

# Philosophy of Ministry

By

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## Introduction

The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century A.D. was a monumental event in church history, where the light of the pure Gospel of grace was rediscovered and boldly proclaimed. Theologian J.I. Packer, in co-writing the introduction to Martin Luther's classic The Bondage of the Will, commented:

“To the Reformers, the crucial question was not simply, whether God justifies believers without works of law. It was the broader question, whether sinners are wholly helpless in their sin, and whether God is to be thought of as saving them by free, unconditional, invincible grace, not only justifying them for Christ's sake when they come to faith, but also raising them from the death of sin by His quickening Spirit in order to bring them to faith. Here was the crucial issue: whether God is the author, not merely of justification, but also of faith, whether in the last analysis, Christianity is a religion of utter reliance on God for salvation and all things necessary to it, or of self-reliance and self-effort...”<sup>1</sup>

With these things in mind, I am dedicated to glorifying God and enjoying Him forever by proclaiming and advancing the God and Christ-centered Gospel and theology of Biblical Christianity as most clearly seen in the Protestant Reformation.

## The Fundamentals

In the face of ever growing theological liberalism that undermines and/or denies the Gospel of Christ and stands in opposition to the truth of God and the Church of Jesus Christ, I stand in Evangelical unity with other modern-day proponents and defenders of the fundamentals of the faith. I am greatly appreciative of the mighty defenders of the faith that God has raised up in every era of the church, to include our own. I follow in this tradition of Evangelical theological conservatism, firmly established upon and passionately dedicated and committed to proclaiming and advancing the fundamentals of the historic Christian faith. These fundamentals briefly stated are:

† The verbal, plenary divine inspiration of the Bible, and the infallibility, inerrancy, and historicity of the 66 books of the Bible, the only sufficient rule for faith and practice.

† There is one God, sovereign, holy, loving, immutable, incomprehensible, eternal, almighty, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and perfect in every aspect of His nature and character. In the unity of the Godhead there are three persons of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: The Trinity.

† Jesus Christ is one person with two distinct natures, being fully God and fully man, perfect in nature, teaching, and obedience. I believe in His virgin birth; in His sinless life; in His miracles; and His voluntary, substitutionary atonement on the cross for sins. I believe that He rose bodily from the dead and ascended bodily into Heaven and sat down at the right hand of God the Father where He ever lives to make intercession for His people.

† The Holy Spirit is the Lord and giver of life, who unites believers to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ by applying the redemption wrought by Christ. The Holy Spirit convicts people of sin and regenerates the spiritually dead, and indwells, empowers, comforts, leads, guides, teaches, and sanctifies believers. The Holy Spirit is to be worshipped as God.

† Man is created in the image of God. Adam and Eve willfully rebelled against the commandment of God, and as a result they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God. The guilt of that sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, proceed all actual transgressions. Unregenerate human beings are incapable of pleasing or commending themselves to God, thus regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential for the salvation of sinners.

† Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in, by, and because of the finished work of Jesus Christ alone, all to the glory of God alone. In justification, the undeserving sinner has the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to him, and is declared righteous by God forever.

† Jesus Christ will return to earth in power and glory, and both the saved and the lost will be resurrected. They that are saved shall be raised unto the resurrection of everlasting life, and shall live and reign with Christ for eternity. They that are lost shall be raised unto the resurrection of damnation--everlasting punishment in a literal hell.

## Further Theological Convictions

I am committed to the purity of the Gospel of grace and Biblical Christianity. It is my conviction that the purest expression of the Gospel and Biblical Christianity is summarized in the Sola's of the Reformation and the Doctrines of Grace:

## The Sola's of the Reformation<sup>2</sup>

### **Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone):**

The infallible and inerrant Scripture (i.e., the 66 books of the Holy Bible) is the sole source of written divine revelation, which alone can bind the conscience. Scripture--the very Word of God--is complete and absolutely sufficient for all that we need for instruction in righteousness, faith and salvation. The Bible alone is ultimately authoritative and the standard by which all Christian-behavior must be measured. No creed, council or individual may bind a Christian's conscience. The Holy Spirit does not speak independently of or contrary to what is set forth in the Bible. (Deut 4:2; Matt 4:4, Acts 17:11; 2 Tim 3:15-17; 1 Pet 1:23; Matt 15:3-9). It is Scripture alone that gives form to and determines doctrine and practice.

### **Solus Christus (Christ Alone):**

Our salvation is perfectly accomplished by the mediatorial work of the historical Christ alone. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement alone actually secures the justification and reconciliation of Christ's sheep to the Father. Jesus Christ Himself is the sole sufficient and efficient cause of our salvation. He is the only Mediator between God and men. The Gospel is not preached if Christ's substitutionary work is not declared and faith in Christ and His work is not solicited. (Isa 53:4-6; Gal 3:10-13; Col 1:13-18; 1Tm 2:5-7; Heb 7:25-27,9:23-28; 10:10,14). Christ's perfect work of atonement is the center of our faith and life. Christ has no co-saviors.

### **Sola Fide (Faith Alone):**

In order to save us, God did not set aside the law nor did He diminish our sin. Instead He fulfilled the righteous requirement of His righteous law by making His Son to be sin by imputing our sin to Jesus on the cross, and then imputing His righteousness to all who trust in Him alone for salvation. In justification Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as the only possible satisfaction of God's perfect justice. Justification does not rest on any merit to be found in us, or upon the grounds of an infusion of Christ's righteousness in us. Thus, a denial of sola fide is a denial of the Gospel. Faith is not the cause of our salvation; rather, it is the instrument, secured for us by Christ and given to us by the Holy Spirit, through which we are enabled to take hold of Him who had taken hold of us from before the foundation of the world (Gn 15:6; Jn 3:16, 36, 6:29, 40, 47; Rm 3:20-28, 4:1-5; 5:1-2; 8:1, 28-33; 10:9-13; Gal 2:16-21; 3:10-13; Eph 1:4-13). Closely related to this is the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:4-10; Heb 4:12; Heb 10:19-20).

