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6).

We teach that Satan, who is also called the devil and many other names, is the author of sin (Genesis 3:15; John 8:44) and the enemy of God and man (Job 1:6-9; Matthew 4:1-11; Revelation 12:9-10), the prince of this world who, along with his demons, has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20; Colossians 2:14-15; Hebrews 2:14). Ultimately, Satan and his demons shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire and brimstone (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

LAST THINGS

DEATH AND RESURRECTION

We teach that physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Revelation 6:9-11), and that there is a separation of soul and body (Philippians 1:21-24).

We teach the bodily resurrection of all men (John 5:28-29), the **believer** to eternal life (John 6:39; Romans 8:10-11, 19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:14), and the **unbeliever** to judgment and everlasting punishment in a literal lake of fire (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:13-15).

- **THE BELIEVER**

We teach that the soul of the believer at death in the church age passes immediately into the joyful presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8) until the time of the Rapture when he along with other believers physically alive at the first phase of our Lord's return (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17) will receive glorified bodies suited for a new, ultimately eternal order (1 Corinthians 15:12-58; Philippians 3:20-21). These believers, along with all of the Old Testament and Tribulation saints, constitute the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6).

- **THE UNBELIEVER**

We teach that the soul of the unbeliever at death passes immediately into conscious punishment (Hell/Hades—Luke 16:19-31) until the second resurrection. This will be followed by the final judgment (i.e. Great White Throne judgment) where both body and soul will be cast into the eternal lake of fire and brimstone where there will be conscious everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:13-15).

THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

We teach that as it was prior to Christ's first coming, in that it was not easy to discern a two-staged coming of Christ from the Old Testament Scriptures (Isaiah 9:6-7; 61:1-2; Luke 4:16-21), so it will be prior to His second coming. The two phases of His final coming, normally designated as **Rapture** and **Revelation**, are most often mentioned side-by-side without clear distinctions in the New Testament contexts (1 Thessalonians 2:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 8; 2 Timothy 4:1; Titus 2:13).

We teach the personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ to translate His church from this earth (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-5:11). The exact timing of this Rapture is both imminent and unknown to all but God (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32-37), and no signs or events of history need precede it. As clear as the fact of the Rapture is, its timing in relationship to Daniel's Seventieth Week or the Tribulation remains open to a number of theological interpretations each exhibiting some strengths and some weaknesses. However, we teach a **Pre-Tribulation Rapture** before the seven-year tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 3:10).

We teach that between the rapture and Christ's glorious revelation with His saints (i.e. the Second Coming of Christ to the earth), the Lord will evaluate the works of each believer at the **Bema Seat of Christ**. This judgment does not concern the believer's salvation, but rather the eternal rewards (or loss of them) for the believer's faithful service (Romans 14:10-13; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

THE TRIBULATION PERIOD

We teach that immediately following the removal (i.e. Rapture) of the church from the earth (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), Satan will be thrown out of heaven and cast to the earth (Revelation 12:7-12), and the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon an unbelieving world (Jeremiah 30:7; 12:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 6-18). This period includes the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24:15-31; 25:31-46).

THE SECOND COMING (i.e. CHRIST'S GLORIOUS REVELATION)

We teach that the Tribulation period will be climaxed by the Second Coming of Christ in glory to the earth to occupy the throne of David (Matthew 24:27-31; 25:31-46; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 1:10-22; 2:29-30; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12).

We teach that at the beginning of the Second Coming the Antichrist and the False Prophet will be overthrown and cast into the lake of fire (Daniel 7:17-27; Revelation 19:19-20), and Satan will be bound for a thousand years from the world (Revelation 20:1-7).

MILLENNIUM

We teach that the Lord Jesus will then establish His Messianic kingdom for a literal thousand years on the earth (**Pre-millennial**: Revelation 20:1-7). During this time all of the resurrected saints will reign with Him over Israel and all the nations of the earth (Ezekiel 37:21-28; Daniel 7:17-22; Revelation 19:11-16).

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, which they forfeited through their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). The result of their disobedience was that Israel was temporarily set aside (Matthews 21:43; Romans 11:1-26) but will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Jeremiah 31:31-34; 33:15; Ezekiel 36:22-32; Romans 11:25-29).

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

We teach that at the end of the thousand year reign of Christ, Satan will be loosed briefly and will deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city (i.e. Jerusalem), at which time Satan's army will be devoured by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:7-9).

