



# A Place For You

A Doctrinal Statement  
Of  
What We Believe and Practice At  
Sunnyvale First Baptist Church

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**A DOCTRINAL STATEMENT  
OF  
WHAT WE TEACH AND BELIEVE AT  
SUNNYVALE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH**

Recognizing that the Bible is the very Word of God to man, and understanding the priority of knowing and obeying it's truths, our Church is committed to studying and teaching the Word of God with diligence and authority. The central ministry of our church is the people of God, that they may know God and serve Him in worship and in ministry.

**I. Concerning the Holy Scripture**

We teach that the Bible is the written revelation of God, and the 66 books of the Bible constitute the plenary Word of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:7-14, 2 Peter 1:20-21).

We teach that the Word of God is an objective; (Exodus 17:14) is a revelation, (1 Thessalonians 2:13) every word verbally inspired, (2 Timothy 3:16) in the original documents absolutely inerrant, (Isaiah 30:8) infallible and God-breathed.

We teach that the Holy Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice (Matthew 5:18, 24:34, John 10:35, 16:12-13, 17:17, 1 Corinthians 2:13, 2 Timothy 3:15-17, 2 Peter 1:20-21, 3:15-16, Hebrews 4:12).

We teach that God spoke in His written Word by the process of dual authorship, in which the Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man, (2 Peter 1:20-21), without error in the whole or in the part (Isaiah 30:8, 40:8, Matthew 5:18, 2 Timothy 3:16). We teach that there is but one true interpretation, and it is to be found as one diligently applies the grammatical historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17, 16:12-15, 1 Corinthians 2:7-11, 1 John 2:20).

**II. Concerning God**

We teach that there is but one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4),

Isaiah 45:5-7, 1 Corinthians 8:4). He is an infinite, intelligent Spirit, (John 4:24) perfect in all His attributes, One in essence, but eternally existing; He is revealed in Three Persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19, Psalms 139:8, 2 Corinthians 13:14), each equally deserving the same worship and obedience as found in Acts 17:24-29, 1 Corinthians 8:6, and Revelation 19:10.

### **1. GOD THE FATHER**

God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalms 145:89, 1 Corinthians 8:6). As absolute and highest ruler of the Universe, He is sovereign in creation and impervious in redemption (Psalms 103:19, Job 1:6, Romans 11:33). He is the Creator of all His spiritual relationships, first of all within the Trinity; and secondly within mankind; creatively, in relation to all men, but spiritually, only in relation to believers. He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass, and continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11). This He does so as in no way to be author and approver of sin, (John 8:38-44) nor to abridge the accountability of moral intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17). He saves from sin all who come to Him through Jesus Christ, and He relates Himself to His own as 'Father' (Luke 3:38, John 1:12-18, Ephesians 1:3-6, Hebrews 12:5-9).

### **2. GOD THE SON**

Jesus Christ, reference second person of the Trinity, possesses all Divine excellence. In Divine excellence He is co-equal with the Father and central with Him (John 10:27-30, 14:9). We teach that in the incarnation He surrendered only the prerogative to Deity, but nothing of the Divine essence, neither in degree or kind. In His incarnation, Christ's Divine nature united with the true nature in an indissoluble union, and so He became the God-man (Philippians 2:5-8).

We teach that Jesus Christ represents the fusion of humanity and Deity into an indivisible oneness (Micah 5:2, Colossians 2:9, John 14:9-10, 1 John 5:20, Jude 1:25). We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:25, Luke 1:26-35). He was God Incarnate (John 1:1-18, 1 John 1:3), and that the purpose of His incarnation was to reveal God's Kingdom (Psalms 2:7-9, Isaiah 9:6, Hebrews 7:26, 1 Peter 1:19; 2:22, John 1:29). We teach that the Incarnation, the second person of the Trinity, laid aside

His right to the full prerogatives of co-existence appropriated to be a servant. He did not, however, divest Himself of His Divine attributes (Philippians 2:5-8). We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through his death on the cross, and that His death was voluntarily vicarious, substitutionary, redemptive, and propitiatory (1 Peter 2:24, Romans 3:25, 5:8).