### **Sola Gratia (Grace Alone):**

In salvation we are rescued from God's wrath by His grace alone. It is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to Christ by releasing us from our bondage to sin and raising us from spiritual death to spiritual life; in logical order, regeneration precedes and produces saving faith. Salvation is in no sense a human work. Grace and works/human ability cannot be commingled. Salvation is wholly owing to the sovereign grace of God alone, not man's decision. The only reason any person ever believes is because God has liberated their will and they have been enabled to choose Him. (Ez 36:26-27; Jn 1:13; Ac16:14; Ep 2:2-10; Titus 3:4-7).

## **Soli Deo Gloria (To God Alone Be The Glory):**

Salvation is wholly and completely owing to God alone, and has been accomplished completely and perfectly by God alone, and it is all for God's glory alone. We must then glorify God alone always. We must live our entire lives “*Coram Deo*,” before the face of God, under the authority of God for His glory alone. (Isa 42:8; Rom 3:27; 16:27; 1 Cor 1:27-29; Eph 2:8-9; 1Tim 1:17; Rev 15:4). If any conclusion concerning questions of biblical truth is arrived at that in any sense either equates or exalts man and his inherent power with, over, and/or against the sovereign power of God, then man has reason to boast, and God's glory is undermined, and is therefore something other than Biblical Christianity.

## **The Doctrines of Grace**

The emphasis here is on declaring the absolute sovereignty of God in all things (salvation included), the deadness of man in sin and his bondage to his sin nature, and Christ's perfect, all-powerful, and perfect work on the cross whereby He made a real propitiation for sin and infallibly secured and guaranteed the salvation of a multitude of sinners *at the cross*. Every person for whom Christ atoned can never be finally lost, and thus they will persevere to the end, being kept by the sovereign power of God. The key soteriological points in Reformed theology are traditionally identified by the acronym TULIP (Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints). Unfortunately, that acronym often contributes to a great deal of confusion. Below is a brief statement of each point with suggested titles in parenthesis (except Unconditional Election) that hopefully better captures the essence of the teaching of each point.

### **Total Depravity (Radical Corruption of Man):**

Sin controls every part of man. The entirety of man's nature has been radically corrupted by sin--his mind, body, emotions, and will. He is spiritually dead and blind, and unable in and of himself to obey, believe, repent or incline himself to any spiritual good. God must take the initiative to save man, and give man the ability to choose Christ. Saving faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation--it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God. (Gn 8:21; Jr 13:23; 17:9; Mt 7:16-18; Jn 3:19, 6:44, 6:63, 65, 8:34, 8:43-44; Rom 3:10-12, 8:7-8; 1 Cor 2:14; Eph 2:1-2; Titus 3:3; 2 Tim 2:25-26; 2 Pet 2:14).

### **Unconditional Election:**

God, from all eternity, chose to save a multitude of sinners from every nation, tribe and tongue on the basis of His free grace and mercy alone, not on the basis on anything good or any merit, either actual or foreseen (such as an act of foreseen faith, or personal works of “righteousness”), on the part of the one chosen, but on the basis of the mercy and merit of God and Christ alone. A person meets the condition of “choosing” Christ because God first chose him/her and gave him/her the ability to do so. (Deut 7:6-7; Ps 65:4; Jer 1:5; Mt 11:25-27,24:31; Mk 13:20; Jn 5:21,6:65,10:26-29,13:18,15:16, 17:2,9-10; Ac13:48; Rom 8:28-33, 9:10-16,11:5-10;1Cr 1:27-29; Gal 1:15,16; Eph1:4-5; Php1:29; 1Thes1:2-5;2Thes 2:10-14; 2Tim 1:9; Heb 2:13,12:2;1Pet 1:1-2,2:8-10; Rev 17:14).

## **Limited Atonement (Actual Atonement):**

Christ did not merely make people savable, He actually saved them by His shed blood alone on the cross. Christ's death on the cross was a substitution whereby He actually paid the penalty for all of the sins of all those He was sent to save. While there is enough merit in Christ's work on the cross to save every single person who ever has or ever will live, and while His death on the cross secured certain temporal blessings for every person, Christ's work of atonement was especially designed and intended to secure all things necessary for the salvation of the elect, and rendered the salvation of the elect absolutely certain. By Christ's death on the cross, He **actually**, not **potentially**, saved His sheep. (Isa 53:4-12; Matt 1:21,20:28,26:28; Mk 10:45; John 3:16, 6:37, 10:11,14-15, 24-29,11:51-52, 17:9-10; Luk 19:19; Acts 20:28; Rom 5:10; 8:32-33; 2 Cor 5:18-20; Eph 1:7,5:25; Col 1:21-22; Titus 2:14; Heb 2:17, 9:12-15;10:10-14;1 Pet 2:24-25; 1Jn 2:2; Rev 5:9). **NOTES:**

1. The term "Limited" Atonement is really a confusing term for a variety of reasons, but primarily because when people hear the words "limited atonement" they infer that there is a limiting in the power of the cross or that Christ is somehow unable to save people in and of Himself by His work on the cross. The great irony is that the exact opposite is true. In contradistinction to other views, this view alone affirms and rests in the omnipotent and infallible power of the cross of Christ and posits Jesus Christ Himself as the sole sufficient and efficient cause of the salvation of every person it was intended to save. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon noted:

"The Arminian says, Christ died for all men. Ask them what they mean by it. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men? They say, "No, certainly not."...Did Christ die to secure the salvation of any man in particular? They answer "no." Now, who is it that limits the death of Christ? Why, you. You say that Christ did not die so as to infallibly secure the salvation of anybody...We say Christ so died that He infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ's death not only may be saved, but are saved, must be saved, and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved."<sup>3</sup>

2. In light of the comments above, there are other terms that have been used in referring to this doctrine, such as Definite Atonement or Particular Redemption; however, I have used the term Actual Atonement to emphasize the fact that Christ's death on the cross actually, not potentially, saved people. Either Christ's work on the cross was sufficient in and of itself to save, or it wasn't. As John Reisenger noted:

"The choice is NOT simply between universal and particular atonement. The choice is between an atonement that actually atones and an atonement that is purely hypothetical and not a real atonement"<sup>4</sup> (emphasis in the original).

## **Effectual Grace (Irresistible Grace):**

God's work of regeneration is a sovereign act whereby He brings to spiritual life those who were spiritually dead. God never fails to accomplish this sovereign work in the hearts of the ones He has chosen from all eternity. The Holy Spirit applies to the elect the benefits of Christ's atonement by changing their hearts and renewing their wills, supernaturally disarming their hostility toward God by enabling them to freely choose Christ. Jesus is thus the Author of our faith, and salvation is thus by grace alone. (Deut 30:6; Ps 65:4; Pr 16:9; Is 42:7; Ezek 11:19-20,36:26; Mt 13:11,16:17; Jn 1:12-13; 3:3, 6:37,44,65; 8:42-47;10:26-27; Lk 24:45; Acts 2:39,13:48,18:27; Rom 8:28-30; 9:11,16,10:17;11:6-7; 1 Co 2:10;4:7;12:3; 2 Co 4:3-6; Gal 1:15-16; Eph 2:4-6, 8-10; Phil 1:29, 2:12-13; Col 3:9; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tm 1:9; Titus 3:5-7; Heb 8:10;9:15;1 Pt 1:23). **Note:** This does not deny that people can, and do, "resist" the Holy Spirit. What it teaches though is that at the moment God determines to regenerate a person, He never fails to accomplish that for the person. God supernaturally overcomes the individual's resistance, and disarms our hostility toward Him in regeneration. Salvation is all of grace. It is by grace through faith that we are saved (Eph 2:8,9), and it is through grace that we believe (Acts 18:27).

## **Preservation of the Saints (Perseverance of the Saints):**

All those whom God has chosen from all eternity, and for whom Christ died, and for whom the Holy Spirit regenerates, must and will endure to the end, being kept by the sovereign and preserving power of God Himself. Jesus is thus the Finisher of our faith, and God alone receives all of the glory for our salvation. To claim that Jesus could lose one of His sheep is to say in essence that Jesus isn't a very good Shepherd. It is to undermine the power of Christ's work on the cross. It is to rob Christ of all of the glory for our salvation. It is to say that He is less powerful than the sheep that somehow wiggle their way out of His sovereign, omnipotent grasp—clearly a contradiction in terms—sovereignty and omnipotence can never fail. (Psalm 121:7; Jer 32:40; Matt 18:14; John 3:16, 3:36,5:24,6:35-40,47,10:27-30, Rom 5:8-10; 8:1, 30-31, 35-39; 1 Cor 1:7-9, Eph 1:5,13, 14, 4:30; Php 1:6, 1 Thess 5:23-24, 2 Tim 4:18, Titus 3:4-7; Heb 9:12, 9:15,10:14;1Pet 1:3-5; 1 John 2:19, 5:4, 5:11-13; Jude 1,24; Heb 6:4-12; Rev 3:5).

# The Church

## **Church Government**

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. Ideally, the church should be governed by a plurality of elders under the Headship of Christ, with the pastor being the senior elder. The model of plural elder government that I find most satisfying is the one advanced by Pastor Bob Whitney in his article [Proposal for Elder-Led Church Government](#).<sup>5</sup>

A. The Pastor - The Pastor is a man that is sovereignly set apart and called of the Lord to Shepherd the people of God, and as such he must meet the criteria for the office of elder as set forth in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

The Pastor must recognize and is to submit himself to the Headship of Christ, and by absolute reliance and dependence upon the grace and Spirit of God, and submission to the Word of God as the sole infallible rule for faith and practice, he is to faithfully shepherd the flock of God entrusted to his care.

The Pastor is the primary steward of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the local church, thus, he is to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified, faithfully expounding the whole of the Scriptures and teaching and defending sound doctrine.

The Pastor is to faithfully administer baptism and the Lord's Supper as ordained by the Lord, never divorcing them from what they ultimately point to and declare: The Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Pastor must be passionately committed to the Great Commission, and proactively obey the command to preach the Gospel to all.

The Pastor is to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, and is to promote unity among the brethren, both inside the local church under his care, and among all Christians, committed to the essentials of the Christian faith. He must allow for and promote liberty of conscience among the people of God as it concerns those matters that while important, are nevertheless considered to be non-essentials, and in all things he is to love all people, even those that oppose, giving a reason for his hope with gentleness and respect.

The Pastor, as a faithful shepherd of the flock of Christ, is called to be an example to the flock in doctrine, personal godliness and holiness, zeal to evangelize the unconverted and make disciples, and he is to pray for, feed, equip, govern, nurture, and watch over and protect the flock of God:

1. Doctrine (Titus 2:7) – By God's grace, he is to study to show himself approved, a workman that cannot be ashamed. He is to be wholeheartedly committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and essential Christian doctrine, growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ, and passionately dedicated to training the church of God in sound doctrine.