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

We teach that immediately following the Millennium, 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 physically resurrect (i.e. the second resurrection) the great and small to appear at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-13). They shall then be committed to an eternal conscious punishment in the lake of fire and brimstone (Matthew 25:41-46; Revelation 20:14-15) and banished from the presence of God forever (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

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), believers will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth wherein only righteousness dwells (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 21-22).

We teach that following this, the heavenly city (i.e. New Jerusalem) will come down out of heaven (Revelation 21:2) and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another. Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

ABORTION

We teach that God alone is responsible for life and death (1 Samuel 2:6). Because all human life begins at conception (Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:5), the abortion of a child for any other reason than to save the life of the mother is murder (Exodus 20:13). God does forgive those who have committed this sin when they come to Him in genuine confession and repentance (1 John 1:9).

BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

We teach that the original autographs in the original languages (i.e. Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek) are the very Word of God and without error. Although we do not have in our possession the original documents, God in His providence has preserved thousands of subsequent manuscript copies from various text-types, which although do not agree identically at every place, accurately reflect the original documents. (The small percent of textual variations has absolutely no bearing on any significant doctrine).

We teach that from these various manuscripts we do possess, there are many traditional and contemporary English versions that have been accurately translated and can be looked upon as being reliable conveyers of God's Word to mankind. At Fellowship Bible Church those in official teaching positions shall use as their primary text a reliable Bible version that follows a more literal word-for-word translation of the original languages (e.g. KJV, NKJV, NASB, etc.).

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

We teach the need for church discipline and restoration of sinning members of the congregation in accordance with the standards of Scripture (Proverbs 27:6; Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Corinthians 2:7-8; Galatians 6:1-2; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16). For a fuller explanation of the church discipline/restoration process see Fellowship Bible Church Bylaws.

CREATION

We teach that God created out of nothing the physical universe and all that it contains, including angels, in six literal twenty-four hour days without any evolutionary process (Genesis 1:1-31; Exodus 20:11; 31:17; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 11:3). God also sustains His creation for His own purposes (Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3).

DEMON POSSESSION/OPPRESSION

- **DEFINITION: Demon possession** occurs when one or more evil spirits completely control a person. The demon is able to dominate the person's speech, actions and body.

Demon oppression is the influence of evil spirits on a person in a wide variety of ways that is short of actual possession and total control.

- **UNBELIEVERS:** We teach that God sovereignly allows unbelievers to be both possessed and oppressed by demons (2 Chronicles 18:2; Matthew 8:28).
- **BELIEVERS: Possession:** We teach that it is not possible for a true Christian to be completely possessed and controlled by a demon. The believer's new master is Christ through the indwelling Spirit of God (Matthew 6:24; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 John 4:4). There is no instance in the Bible where anyone casts demons out of a believer.

Oppression: We teach that God sovereignly allows believers to be oppressed by Satan and his demons (Luke 22:31; 2 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Peter 5:8).

- **PROTECTION:** We teach that modern-day "Deliverance Ministries" are not in accordance with the Word of God. When Christ and the Apostles cast out demons they were authenticating messianic and apostolic credentials, not establishing a normative pattern for believers to follow. Nowhere in the Scriptures are believers instructed to talk to, confront or "exorcise" demons (2 Peter 2:10; Jude 8). Rather, the emphasis is on the following:
 - Be aware of Satan's methods (2 Corinthians 2:11).
 - Submit to God and resist Satan (James 4:7).
 - Live a holy life and confess sin (Ephesians 4:27; 1 John 1:9).
 - Put on the full armor of God to stand defensively in the provisions of God (Ephesians 6:11-20).

FAMILY

- **GOAL OF THE FAMILY**

The ultimate goal of the Christian home is to glorify God. This will be accomplished as each individual fulfills his or her God-given role and responsibilities.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- **HUSBANDS AND FATHERS**

We teach that as the head of the home, God has given the husband/father the ultimate authority and responsibility for the family in all matters (Ephesians 5:23; 6:4).

We teach that the husband is to be the spiritual leader in the home. He is to love his wife with a Christ-like love by sensitively communicating with her, protecting her purity and encouraging her spiritual growth (Ephesians 6:28-29; 1 Peter 3:7) and also to love his children.