We teach that upon the basis of the efficacy of His death, the believing sinner is freed from all punishment, penalty, power, and one day, the very presence of sin; declared righteous, given eternal life and admitted into the Family of God (John 10:14, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18, Romans 3:25, 5:8). We teach that our justification is made sure by His literal physical resurrection from the dead, and He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He is now ministering as our advocate and High Priest (Matthew 28:6, Luke 24:38-39, Acts 2:30-31, Hebrews 7:25, 9:24, Romans 4:25).

We teach that in the resurrection of Christ from the grave, God confirmed the Deity of Christ. God accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross and His bodily resurrection as a guarantee of future resurrection of life for all believers. We teach that He will return to receive the Church, which is His body, unto Himself at the Rapture, and that returning to His Church in glory He will establish His Kingdom in its millennial manifestations (Acts 1:9-11, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Revelation 20). We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is one through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22-23).

At the Judgment Seat as judge of:

- a. Believers (2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15).
- b. Those living inhabitants of the earth at His Glorious return (Matthew 5:31-46).
- c. The Great White Throne Judgment—the unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Revelation 21:11-15).

As mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ represents man (1 Timothy 2:5). He is the head of the body of the Church (Ephesians 5:23, Colossians 1:18). He is the coming universal King who will reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6). He is the final judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior of life (Luke 1:31-33, Acts 17:31, Matthew 25:14-26, Hebrews 7:25).

### 3. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

We teach that the Holy Spirit is a Divine person, eternal, possessing all divine excellency. As such, He is co-equal with the Father and the Son, and is one with them (Acts 5:3-4).

He has intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-14), emotion (Ephesians 4:30), a will (1 Corinthians 12:1), He is Co-Equal (Matthew 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6), He is Eternal (Hebrews 9:14), Omnipresent (Psalms 139:7-10), Omniscient (Isaiah 40:11-14), Omnipotent (1 Corinthians 12:11), and He is Truth (John 16:13).

We teach that the work of the Spirit is to execute divine will within relation to the world of man. We recognize His sovereign activity in creation, the incarnation, the written revelation and the work of salvation. We teach that the work of the Spirit in this age began at Pentecost when He came from the Father as promised by Christ, to initiate and complete the building of the body of Christ which is the Church. The broad scope of His Divine activity includes convicting the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment, of glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ, and transforming the believers into Christlikeness (John 16:7-9, Acts 1:5, 2:4, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 2:22). We teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign agent of regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13), indwelling, sanctifying, instructing, empowering for service and sealing them till the day of redemption (John 16:8-11, 2 Corinthians 3:6, Romans 8:9, Ephesians 1:13). We teach that the Holy Spirit is a Divine teacher who guided the Apostles into all truths as they submitted to God's revelation in Scripture. From salvation on, every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with the Spirit (John 16:13, Romans 8:9, Ephesians 5:18, 1 John 2:20-27). We teach that the Holy Spirit alone administers spiritual gifts to the church; not to glorify Himself or the gifts by their displays, but to glorify Christ, and implement His work of redeeming the lost and building up the believers in the most Holy Faith (John 16:13-14, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 2 Corinthians 3:18). We teach, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today, and the speaking in other languages and the working of signs and miracles gradually ceased as the New Testament

Scriptures were completed, and their authority became established (1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 2 Corinthians 12:12, Ephesians 4:7-12, Hebrews 2:1-4, 1 Thessalonians 5:11).

### **III. Concerning Man**

We teach that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness; he was created free from sin, with a rational nature, and intelligence which is volitional self-determination, and he is morally responsible to God (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:1-2, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, James 3:9). We teach that the purpose of man's creation was with Divine intercession that he should glorify God, enjoy His fellowship, live his life in the Will of God and by this, accomplish His purpose for man in the world (Genesis 1:26-30, Isaiah 43:7, Colossians 1:16, Revelation 4:11). We teach that in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, he lost his innocence, incurred the penalty of physical and spiritual death, became subject to the wrath of God, and is inherently corrupt, utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from Divine Grace. With no redeeming powers to enable him to recover himself, he is hopelessly lost, apart from the salvation which is in the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We teach that all men were in the loins of Adam, and that the consequence of that sin has been transmitted or imputed to all men of all ages; Jesus Christ being the exception, of course. All men thus are sinners by Divine declaration, by nature and by choice (Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:9; 18; 23, 5:10-14, James 2:10)

### **IV. Concerning Salvation**

We teach that salvation is wholly of God by Grace, through the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12, Ephesians 1:7, 2:8-10, 1 Peter 1:18-19).