2. Example in Godliness and Holiness (1 Tim 3:2-7) – By God's grace, his life is to be marked by the fruit of the Spirit. This holiness of life in word, thought, and deed will be clearly manifest and evident both to those within the household of faith, and to those outside.

3. Zeal in Evangelism and Discipleship (Matt 28:18-20; 1 Cor 9:19-27) – By God's grace, he should be passionately concerned for, and seek to find ways to reach the lost with Gospel of Jesus Christ, and he must be actively engaged in the spiritual growth and development of all Christians, particularly those entrusted to his care.

4. Prayer (Col 1:9-12) – By God’s grace, he must pray without ceasing for the flock of God entrusted to his care, as well as the church universal, lifting the people up in prayer before the throne of grace and committing them to the Fatherly care of our Sovereign and Triune, Lord and King, that His will would be done on earth as it is in Heaven, so that God would be glorified in the lives of His people.

5. Feed the Flock (John 21:15-17) - By God's grace, faithfully putting Christ and the Gospel before the people of God through the faithful reading, preaching, teaching, and exposition of the Word of God that they might feed on Him and, by God's grace, be nourished and grow more and more in the grace and knowledge of God.

6. Equip the Saints (Eph 4:12) - By God's grace, faithfully preaching and teaching the Word of God and sound doctrine with a view toward equipping the saints for the work of the ministry. This entails helping Christians discover the gifts that they have, providing opportunities for them to use those gifts to the glory of God, and emphasizing, teaching, leading, encouraging and accomplishing God-centered evangelism in light of God’s sovereign decree to gather His sheep to Himself.

7. Govern the Household of Faith (Heb 13:17) – By God’s grace the Pastor, along with the other elders, is to govern the church under the Headship of Christ, faithfully managing the affairs of the church, which include such things as developing and managing the administrative processes of the church, care of church property, and the enforcement of church discipline.

8. Nurture – By God’s grace, the Pastor is to have a compassionate concern for the people, and take an active interest in the lives of God’s people. He is to routinely visit the people at their homes, especially the sick. He is to comfort those that mourn, and provide Biblical counseling to the people, with the emphasis being on pointing the people to Christ.

9. Watch Over and Protect (Acts 20:28-31) – By God’s grace, the Pastor is to keep diligent watch over the flock committed to his charge, guarding and protecting them from corrupt doctrine or morals.

B. The Elder – The elder is a man that is sovereignly set apart and called of the Lord to Shepherd the people of God, and as such he must meet the criteria for the office of elder as set forth in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. He is a co-laborer with the Pastor in shepherding the flock of God entrusted to his care. All of the responsibilities listed above with reference to the Pastor are applicable to the Elder, keeping in mind that the Pastor is the senior elder essentially an under-shepherd to the Pastor, and he is to faithfully assist the Pastor in the carrying out of the duties and responsibilities listed for the Pastor.

C. The Deacon – The deacon is one that is sovereignly set apart and called of the Lord to serve the Body of Christ by humbly and diligently relieving the elders of certain critical responsibilities so that the elders can give their attention to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:3-4). The deacon ministers to the whole person (spiritual and physical), with an emphasis particularly on ministering to the physical needs of the people by comforting the sick and

bereaved, and collecting gifts from the people to be distributed to those who are in need. The deacon has oversight of the church facilities and ensures that they are properly maintained.

## **Church Discipline**

Church discipline is critical to the health of the church. The goal of church discipline is restoration. J. Hampton Keathley, III's article Church Discipline<sup>6</sup> is representative of my view of church discipline. The article outlines the importance of church discipline, the biblical basis for it, and the way in which it is to be administered in the church.

## **Fellowship**

Dr. Van Lees of Covenant of Grace Church provides outstanding insight in this vital aspect of the life of the church.<sup>7</sup> Dr. Lees states:

“In the last 50 years our society has become increasingly urban and fast-paced. As a result of this, to a great degree we have lost the sense of community and belonging enjoyed by past generations...the biblical concept of fellowship goes far beyond having a dinner or a coffee time together.”

Dr. Lees goes on to provide a biblical foundation for the nature of fellowship. He provides a summary of the Bible's teaching on it, and then he goes on to prescribe and describe various activities that the church should engage in to help facilitate fellowship:

“1) Mutual prayer support. We emphasize the importance of prayer for each other. In all of our small group Bible studies we give opportunities to share needs and concerns so that the group can pray for them together and individual members can continue to pray for the needs later. We also have a church prayer chain which enables serious needs to be immediately passed through the church for prayer. We also publish serious prayer needs in the church bulletin each week so our church family can have a record of needs that call for continual prayer.

2) Church dinners. We try to regularly have church dinners. We have made these interesting and fun events by having them revolve around certain themes.

3) Church parties and picnics. Throughout the year we have several church parties and picnics. We have found that playing games and eating snacks together helps facilitate people getting know one another and developing friendships.

4) Church campout/retreat. In the fall we have held a two-day church retreat at a Christian camp. This is not only a time of recreation for families and friends in the church, but it is also a meaningful spiritual time. We usually plan a devotional theme for the retreat and hand out material and study guides on that theme. We meet together and in small groups for discussion and prayer concerning the theme of the retreat. This has often been a time of spiritual assessment and renewal in people's Christian lives.