We teach that the husband/father is to provide for the material needs of his household (1 Timothy 5:8).

We teach that God has given to fathers the primary responsibility for the spiritual instruction and discipline of their children in order to be faithful followers of Christ. Fathers must not surrender this responsibility to their wives, another adult, or to any organization such as the church, Christian school, etc (Deuteronomy 6:5-6; Ephesians 6:4).

▪ **WIVES AND MOTHERS**

We teach that as the helpmeet, the wife is equally created in God's image (Genesis 1:27; 2:20-23) and is equal in her standing in Christ (Galatians 3:28). Although equal with men as far as identity and person, she is called to lovingly take a submissive role under her husband's leadership (Ephesians 5:22-23; Titus 2:4-5). This is not a "doormat devotion," but rather loving service and mutual submission.

We teach that the primary means by which mothers can have an influence for the kingdom of God is by lovingly raising their children (Titus 2:4-5). Mothers are equally important as they share the labors alongside fathers in the administration of this great task.

▪ **CHILDREN**

We teach that children are to honor and obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20).

GIVING

We teach that biblical giving is first a matter of one's own heart before God, offering back to the Lord a portion of the resources that He has entrusted to each individual believer.

Therefore, each believer is accountable directly to God for giving to the work of His kingdom here on earth.

We teach that the New Testament pattern of giving is not "**tithing**" (i.e. giving ten percent), but is to be according to the following biblical principles:

- **Giving is investing with God** (Matthew 6:19-20, 33; Acts 20:35; 1 Timothy 6:17-19).
- **Giving is to be done from a loving, willing and grateful heart** (Matthew 10:8; 2 Corinthians 8:10-12; 9:2, 7).
- **Giving is to be personally determined** (Matthew 6:3-4; 2 Corinthians 9:7).
- **Giving is to be sacrificial** (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4; Hebrews 13:16).
- **Giving is to be proportionate** (Luke 12:48; 19:8; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:3, 11-12).

- **Giving is to be generous** (2 Corinthians 8:2-5; 9:5-6).
- **Giving is to be planned and regular** (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
- **Giving is to be in response to need** (Acts 11:28-30).
- **Giving generously results in blessing** (Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:8-11; Philippians 4:17-19).
- **Giving affects spiritual riches** (Luke 16:10-13; 19:17-19; 1 Corinthians 4:2).

In accordance with the above principles, Fellowship Bible Church will not use guilt or coercion to collect funds, but will make the needs of the church known to the body so that God may move in the hearts of His people to give to His work and for His glory.

GOVERNMENT/POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

We teach that God is the author of government and sovereignly controls those who are in power (Romans 13:1). God has established government to reward those who do good and to punish the guilty (Romans 13:3-4). Therefore, the responsibility of believers is to pray for and submit to their governmental authorities (Romans 13:5-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; 1 Peter 2:13-17), which includes paying taxes (Matthew 17:24-27; Romans 13:6-7).

We teach that the only time believers must disobey the government (i.e. civil disobedience) is when the government requires actions that violate a clear command of Scripture (Acts 4:19-20). At this point believers must be prepared to suffer the consequences of that disobedience.

We teach that there is to be a separation between church and state. Fellowship Bible Church shall not participate in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) or endorse any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

We teach that the church shall address any political, social and moral issue consistent with Scripture in order to fulfill our mandate to be “salt and light” to a lost world (Matthew 5:13-16).

HOMOSEXUALITY

We teach that the Scriptures condemn homosexuality. This is not cultural, but expresses God’s attitude towards that which violates His original design (Genesis 19:4-11, 23; Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:9; Jude 7). Just as with any other sinner saved by grace, Christ’s cleansing and power is sufficient to enable a person to begin and live out a new life in Christ (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 10:13).

LAWSUITS

We teach that believers should not sue or go to court against another believer (1 Corinthians 6:1,7). If at all possible, believers should seek to settle out of court (Matthew 5:25, 40; Romans 12:18). Where personal

reconciliation cannot be accomplished the matter should be brought to the church Elders to be resolved according to biblical guidelines (Matthew 18:15-17).

MARRIAGE/DIVORCE/REMARRIAGE

▪ **MARRIAGE**

We teach that God instituted marriage as both a covenant (leave and cleave) and a consummation (one flesh). His original plan was for one man and one woman to remain together permanently for life, and to enjoy the deepest level of spiritual, emotional and sexual intimacy and oneness (Genesis 1:27; 2:23-24).