1. We teach that regeneration is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the Divine nature and the Divine life are communicated to man (John 3:3-7). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24) so as to secure voluntary obedience to the Gospel; regeneration will be manifested by repentance, faith, and righteous living. Good works are its proper evidence in

fruit, 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 2:13, Colossians 3:16, 2 Peter 1:4-10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, and such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming. We teach that election should not be looked on as a basis merely of abstract sovereignty. We teach that election is consistent with responsibility of man, because it comprehends all the means and connections with the end achieved (John 6:37-44, Acts 13:48). God is truly sovereign, but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes such as omniscience, justice, holiness, and wisdom, and His sovereignty must never exalt the will of God as separate from His will and character as revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25-28, John 1:13, 2 Timothy 1:9).

## **V. Justification**

We teach that justification before God is an act of God by which He declares righteous those who believe in Christ (Romans 8:33). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20), and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Colossians 2:14), and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (Romans 4:6, 1 Corinthians 1:30). By this means, God enables us to be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Christ (Romans 3:20; 26, 4:3-5).

## **VI. Sanctification**

We teach that every believer is set apart unto God by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every believer, therefore, is declared to be holy, and identified as a saint. This is not a progressive sanctification; this sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present state (Acts 20:32, 1 Corinthians 1:2; 30, 6:11, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Hebrews 2:11, 10:10, Jude 1). We teach that there is, by the work of the Holy Spirit, an experiential sanctification by which the state of the believer is progressively brought closer to the standing the believer enjoys. Through sanctification, 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 and conformity to the Will of God, becoming more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Every saved person is involved in a conflict. This new man in Christ is set against the flesh. But adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle stays with the believer all through the earthly life, and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of the sin nature are never totally gone, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over it (Galatians 5:16-25, Ephesians 2:22-24, Colossians 3:9-10, 1 Peter 1:14-16, 1 John 3:5-9, Philippians 3:12).

## **VII. Security**

We teach that a believer can know that he has salvation through Jesus Christ and that assurance ought to set the heart to song; for God knows our heart as we know our standing to Him, and our commitment to be either true or false. We do not accept multiple regeneration; that is, we do not believe that a man can be saved and then lost. We believe that all who have received Christ have eternal life and cannot lose that free gift. It is a gift given apart from works by any kind. It is Christ's work plus nothing at all. Upon salvation by faith alone in Christ we are made part of the Body of Christ and will remain so through eternity. We believe that an evidence of salvation is that a man continues in Christ (Romans 6:15-22, 13:13-14, Galatians 5:13; 25; 26, Titus 2:11-15).

## **VIII. Concerning Separation**

We teach that the doctrine of separation from sin is clearly evident throughout the Old and New Testaments, and that the Scripture clearly indicates that in the last days apostasy and worldliness will increase (2 Corinthians 6:14, 7:11, 2 Timothy 3:1-5). We teach that all the saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Savior and Lord, and that the separation from all religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of God. We teach that believers should be separated unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **IX. Concerning the Church and Spiritual Gifts**

We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately baptized by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body, the Church, of which Christ is the Head, and which is His espoused bride. We teach that the formation of His body began on the day of Pentecost, and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own in the Rapture. We teach that the Church is then a unique spiritual organism, made up of all born again believers in this present age. The Church is distinct from Israel, a mystery not yet revealed unto this age. We teach that the establishment and the continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures, and that the members of this one spiritual body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies. We teach that the one and supreme authority of the Church is Christ, and that the order, discipline and worship are appointed through His sovereignty. The Biblical designation of officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders, called bishops, pastors, teachers, deacons, etc., who must fit Biblical qualifications. The leaders that lead and rule in the place of Christ have His authority in directing the Church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership. We teach that the disciplining of sinning members of the congregation is to be done in accordance with the standards of Scripture (Matthew 5:18, 18:15-22, Acts 5:1, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, 1 Timothy 1:19-20, Titus 1:10-16). We teach that the autonomy of the local church is free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government, and the freedom from the interference of any heresy or of any individuals or organizations. It is scriptural for the true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and the building of the faith. However, each local church, through its leaders and their interpretation and application of the scripture, is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation, as well as on all matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence and government. We teach that the purpose of the church is to glorify God by building itself up in the faith by instruction of the Word, by fellowship, by keeping Biblical ordinances, and by advancing and communicating the Gospel to the entire world. We teach that the calling of all saints to the work of the ministry will bring about the accomplishment of that purpose. He has given the Church spiritual gifts to equip the saints for work in the ministry. He also gives unique and