5) Social outings. Periodically we plan special outings for fellowship and friendship building. For example, we may have a bowling night or have a board game tournament (such as monopoly, risk, or, pictionary), ladies' or men's luncheons after church, etc.

Our goal in these activities is to provide opportunities for the building of relationships and to build a sense of community and belonging within the congregation. These activities are also excellent evangelistic opportunities in that we encourage people to invite friends, neighbors, and relatives.”

## **Worship**

We are commanded to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth (John 4:24), thus, I believe that the church should seek to engage in God-centered, God-prescribed, and God-honoring worship whereby we are brought into a deeper apprehension of the majesty (referring to the sum total of all of God’s attributes) of God through the power of the Holy Spirit working primarily by means of His Word through the active engagement of both our intellect and emotions. The worship of God involves at least four vital elements: Prayer, Praise, Proclamation of the Word of God, and the Administration of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper:

### **A. Prayer:**

Prayer at its most basic level is communicating with God, but this does not capture the full meaning of what prayer is. Prayer is one of the key elements in the worship of God. It is where we bow ourselves in humble submission to God, and acknowledge that He is God, and there is no other. It is the place where we submit our mind, emotions, and will (i.e., our desires and choices) to the Lord, and acknowledge our complete reliance upon, and our utter destitution without, Him. The New Bible Dictionary, Second Edition, briefly defines prayer:

“In the Bible prayer is worship that includes all the attitudes of the human spirit in its approach to God. The Christian worships God when he adores, confesses, praises and supplicates Him in prayer. The highest activity of which the human spirit is capable may also be thought of as communion with God...”<sup>8</sup>

Various elements of the statement on prayer by Covenant Lake Presbyterian Church in Lakeland, Florida capture my vision of prayer:

“We are resolved to make prayer a leading characteristic and focus of our ministry and a serious part of the life of [our church]...We aim to develop in our church a sense of the importance and excitement of true prayer. We desire to see it as a meeting with God through Christ, an opportunity to humbly yet boldly plead His own promises for the advancement of his kingdom (Matt. 6: 10). We aim not only to faithfully pray for the needs of the sick and the distressed but to also be faithful to pray for outrageous achievements for Christ and His Gospel.”<sup>9</sup>

## B. Praise and Worship

1. Music: Since the primary means by which the Holy Spirit graces His people is through His Word and the Gospel, our worship music must be theologically sound, God-centered and exalting, and ultimately direct our hearts to the Gospel of Christ (ref Col 3:16). The Wycliffe Bible Commentary notes well with reference to Col 3:16:

“It has been the testimony of Christians from earliest times that "Christ put a song in my heart." And it is no exaggeration to say that songs have taught more theology to new converts than textbooks.”<sup>10</sup>

2. Style and Form: In recent years the church has witnessed what has been branded as the “worship wars” within the Evangelical community, which usually pits those who prefer formal, liturgical, and traditional worship against those who argue for a contemporary emphasis. I have been a part of churches where the worship was exclusively contemporary, and ones that were exclusively traditional/liturgical, and I found both to be edifying. I believe that both forms have a basis in Scripture, and have much to offer the church.

I have also been a part of churches that engage in what is called “blended worship,” that seeks to marry the best elements from the traditional/liturgical forms and the contemporary forms. In terms of the traditional, there is the singing of the great hymns, and other elements commonly associated with liturgical forms of worship, such as the singing of the doxology, and even congregational professions of faith, where the great creeds and confessions of Christianity, such as the Apostles Creed, or the Nicene Creed, etc., are recited. In terms of contemporary, we would sing acceptable modern praise choruses.

Having been part of all three “styles” of worship, I have a deep appreciation for each one, and I am comfortable in either setting. In my experience, the blended form has worked quite well and seemed to be the most edifying; however, whatever style of worship a church engages in should be done only after prayerful consideration and in humble submission to Scripture, the only infallible rule for faith and practice. And, regardless of the style, we must ensure that the content of our songs are theologically sufficient and correct in content.

Here, then, are some basic things to keep in mind with regard to worship style/form:

a. Regulated - Since the church abides by the principle of Sola Scriptura, we seek to worship God only in ways He has ordained in His Word, or:

“By good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture, realizing that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.”<sup>11</sup>

b. Diverse – Scripture presents us with a variety of musical instruments that are used to produce music in our singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (ex: Psalm 150).

c. Posture/Response - Various postures and responses are found in the Scriptures as acceptable in our worship of God (i.e., clapping, lifting of hands, kneeling, etc.); however, all things must be done decently and in order, and there must be corporate unity and agreement where these things are concerned. When the actions of one become a distraction to others, it is detrimental to our corporate worship of our sovereign King, and we are no longer worshipping in spirit and in truth, for we are not submitting ourselves one to another in love.

d. Psalms, Hymns, Spiritual Songs - The Scriptures tell us to teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col 3:16). With reference to the nature of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, I find the following references to be most helpful:

The Geneva Study Bible states:

“By "psalms" he means all godly songs which were written upon various occasions, and by "hymns", all such as contain the praise of God, and by "spiritual songs", other more special and artful songs which were also in praise of God, but they were made fuller of music.”<sup>12</sup>

The New International Version (NIV) Study Bible, in its commentary notes on Col 3:16, makes these comments:

“Psalms refers to the OT psalms (Lk 20:42; 24:44; Ac 1:20), some of which may have been set to music by the church. “Psalm” could also describe a song newly composed for Christian worship (1 Co. 14:26, where “hymn” is lit. “psalm” in the Greek text). A hymn was a song of praise, especially used in a celebration (see Mk 14:26; Heb 2:12; see also Ac 16:25), much like the OT psalms that praised God for all that He is. A “song” recounted the acts of God and praised Him for them (see Rev 5:9; 14:4; 15:3), much like the OT psalms thanked God for all the He had done.”<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the Inter Varsity Press (IVP) New Testament Commentary states:

“Paul's set of words for congregational singing, *psalms, hymns and spiritual songs*, "describe the full range of singing which the Spirit prompts" (Lohse 1971:151). Yet lists in Paul's writings tend to be illustrative rather than technical; his purpose is to impress his readers with an important point rather than with precise prescription. Thus we do not gain much by trying to differentiate among *psalms, hymns and spiritual songs* (for this see O'Brien 1982:209). Paul's point is that songs complement teaching in worship.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Proclamation of the Word**

Biblical exposition that emphasizes the person and work of Christ is absolutely essential. The Gospel of Jesus Christ must not be put on the shelf in favor of self-help steps and principles. Once this occurs, we have moved away from the only thing that can give us victory in our daily lives in our battles with the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are in a war with those things, and the goal of those enemies is to get us to take our eyes off of Christ and His cross and place them on ourselves. We fall right back into the trap of trying to earn God's favor, and fall into the legalism of believing in sanctification by works alone. The only thing this produces is bondage. We must take hold of that glorious Gospel of the living Christ, set our eyes upon it everyday, and preach it to ourselves everyday.

In terms of the worship service, every thing centers on the preached Word of God. It is the proclamation of the Gospel that is the highlight and climax of the service. It is the Gospel that must be preached, not just to unbelievers, but to believers as well. We enter into righteousness by grace alone through faith alone, in, by, and because of Christ alone—that's just the beginning. Once we embrace Christ by grace through faith, we have entered upon the journey of faith, and the only thing that can equip and empower us along our pilgrim's progress is the very same thing that put us on the path in the first place: God's grace alone, through faith alone, in, by and because of Christ alone, i.e., the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, emphasis must be placed on the glory of God through Christ-centered preaching and teaching.

The method that best accomplishes this is expository teaching and preaching. The preaching ministry of the church should be geared toward Biblical expository preaching that is relentlessly Christ and cross-centered in order to equip, exhort, encourage, refresh, and disciple the saints of God. Covenant Lake Presbyterian Church captures the essence of the goal here:

“Since the Bible is a book of redemption, every text points to Christ. In preaching, Jesus is clearly portrayed as the One who was crucified for sinners (Gal. 3:1). Therefore, the ministers of [the church] will be careful to preach Christ as the Redeemer of sinners from all the Scriptures. In preaching, the gospel is preached to believers and to unbelievers alike. The gospel by which we come initially to God is the same gospel by which we continue to grow. The gospel transforms our lives (Rom. 1:16) and motivates our service (2 Cor. 5:14). Therefore, recognizing that God’s people never mature beyond the cross, Christ is preached as both the Justifier and the Sanctifier. Furthermore, we believe that Christ freely offered in the gospel can save and change anyone; no person is beyond the grace of God in Christ...Preaching by its very nature and dependence upon Scripture is expository...Even when a pastor thinks it wise on occasion to take a more topical approach, the method must carefully expound Scripture. Since the Bible is a book of redemptive history, the minister will not moralize but will preach Christ from every text of Scripture.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Administration of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper**

I believe in the faithful administration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, as ordained by the Lord. The administration of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper cannot be divorced from what they ultimately point to and declare: The Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## **Values and Goals**

### **Great Commandment:**

By the power of the Holy Spirit, cultivate a climate by means of the Gospel through which the Spirit of God causes us, in the entirety of our person, to have a zealous passion and love for the sovereign and holy triune God of heaven and earth, which will manifest itself in true godly love for and toward all people. This will be done by educating people on the totality of the nature of God as revealed in Scripture and emphasizing the Gospel of Christ as the very life of the believer.

### **Great Commission:**

By the power of the Holy Spirit, cultivate a climate by means of the Gospel through which the Spirit of God causes us to have a zealous passion for evangelism and discipleship:

1. Passionately and proactively obeying the command to preach the gospel to every creature, and emphasizing a God-centered view of evangelism in the context of the sovereign decree of God to gather His sheep that are scattered all over the world (John 10:14-16,26-30). Hope in evangelism does not rest in our methods, schemes, programs, powers of persuasion, intellectual prowess, or techniques, rather in the foreordained promise of God to infallibly save a multitude of sinners from every nation, tribe and tongue according to the redemption accomplished by Christ and the effective power of His Spirit and Word working in the hearts of those He is pleased to bless with the gifts of saving faith and repentance according to His grace alone and the purpose of the council of His will (Eph 1:4-14). We are tasked with faithfully proclaiming the Good News as the means by which an absolutely sovereign God has determined to save sinners. Thus, God's sovereignty and power alone serves as the only sure foundation and hope for evangelism, and God alone receives all of the glory in our evangelistic efforts.

2. Since the primary means our sovereign God uses to gather His sheep is the preaching of the Gospel, it is imperative that all Christians, particularly the key leaders, be educated in the Gospel and be properly equipped to present the Gospel. Hence, training in evangelism should be strongly encouraged for all congregants (ideally, the new believers class should include training in evangelism), and should be required by all those in ministry positions (to include Sunday School teachers). Evangelism Explosion is the recommended course.

3. Discipleship - An aggressive Christian education system is to be employed, where education to every level of spiritual knowledge/maturity is provided, as well as an aged-based curriculum for children, youth, and young adults. "Personal" discipleship should be encouraged, where spiritually mature mentors take those younger in the faith and mentor and disciple them in the Christian life.