We teach that believers are to marry only other believers (1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14).

We teach that when conflicts arise in a Christian marriage relationship both spouse's should submit to the Word of God and the Spirit of God and address the situation among themselves. If further help is needed, medical problems excluded, only biblical counseling should be sought out (2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12-13). In extreme situations, such as physical abuse, etc., which cannot be allowed to continue, a temporary "remedial separation" may be advisable. This separation would include mandatory biblical counseling and be under the loving oversight of the Elders to insure that appropriate changes are taking place toward the goal of reconciliation.

▪ **DIVORCE**

We understand that the issue of **divorce** and **remarriage** is a very controversial, and sometimes volatile, one in the body of Christ. Not all divorce/remarriage situations fit neatly into a few select Bible texts. However, the biblical passages on this subject do give us the framework necessary to think critically through every situation so as to arrive at a biblical response. We teach the following on divorce and remarriage:

We teach that God hates divorce because it is in violation of God's expressed purpose for the intimate unity of the marriage bond (Malachi 2:16; Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6). Therefore, all believers considering divorce should have the same attitude toward divorce, as does God.

We teach that whereas all divorce involves sin, and is a departure from the divine ideal, however, not all divorce is sinful (Ezra 9-10; Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8; 31:31-32). Divorce is the complete dissolution of the marriage, both legally and in the eyes of God. It is permitted in the Scripture as an accommodation to man's sin for the protection of the "faithful spouse" (i.e. the one not violating the biblical reasons stated below), due to the other spouse's "hardness of heart" to God (Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Matthew 19:8).

We teach that the Bible permits divorce for two explicitly stated reasons. But even then, it is never required. Restoration, if sin is repented of and not continual, always remains preferable (Matthew 6:12; 18:21; Mark 11:26; Luke 17:3ff; Ephesians 4:32).

We teach that the two biblical reasons for divorce are:

- 1) **Sexual immorality** (Matthew 5:32; 19:9): all kinds of unlawful sexual intercourse that involves such things as adultery, incest, homosexuality, prostitution and bestiality. In the Old Testament

adultery would always dissolve the marriage because the adulterer would be put to death leaving the faithful spouse free to remarry (Leviticus 20:10).

2) **Desertion** by an unbelieving spouse who initiates the divorce (1 Corinthians 7:12-15).

▪ **REMARRIAGE**

We teach that remarriage after divorce, or to a divorced person, is biblically permitted for the following reasons:

- 1) The divorce is based on biblical reasons stated above (Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:15, 26-28).
- 2) The former spouse has died (Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:39).
- 3) The former spouse has remarried, thus making reconciliation impossible (Deuteronomy 24:4).
- 4) When the divorce was prior to salvation (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:1-7).
- 5) According to 1 Corinthians 7:11 when two believers are divorced for **unbiblical reasons**, though the marriage is dissolved, both spouse's are to either:
 - a) **Remain unmarried**: until the former spouse dies, remarries or commits adultery in order to not preclude any possibility of God changing his/her heart and behavior, thus making reconciliation possible.
 - b) **Be reconciled** to his/her former spouse.

We teach that believers who pursue divorce for unbiblical reasons are subject to church discipline, in order to bring about repentance and reconciliation, because they openly reject the Word of God, (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13). According to Matthew 18:17, the spouse who refuses to repent and be reconciled is to be excommunicated and treated as an "unbeliever." In the above situation, according to 1 Corinthians 7:15, it may be possible for the faithful spouse to eventually remarry.

However, we teach that each situation needs to be dealt with on an individual basis. Before a Fellowship Bible Church Pastor would agree to perform a wedding under these circumstances, the Pastor and Elders, applying biblical principles, would evaluate the individual situation. Such considerations would include:

- a) Every effort has been made by the faithful spouse to forgive and restore the marriage. If not, the Elders will help to bring reconciliation.
- b) The length of time that has elapsed since the dissolution of the marriage.
- c) The faithful spouse's purity of life, etc.
- d) The faithful spouse has prayerfully sought the mind of the Lord to ensure that his/her conscience is clear before God.