special abilities to the members of the body of Christ. They are to work together as one body, having many members in unity, and in the will and mind of Christ. These gifts are sovereignly bestowed and cannot be sought. It is essential that every believer discovers, develops and employs his spiritual gift or gifts for the edification of the body, and for the accomplishment of Christ in this world. We teach that spiritual gifts are in two forms: temporary confirming gifts, and permanent edifying gifts; that the Apostles had a special temporary gift to confirm their message to be of God, which went away with the apostleship, and yet, there are permanent gifts which we have and use today to edify and build the body of Christ. We each possess a gift which is our motivational gift for how we serve Christ. These areas of spiritual gifts are listed in Romans Chapter 12 and are given at spiritual birth. We have helps available for the discovery of the spiritual gifts.

## **X. Concerning Church Ordinances**

We teach that there are two gospel ordinances in Scripture to which the Church must adhere today. They are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Christian baptism is by immersion only, and is a testimony of the believer showing forth in solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried and risen Savior, and our union with Him through death to sin and resurrection to a new life. It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible body of Christ, and a testimony of theological agreement concerning the receiving of eternal life with the local church.

We teach that the Lord's Supper is a time of great reverence and proclamation of His death till He comes. It is to be taken only by those who have been spiritually baptized. If our church will accept your baptism we would invite you to take the Lord's Supper with us. We have close communion.

We teach that while Christ's flesh and blood are not actually present, the Lord's Supper is an actual communion with the Risen Christ who is present in a unique way, and it ought to be a time of self-examination. It calls for confession and repentance in light of that spiritual examination.

## **XI. Concerning Angels**

1. Holy Angels. We teach that angels are created beings and therefore are not to be worshiped, although they are a higher order of creation than man, created to serve God and worship Him (Luke 2:9-14, Hebrews 1:6-7, 2:6-7, Revelation 5:11, 19:10, 22:9).

2. Fallen Angels. We teach that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator, and involving numerous angels in his fall (Job 1:6-7, Isaiah 14:12-17, Ezekiel 28:11-19). In introducing sin to the human race by the tempting of Eve (Genesis 3:10-15), we teach that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Matthew 4:1-11, 25:41). He is the prince of the world; he has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 16:20), and he shall be eternally punished in a lake of fire (Job 1:6-7, Isaiah 14:12-17, Ezekiel 28:11-19, Revelation 20:10).

## **XII. Eschatology - A Doctrine of Last Things**

1. Death. We teach that physical death involves no loss of consciousness, that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ (Revelation 6:9-11, Matthew 10:28, Luke 23:43, Philippians 1:23), that there is a separation of the soul and body (2 Corinthians 5:8), and that such separations will continue until the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6), when the spirit, soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Philippians 3:21, 1 Corinthians 15:3-44; 50; 54). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in a joyful fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8). We teach the bodily resurrection of all men; the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2, Revelation 20:11-15, John 5:28-29, Romans 8:10-23, 2 Corinthians 4:14). We teach that the soul of the unsaved, at death, descends immediately to Hades (Job 3:13-19, Luke 16:19-26), that they are kept under punishment until the second resurrection (Luke 16:19-26, Revelation 20:1-15), when the soul and the resurrected body are united to stand at the Great White Throne Judgment, and will be cast into the lake of fire, cut off from God forever.

## 2. The Rapture of the Church

We teach the personal bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ to translate His church from this earth and to reward them according to their works, with sufficient time elapsing between this event and His glorious return with His Church to allow for the judgment of the believer's works and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and that this period includes the 70 weeks of Daniel's prophecy (1 Thessalonians 4:16, Titus 2:11-13, 1 Corinthians 15:51-53, 3:11-15, 5:10, Daniel 9:24-27, Matthew 24:15-31, 25:31-46)

## 3. The Tribulation Period.

We teach that immediately following the removal of the Church from the earth, the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon the unbelieving world. These judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in His glory to the earth, at which time persons living under the Old Testament and the tribulation saints will be raised and the living will be judged.