4. Impacting society with the love of Christ – The emphasis here is on implementing practical methods of reaching out to the downtrodden in our society. Soup kitchens, ministry to the homeless, drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, pregnancy crisis, etc.

5. Impacting society with a biblical worldview – The goal here is not to politicize Christianity, but to bring the Gospel of Christ to bear in every sphere of life and to speak with clarity concerning the key moral issues in society, human rights, and family values.

### **Racial/Ethnic Barriers**

The difficulty noted by many scholars of trying to bring people to together from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds is noted; however, I do not accept their skepticism that would make it a foregone conclusion that it is impossible.<sup>16</sup> I believe, through the power of the Holy Spirit, these barriers can be broken down, and the church can be a desegregated and unified community. The statement by the National Association of Evangelicals captures the essence of my vision and goal regarding racial reconciliation:

“We believe the only lasting basis for racial reconciliation is God's love, expressed through Christ. While Jesus was on earth, He demonstrated the risks and rewards of crossing racial barriers. Paul gives further clarity to Christ's intention of racial unity. "For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two (races) one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...through the cross." It is clearly Jesus' desire that all races, with their diverse cultures, become "a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit." And He taught unity was essential for effective evangelism (John 13&17).”<sup>17</sup>

With this in mind, I also find this following statement from Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis MN to be most helpful:<sup>18</sup>

“1. Interracial reconciliation. Against the rising spirit of indifference, alienation and hostility in our land, we will embrace the supremacy of God's love to take new steps personally and corporately toward racial reconciliation, expressed visibly in our community and in our church.

2. Diversity in God-centered worship. Sunday morning worship is a corporate expression of our passion for the supremacy of God. We sense God's leading to develop fresh expression of this passion that 1) allow for a more focused and free lingering of love in the presence of the Lord; 2) reflect musically the diversity of our congregation and our metropolitan culture; and 3) interweave the values of intense God-centeredness and more personal ministry to each other in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

### **Ministerial Education**

Establish an education system for those called to the ministry within the church itself. I favor the model presented by Sovereign Grace Ministries.<sup>19</sup>

### **Church Planting**

Proactive church planting. The local church is involved in spinning off and nurturing daughter churches. The emphasis is on a local church training and equipping the saints for the work of ministry to spin off daughter churches once the “mother” church reaches a certain size. Three Rivers Presbyterian Church's statement captures the goal:

“We want to be more than just a church. We want to be a catalyst for a movement of churches and innovative ministries...We will discourage turf consciousness...We will serve as an incubator for new churches, new ministries, and corroborative efforts between creative Christians. We will have a Kingdom agenda driven by the Gospel.”<sup>20</sup>

## Purpose

The purpose of the church is to:<sup>21</sup>

1. Exalt and worship our sovereign and holy Triune God in a manner that is worthy and honoring to Him and in a manner that is ordained according to His holy Word.
2. Equip and mature believers through the instruction of God's holy, infallible, and inerrant Word, according to the historic Protestant faith.
3. Evangelize and extend the gospel of grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone by means of local outreach and through national and international missions.

The purpose can be further stated in the form the acronym **GRACE**:

**G - Glorify God** - Passionately committed to Christ-centered worship, thinking, and living.

**R – Reach All People** - Passionately committed to seeing the Gospel of Christ proclaimed to all people, in our community, country, and the world. (Matthew 28:18-20).

**A – Assimilation** – New believers and members must be brought into the life of the church. Assimilation begins outside of the church in outreach. Once inside, the goal is moving them along the process from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity in Christ.

**C – Communion of Saints** – Fellowship and interacting with one another by living, sharing, confessing, and speaking the truth in love with one another (James 5:16; Ephesians 4:15,25). Bearing one another's burdens through prayer, comfort, encouragement, and the sharing of material goods (Gal 6:2; James 5:16; 1 Thess 4:18; Heb 3:13; Acts 4:32).

**E – Equipping of believers** - Equipping each believer for ministry and encouraging the discovery and use of spiritual gifts in ministry (Ephesians 4:12; 1 Peter 4:10,11). Emphasizing an "every member ministry" based on individual spiritual gifts.

## Purpose Statement

To glorify God and enjoy Him forever by proclaiming, advancing, and living the God and Christ-centered theology and Gospel of Bible Christianity, in order to equip and mature the Body of Christ and transform our culture by the power of the Holy Spirit.

## Defining Our Target

I do not accept the current trend of defining a target in terms of education level, economic status, ethnicity, or any other physical characteristic or category that have traditionally divided people. I believe that the call of the church is to preach the Gospel to every creature, without reference to those distinctions, and I trust God to add to our church whoever it is He sees fit to add. Therefore, the target for the church is simply lost sinners.

### Contact Every Household

Start within a radius around the church and move out from there (Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, ends of earth).

**1. Jerusalem** – Neighborhoods right around our church. Also, the “Jerusalem” in every communicant member’s life (work associates, friends, relatives, etc.). Members should be encouraged to interact with people, sharing the Gospel in both word and deed, and inviting people to the church, etc. Equip members with Gospel tracts and church literature to distribute to their “Jerusalem.”

**2. Judea** – We expand our circle/radius until as many households as possible in the city are finally contacted. The “Judean” outreach continues in the county, neighboring counties, the state, neighboring states, etc.

**3. Samaria** – Confronting the false religions and belief systems in the community, city, county, state, region, and country.

**4. Ends of earth** – Ensure we are keeping missions a focal point—support missions groups, send missionaries, etc.

## Defining Our Strategies

Strategies for reaching our target(s) as described above:

**1. Evangelize:** Passionately and proactively obey the command to preach the Gospel to all, emphasizing God-centered evangelism in light of God’s sovereign grace.