We teach that when a marriage is dissolved by divorce for unbiblical reasons, the first person to remarry commits the act of adultery (Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12), and the person who marries that person also commits the act of adultery (Matthew 5:32; Luke 16:18), due to fact that the divorce was for an unbiblical

reason. However, this second marriage makes reconciliation to one's first spouse impossible (Deuteronomy 24:4). Therefore, the second marriage is to remain and the couple is to commit themselves to fidelity and serving Christ through their current marriage.

We teach that the sins committed in an unbiblical divorce and/or remarriage are not unpardonable sins. God forgives those committing such sins when genuine confession and repentance have taken place (1 John 1:9). Therefore, it is essential that the local church help them rebuild their lives and be a place of healing and support by demonstrating to them God's mercy, grace, forgiveness and acceptance.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

We teach that a man who has been divorced and remarried is not automatically disqualified from church leadership. The phrase "the husband of one wife"(or a one-woman man) in 1 Timothy 3:2, 12 and Titus 1:6, does not mean that a man cannot have had a divorce and remarriage in his past since none of the other qualifications listed refer to specific acts in the past (either before or after salvation). These passages refer to the character qualities that currently characterize the man's life, not his marital status or what may have transpired in his past.

We teach that where there has been a divorce and remarriage in a man's past, because of the public nature of divorce, the Elders may restrict for a period of time, his involvement in leadership until it can be observed and proven that his present marriage is characterized by Christ-like devotion and sacrificial love (Ephesians 5:25-33).

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

We teach that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints. In the early church the Holy Spirit gave two kinds of gifts: **miraculous sign gifts** and **ministering gifts**:

▪ MIRACULOUS SIGN GIFTS

We teach that the **miraculous sign gifts** (such as the gifts of prophecy, speaking in tongues and its interpretation, healing, casting out demons, raising the dead, etc.) were given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the Apostles' message as divine truth (2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 2:20; Hebrews 2:3-4). With the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture becomes the sole test of the authenticity of a man's message (1 Corinthians 13:8-12). Therefore, the miraculous sign gifts were never intended to be normative or characteristic of the lives of believers throughout the age of the church (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:1-4).

We teach that just because someone may appear to exercise miraculous sign gifts it does not prove that these are from God (Matthew 7:21-23; 1 Corinthians 13:13-14; Revelation 13:13-14). Even the Apostles, who had the miraculous sign gifts, did not use them outside their biblical purpose (1 Corinthians 14:18; 1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20).

We teach that even after the church age, when God again sovereignly enables his two witnesses to do miraculous signs, the uniqueness of the situation is evident (Revelation 11:3-13).

We teach that the gift of tongues was the supernatural ability to speak in real human languages not understood by the speaker, yet known by some present. It was not an “ecstatic” unknown private prayer language for the benefit of the individual believer, nor a sign of the filling or baptism of the Holy Spirit (i.e. second blessing), but a sign to unbelievers (Acts 2:1-11; 1 Corinthians 14:21-22).

We teach that no one possesses the gift of healing today but that God does hear and answer prayer 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).

▪ **MINISTERING GIFTS**

We teach that the only gifts in operation today are the **ministering gifts** given to equip believers for the continual building up of the body of Christ (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12: 1-7, 12-27; Ephesians 4:7, 12-16; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

WOMEN’S ROLE IN THE CHURCH

We teach that both men and women are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and are equal in their intrinsic worth in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28-29). Whereas there is an equality with men and women before the Lord, God has also created them to fulfill different, but complementary God-given roles, which are rooted in their unique sexual identity (Genesis 2:17-25; 1 Corinthians 11:3).

We teach that although women fulfill a vital role in using their God-given spiritual gifts in Christ’s church (Acts 9:36-42; 16:13-15; 18:1-2, 18, 24-28; Romans 16:1-2; 2 Timothy 1:5), the official leadership of the church is to be filled by biblically qualified men called Elders and Deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9).

We teach that the word “servant” in Romans 16:1 does not designate an official position (i.e. deaconess) in the church, and the word “women” (NASB) in 1 Timothy 3:11 is a reference to the wives of the deacons.

We teach that women are able to serve in church leadership roles to children and to other women (Titus 2:3-5). They may also serve in certain capacities when men are present (e.g. reading Scripture in public, share testimony, share observations in Bible Study Groups, husband-wife counseling/discipleship team—Acts 18:26, etc.). However, women are not to teach (i.e. instruct in doctrinal matters) a man or have authority over him (1 Timothy 2:11-15).