## 4. The Second Coming and the Millennial Reign.

We teach that after the tribulation period of 7 years, Christ will come to the earth and occupy the throne of David (Matthew 25:31, Luke 1:31-33, Acts 1:10-11, 2:29-30), and establish His Messianic Kingdom for one thousand years on earth (Revelation 20:1-7). During this time, the resurrection saints will reign with Him over Israel and all the nations of the earth (Ezekiel 27:21-28, Daniel 7:17-22, Revelation 19:11-16). This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and false prophet, and the removal of Satan from the world (Daniel 7:17-22, Revelation 20:1-7). We teach that the Kingdom itself will be the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel (Deuteronomy 30:1-10, Ezekiel 37:21-28, Zechariah 8:1-17), to restore them to the land which they forfeited through disobedience, with the result that Israel was temporarily set aside (Matthew 21:43, Romans 11:1-26), but who will once again be awakened through repentance (Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:22-32, Romans 11:2-29), and will enter into the land of blessing (Revelation 20:4-6). We teach that the time of the Lord's return will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness and long life (Isaiah 11:1-16, 65:17-25, Ezekiel 36:33-38), and will be brought to an end with the release of Satan (Revelation 20:7).

## 5. The Judgment of the Lost.

We teach that after the release of Satan, and after one thousand years reign, Satan will deceive the nations of the world and gather them to battle against the saints in the beloved city, at which time Satan and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven. Following this, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, whereupon, Christ, who is the judge of all men, will resurrect and judge the great and small at the Great White Throne Judgment. This resurrection of the unsaved dead will be a physical resurrection, where, upon receiving judgment, they will be committed to an eternal conscious punishment—Hell.

## 6. Eternity.

We teach that after the close of the Millennial, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers (1 Thessalonians 1:9, Revelation 20:7-15, 22:14), the saved will enter into an eternal state of glory with God; that the elements of this world will be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10), and will be replaced with a new earth wherein only the righteous will dwell (Ephesians 5:5, Revelation 20), and that the heavenly city that comes down out of Heaven (Revelation 21:2) is to be the dwelling place for the saints where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and with one another (Ephesians 2:11-16, Revelation 21:22, John 17:3). The 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.

## **Scriptural Position on Divorce and Remarriage**

**I. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16).** Divorce in the Scripture is permitted as an accommodation to a man's sin, for the protection of the innocent party. Since divorce is only a concession to man's sin, it is not part of God's original design or plan for marriage. All believers considering divorce should have the same attitude toward divorce as God does.

Notice in Matthew 19:5-9 Christ teaches that divorce is an accommodation to man's sin, and is in violation of God's purpose for the intimate unity of the marriage bond (Genesis 2:24).

It was a concession for the innocent party, due to the insensitivity of the other partner to God. It is defined Biblically as ‘hardness of heart’ (Matthew 19:8).

Dissolution meant that the innocent party no longer had to remain in a hopeless and intolerable situation (Matthew 5:32, 19:9, 1 Corinthians 7:12-15). It is to be expected that a believer will have the same attitude toward divorce as does God, and will see it as a violation of God’s express purpose for marriage.

## **II. The only Biblical grounds for divorce given in Scripture are:**

1. Fornication (any sexual activity including adultery, unfaithfulness of the marriage partner).

2. A non-believing partner who initiates the divorce, due to incompatibility with a Christian partner.

Let’s look at the first: fornication, which covers a wide area of sexual activity such as adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, and incest (Matthew 5:32, 19:9, 1 Corinthians 5:1). Adultery will take place even after the official dissolution of the marriage if the divorce is on non-Biblical grounds (Matthew 5:32, Mark 10:11-12).

The second reason for permitting a divorce is in the case where a non-believing mate refused to live with his or her spouse, especially because of a Christian testimony (1 Corinthians 7:12-15). It is, in this reference, essential to keep in mind that the Bible merely permits divorce in these limited circumstances, but it never commands divorce.

Example: We see this clearly in the life of Hosea, Chapters 1-3, where the adulterous wife was forgiven and restored. We feel in our church, and teach that it is God’s plan for the marriage to be kept intact to fulfill God’s best for their lives.