A. Equipping: This shall be done by teaching congregants how to effectively share the Gospel in a very clear, cogent, and loving way. I am trained in the Evangelism Explosion course ([www.eeinternational.org](http://www.eeinternational.org)), and have witnessed first-hand how it is one of the most effective tools that the Holy Spirit has used to bring many to faith in Christ.

B. FRANgelism (Friends, Relatives, Associates, Neighbors): Encourage congregants to seek opportunities to share the Gospel with their “FRAN’s,” i.e., friends, relatives, associates and neighbors, and to be proactive in inviting their “FRAN’s” to the church. At least 2 things will be done to help facilitate this:

1) Equip members with Gospel tracts and church literature to distribute to various friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors that they come in contact with.

2) Invite a Friend Sunday: Organize a special Sunday for friends. Encourage members to invite their friends, colleagues, and acquaintances (not active in another church) to this worship experience. Welcome and follow-up the visitors who come. Materials are available at [http://newlifeministries-nlm.org/products/invite\\_a\\_friend\\_kit.htm](http://newlifeministries-nlm.org/products/invite_a_friend_kit.htm) to help thoroughly plan this event for maximum results.

C. Visiting Those That Visit The Church: It is imperative to immediately visit those that have visited the church. On this visitation, we would go to the home of those that visited the church to introduce them further to our church, and discover where they are spiritually. If we discover that they may not be Christians, we would then share the Gospel with them, and in all cases literature about the church and Gospel will be given to those that we visit.

D. Door-To-Door Visitation: Starting with the neighborhoods right around our church, we would go door-to-door to introduce the church, hand out literature, administer surveys, and look for an opportunity to share the Gospel. We would begin moving out from there until we have gone through all of Hamburg. Then we would go to the towns that surround Hamburg, and so on.

E. Telephone Outreach: Use the telephone to discover prospective members and invite them to the worship service. The call would go something like this:

“Hello. My name is John Orlando of Hamburg Baptist Church. We’d like to extend a loving invitation to you and yours to come and worship with us. May I share with you our worship times and location?” If they say no, then we would respond by saying, “Thank you so much for your time. Should you desire, you can always find us in the yellow pages. Have a blessed day!”

If they say yes, we would respond by saying, “Wonderful! We meet every Sunday at 10:30 a.m. for worship. Sunday School is at 9:30 a.m. If it’s okay with you, we’d like to mail you some information about us. May I have your mailing address?” If they say yes, then get their address info, thank them for their time, and tell them you hope to have the chance to meet them sometime, and hang up. If they say no, thank them for their time, and tell them you hope to have the chance to meet them sometime, and hang up.

## **2. Advertise**

A. Posting Information: We will post information about the church in public places: Laundromats, Community Centers, Shopping Centers, Colleges, Apartment Complexes, YMCA, etc.

B. Mailing Campaigns: We will conduct mailing campaigns, where we send literature about the church to households throughout a city and its surrounding area.

C. Media: Advertise the church by means of newspaper, radio, TV, and internet (we would also develop a website. I already have a front page created and ready to load onto the internet for any prospective church).

### **3. Community Engagement**

A. Information Tables: Setup information tables at malls/shopping centers with literature. Provide free giveaways (example: refrigerator magnets, pens, coffee mugs, etc., that have Hamburg Baptist Church and contact info printed on them).

B. Good News Dinner Plan: Organize fellowship dinners where members can invite their unchurched friends, relatives, and acquaintances. Provide a warm, inviting, hospitable atmosphere at the dinners. Along with the fellowship meal provide some brief entertainment (maybe do a skit, or sing some songs), and provide information about the church.

C. Parents' Night Out: Set aside a certain Friday of each month to offer low cost babysitting at the church from 7:00 until 10:00 p.m. This is an outreach to single parents or couples with small children in the community. This can be advertised at Day Care Centers.

D. Community Block Party/Holiday Festivals: Hold an event open to the community offering games and activities for all ages, but especially for children, and have Pizza and other finger foods and deserts.

E. Holiday Giveaways: Find a public place to give away small candy canes at Christmas time, or small American flags on Independence Day, etc. Attach a card with the information about the particular holiday on one side and information about our services on the other side.

F. Seminars/Lectures:

1) Events at the church: Conduct seminars/lectures on various topics of interest (parenting, money management, spiritual topics of interest, etc). These can be held at the church on a particular evening (or on Saturday). The event(s) would be advertised to the whole area.

2) Events at different venues: Same thing as number 1 above, but try to find a different place to host it other than the church. Community Centers, YMCA, Public schools, colleges, etc.

## **Communication**

Media: radio and TV ads and/or programming.

Newspaper Advertising

The Arts - Communicate to our cultural in relevant ways through the arts.

Gospel Tracts

The Internet  
Bulletins/flyers

## Ministries

- G – Glorify God:**           **The Worship Ministry:** Prayer, Praise, Proclamation of the Word, Administration of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper
- R – Reaching All People:**   **The Outreach Ministry:** Evangelism and Missions
- A – Assimilation:**           **The Assimilation Ministry:** New Members Class, Spiritual Gift Surveys
- C – Communion of Saints:**   **The Fellowship Ministry:** Congregational activities/gatherings, Special functions, retreats, conferences and seminars
- E- Equipping Believers:**   **The Education Ministry:** Sunday School, Bible Study, Leadership Training

## Ministry Model

The shepherding model that seeks to combine the best elements of the curriculum and program models. The shepherd nurtures, cares for, leads, and guides the sheep.<sup>22</sup>

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