**III. Remarriage is permitted for the innocent party when the divorce was on Biblical grounds.** In such cases where a divorce was obtained between believers on non-biblical grounds, the person who remarries first commits adultery (Matthew 19:9), and the person who marries a person who was divorced

on non-biblical grounds also commits adultery (Luke 16:18). God is serious about divorce. According to the Old Testament, the pattern for remarriage allowed after divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, is the only exception that we find in scripture. The New Testament allowed for remarriage when the divorce was based on biblical grounds (1 Corinthians 7:12-15). In cases where the divorce was not for the two reasons stated above, the believer is exhorted to first seek reconciliation of the former marriage, or else secondly remain unmarried (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). When one party remarries after a divorce which was on non-biblical grounds, the person has committed adultery, because God did not recognize the validity of the divorce (Matthew 5:32, Mark 10:11). Since the remarried partner has committed adultery, the bond is now broken, and the remaining partner is free to remarry. The Bible gives a word of caution to anyone who is considering marriage to a divorcee. If the divorce was not on biblical grounds, the person who marries a divorcee is considered an adulterer (Mark 10:12). The believer who pursues divorce on non-biblical grounds is subject to church discipline, because they openly reject the Word of God. One who obtains a divorce on non-biblical grounds and remarries is living in a state of adultery, since God does not recognize the validity of the original divorce (Matthew 5:32, Mark 10:11-12). That person is subject to the steps of church discipline as outlined in Matthew 18:17, and is illustrated in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.

**IV. Salvation means that a person begins a new life.** The believer is responsible to live up to what God has revealed about marriage and divorce from the point of his or her salvation. According to 2 Corinthians 5:17 the believer has become a new creature when he or she accepts Christ as personal Savior. This does not mean that Christ immediately erases painful memories or bad habits, or the underlying cause for these past marital problems, but that He begins a process of transformation through the Holy Spirit and His Word. One sign of saving faith will be a willingness to be receptive and obedient to what Christ has revealed about marriage and divorce through His Word, and to follow His guidelines and principles in regards to one's own life. The Apostle Paul counsels in 1 Corinthians 7:20-27 that a believer should see every circumstance as being from God. If they are called while married, they are not to seek a divorce

except on the grounds given in Matthew 5:32, 19:9, & 1 Corinthians 7:12-16. If they were called while divorced, they are free to be remarried to another believer (2 Corinthians 6:14). In cases where a divorce took place on non-biblical grounds, and where the guilty party repents, the Grace of God is operative at the point of repentance. It is assumed that a repentant party will endeavor to restore marriage whenever possible as a sign of true repentance. In other words, where two believers were divorced on non-Biblical grounds, the grace of God becomes operative at the point of repentance and confession, and they can once again experience the joys of the relationship with Christ and their mate. Our church teaches a true sign of repentance will be a desire to implement 1 Corinthians 7:11, and this involves the willingness to remain unmarried or else be reconciled with the mate. Further, we say in cases where a believer obtained a divorce on non-biblical grounds and remarried, the second marriage union is recognized as living in adultery (Mark 10:11-12). However, if repentance takes place, it is recognized that to obtain a second divorce would be to disobey scripture (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), thus they are to remain in the second marriage. Our church never attempts to unscramble eggs; we simply take a life where it is and apply the principles of God's Word to that life at that point. The church has a responsibility to uphold Biblical ideals of marriage, especially as exemplified by its leadership. In cases where there has been a person divorced in the past, the church has an obligation to restrict that persons involvement in leadership within the church, for the period of time necessary to determine that persons present marriage, if any, is characterized by pure devotion and a sacrificial love. We teach that the statement, "the husband of one wife" does not mean that the person could not have had a divorce in the past, since none of the other qualifications listed in this passage refer to the specific act in the past, such as prior to salvation, or subsequent to salvation, but rather qualifies the current characteristics of the man's life (a one-woman man). To reiterate, it is especially important in cases where there has been a divorce in the man's or woman's past that there be a period of careful observation to see that their present marriage is characterized by pure devotion and a sacrificial love. If the innocent party is a divorcee and is seeking remarriage, it is preferable that he or she wait until the spouse has remarried in order not to preclude any possibility of reconciliation.

## Concerning Giving

Giving is not the most popular subject in Christian circles, but is one of the most essential. Ignoring the responsibility does not negate or even minimize it, but it does rob you of joy in obedience. There are many commandments in the Word of God that are especially emphasized in terms of the blessing that accompanies them. Giving is one such commandment. Biblical teaching on this topic is a major part of the revelation of God, so it must be important. As stewards of God, we must be not only faithful with our time, but also with our finances. God is expecting us as good stewards to give an answer for what we do with that with which we have been blessed. The Bible teaches all money belongs to Him. Haggai 2:8 says, ***“The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine, declares the Lord of hosts.”*** God was talking about all the nations of the world here; all the gold and silver in the world is God’s. Deuteronomy 8:18 adds that you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who giveth you power to make wealth.

Notice: All money is God’s. God grants man the ability to earn that which is His - wealth and money. It is not wrong to have money; God allows man to make money. Money is one of God’s gifts to you. Sadly, God’s gifts intended for man’s good are generally perverted into evil. There are many examples of this in scripture. For the Christian, sometimes the gift of money has been misused and perverted. Money can be a blessing or a curse. The key is your attitude toward it. You will always hear people say, “If I had a million dollars I would do such and such.” They may or may not. The question is not what would you do with a million dollars, but what you are doing with the ten dollars in your pocket? The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 5:10-11, ***“He who loves money will not be satisfied with money.”*** When good things increase, those who consume them increase. The more you have, the more stores you go to, and the more money you spend. In essence, it doesn’t have to be that way. We can let money not only be a gift from God, but a blessing to our life as we, out of a heart of love, support the Kingdom work through our loving liberal giving unto Christ. It is not a question of having more money and doing more with it, it is just a question of what are you doing with what you have. Riches can

literally obstruct spirituality. Jesus said in Matthew 10:23, ***“How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.”*** How hardly! For the love of money will turn a man’s heart from the Lord. I Timothy 6:10 says, ***“The love of money is the root of all evil.”*** It is not an easy thing to avoid loving money. You don’t have to love it. If you derive your sense of security in life from money, then you say to God, “Money is more important than you.” We believe that depending on wealth and riches is foolish and unscriptural for Christians. For many, money has become their master. The Apostle Paul indicates that God is more interested in your heart than in your money. In 2 Corinthians 8:5 he says, ***“First, give your own selves to the Lord.”*** That is where it all begins: Giving yourself to the Lord first, or else the rest is meaningless. We believe then that giving is done out of love, and not out of law. Here are some principles of giving:

1. Giving is investing with God. Luke 6:38 says, ***“Give, and it will be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will pour into your lap; whatever measure you deal out to others, it will be dealt to you in return.”*** This verse gives us the only requirement connected with free will giving in the New Testament. Simply, give. This is the principle of investing in God. Give and it will be given unto you. God gives back abundantly more than we could ever think of giving to Him. A principle of the Scripture is, ‘You cannot out-give God.’ Matthew 6:19-21 says, ***“Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”***

Be sure that you invest in God, because wherever you put your treasure, that’s where you are going to put your heart. 2 Corinthians 9:6 tells us, ***“He which sows sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully, will reap also bountifully.”*** This is the key. Paul gave a beautiful example of bountiful sowing in the previous chapter when he said this of the Macedonian churches: ***“In great trials of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.”*** How much should

you give bountifully! ***“Every man according as he has purposed in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver.”*** Don’t give out of compulsion. If it comes to that, keep your money; God doesn’t need it. God loves a cheerful giver. For many, even in the Church today, money stands between them and God, as the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:21.

2. Giving is to be sacrificial. In Mark 12:41-44 we are provided with a beautiful example of this: ***“And Jesus sat over against the treasury and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury. And many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites which makes a farthing. And He came unto the disciples and said unto them, ‘Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury; for they all did cast in of their abundance, but she of want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.’”*** Our giving to the Lord is to be sacrificial. David said, ***“I will not give the Lord that which cost me nothing.”*** What a mockery it would be to do that to God. God is not concerned about how much we give, but about what it costs us to give.

3. Giving is not only a matter of what we have; God is not interested in what we would do if we had X amount of dollars. Giving is a matter of what you have now. Give from what you have right now, whether it’s little or much. It’s a matter of the sacrifice that you desire to render to God that brings the blessing to your home and to your life.

4. If you can’t handle money, you can’t handle spiritual riches either. As Luke 16:11 says, ***“If ye therefore have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon (money), who will commit to your trust the true riches?”*** If you can’t handle money (earthly riches), do you think God should entrust you with spiritual riches? The answer, of course, is no.

5. The amount given is personally determined. In Luke 19 we read, ***“And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho, and beheld, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was chief among the publicans.”*** Being a tax collector of that time was like having the kiss of death. Everyone avoided him. Of course, he was rich because he could exact any amount of taxes that he wanted; well beyond what he was required to pass on to the Roman government.

But he sought Jesus Christ, and when he found Him, his life was changed. Zacchaeus not only found salvation for himself and his home that day, but he learned the principle of giving. He gave 50% - half of everything he had. The point here is that giving is spontaneous. It's an act of love and gratitude, and not of law-keeping. Our example, of course, is Jesus Himself. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says, ***“Though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might become rich.”*** That is the pattern for giving. We have riches now so we are to give sacrificially in a response of love. The amount to be given is to be determined between you and God. The important thing is to have a willing heart.

6. Giving is to be in response to a need. In Acts 2 the Christians gave as the need was present. We must have that same love. We must give until the need is met, not until a law is met. Love is the foundation of giving. An example of this is found in Romans 15:25-26, ***“I must go down to Jerusalem to take a gift to the Jewish Christians there. For, you see, the Christians in Macedonia and I have taken up an offering for those in Jerusalem that are going through such hard times. They were very glad to do this, for they felt that they owed a real debt to the Jerusalem Christians. Why? Because the news about Christ came to these Gentiles from Jerusalem.”*** (Living Bible)

7. Giving is to be planned. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath proposed him (1 Corinthians 16:2). We are all to give weekly ... ***“Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you give...”*** so the churches would have money available to meet the needs as they arose, rather than always pleading for special money for special offerings; and of course, giving is important to stabilize a budget for the church. Giving, then, is to be done systematically, faithfully, as you purpose in your heart. Giving is to be generous, bountiful, liberal and sacrificial if we are to abound in the grace of God. Generous giving always results in the blessings of God. As we sow, so shall we reap.

8. Giving should be secret and humble. The Pharisees loved to announce their giving so everyone would know and be impressed, but God says we are to be quiet and humble. Let our giving be between us and God. That's the way to give. Not to draw attention or to impress men, for if you do that, you have received your reward. If you impress men, you get their praise, not God's.

Therefore, when we give unto God, let us do it in secret, not calling attention unto our own gift. When you consider how much God has given you, can you possibly set a limit on how much you give Him? He has given spontaneously and totally. We are to give in the same way.

9. We believe that God has established a beginning point of giving of 10% or a tithe unto the Lord. In addition to this we ask our people to give sacrificially to our building payment, "Forward in faith." Every dollar given is given strictly in accountability to the church. We have monthly reports on our financial report.

### **Concerning Our Worship**

We believe that the cooperative worship of God is the apex of our service. While at church we want to do everything possible to enhance that worship. There are some requests we ask of all our people to help us lift up our Blessed Lord.

1. Those who lead in worship need to look their very best. This does not mean we all need to wear expensive clothes or even suits (though all staff members are asked to wear coat and tie on the platform). When we stand before God and His congregation we simply want to be and look our best. If your best is a pair of jeans, they need to be clean and neat. While many kinds of attire are acceptable in our fellowship, shorts are never appropriate in times of worship or Bible Study. While your shorts may be modest, others may not be.

2. Most of our worship times are directed toward an invitation for the lost to receive Christ. During the invitation we ask no one to leave the Worship Center or distract in any way those who are possibly making decisions to follow Christ.

3. Our worship enjoys the freedom to praise God. If it is appropriate to applaud and you desire to do so, fine. There are times when the seriousness of the moment would tell us not to, but for most parts of the service, feel free to do so.

## **Concerning Shepherding Ministry**

We have developed a ministry format that allows everyone to be involved in ministry. It is a celebration of service. Serving is not only a duty, but a joy. We encourage you to get involved in the area of ministry God has equipped you to do. Our ministry needs you and you need to be involved.

There are job descriptions and qualifications for almost all of our official places of service. We see spiritual service as spiritual responsibility. While almost anyone could do a certain task, God has called some especially for certain tasks and nobody can do the job like that person. There is no unimportant job for the Lord. We all have a spiritual gift that equips and motivates us and a command of God to go serve.

To help you become aware of service opportunities, our shepherding ministry has a service celebration chart. Please contact the church office or a staff member or deacon for details.

