

STATEMENT OF FAITH

To better help people not familiar with the Calvary Chapel ministries understand who we are, we at Calvary Chapel's Bible College developed the following statement of faith, most of which was written by, and all of which was approved by, Pastor Chuck Smith, the founder of the Calvary Chapel movement, pastor of Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, and President of the Bible College.

Calvary Chapel has been formed as a fellowship of believers in the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Our supreme desire is to know Christ and be conformed to His image by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are not a denominational church, nor are we opposed to denominations as such, only to their over-emphasis of the doctrinal differences that have led to the division of the Body of Christ.

We believe the only true basis of Christian fellowship is Christ's (Agape) love, which is greater than any differences we possess, and without which we have no right to claim ourselves Christians.

We believe worship of God should be spiritual. Therefore, we remain flexible and yielded to the leading of the Holy Spirit to direct our worship.

We believe worship of God should be inspirational. Therefore, we give great place to music in our worship.

We believe worship of God should be intelligent. Therefore, our services are designed with great emphasis upon the teaching of the Word of God that He might instruct us how He should be worshipped.

We believe worship of God should be fruitful. Therefore, we look for His love in our lives as the supreme manifestation that we have been truly worshipping Him.

We believe in all the fundamental doctrines of orthodox evangelical Christianity.

We believe in the inerrancy of Scripture; that the Bible, Old and New Testaments is the inspired, infallible Word of God.

We believe that God is eternally existent in three separate persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We believe that God the Father is the personal, transcendent, and sovereign Creator of all things.

We believe that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human, that He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, provided for the atonement of our sins by His vicarious death on the Cross, was bodily resurrected by the power of the Holy Spirit, ascended back to the right hand of God the Father, and ever lives to make intercession for us. After Jesus ascended to Heaven, He poured out His Holy Spirit on the believers in Jerusalem, enabling them to fulfill His command to preach the Gospel to the entire world, an obligation shared by all believers today.

We believe that all people are by nature separated from God and responsible for their own sin, but that salvation, redemption, and forgiveness are freely offered to all by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. When a person repents of sin and accepts Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord, trusting Him to save, that person is immediately born again and sealed by the Holy Spirit, all his/her sins are forgiven, and that person becomes a child of God, destined to spend eternity with the Lord.

We believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the Scriptures, and that they are valid for today if they are exercised within the Scriptural guidelines. We as believers are to covet the best gifts, seeking to exercise them in love that the whole Body of Christ might be edified. We believe that love is more important than the most spectacular gifts, and without this love all exercise of spiritual gifts is worthless.

We believe that church government should be simplistic rather than a complex bureaucracy, and we depend on the Holy Spirit to lead, rather than on fleshly promotion.

We await the pre-tribulation rapture of the church, and we believe that the second coming of Christ with His saints to rule on the earth will be personal, pre-millennial, and visible. This motivates us to holy

living, heartfelt worship, committed service, diligent study of God's Word, regular fellowship, and participation in adult baptism by immersion, and in Holy Communion.

We seek to teach the Word of God in such a way that its message can be applied to an individual's life, leading that person to greater maturity in Christ.

We reject: (1) The belief that true Christians can be demon possessed; (2) "five-point Calvinism" (i.e., a fatalistic Calvinistic view that leaves no room for free will; specifically, we reject the belief that Jesus' atonement was limited, instead we believe that He died for all people, and we reject the assertion that God's wooing grace cannot be resisted or that He has elected some people to go to hell; instead we believe that anyone who wills to come to Christ may do so); (3) "positive confession" (the faith movement belief that God can be commanded to heal or work miracles according to man's will), (4) human prophecy that supersedes the Scripture, (5) the incorporation of humanistic and secular psychology and philosophy into Biblical teaching, and (6) the over-emphasis of spiritual gifts, experiential signs and wonders to the exclusion of Biblical teaching.

In our services, we focus on a personal relationship with God through worship, prayer, and the teaching of the Word of God. We teach both expositively and topically. We do not allow speaking in tongues loudly during services, nor prophecy while a Bible study is in progress because we do not believe that the Holy Spirit would interrupt Himself. We have specific "after-glow services" and believer's meetings when these gifts of the Spirit may be exercised.

HISTORY

Calvary Chapel began in the late 1960's as a small non-denominational church of 25 members, pastored by Chuck Smith. As of the beginning of the 21st century, Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa is home to some 30,000 believers. The Word for Today publishes Bible study books and tapes all over the world, and KWVE broadcasts God's Word to all of Southern California. Calvary Chapel's Bible College provides Bible education to thousands at its home campus in Twin Peaks, California, and at over 20 extension campuses world wide.

Because of its size and influence, many Christians have asked what exactly does Calvary Chapel believe? What is distinct about it, and what sets it apart from other Christian groups? At Calvary Chapel, we have always hesitated to try and answer those questions. This is not because we are unsure of our beliefs, but because we are cautious to avoid division within the Body of Christ. After all, what really matters is what we have in common as Christians. These things are the "essential" doctrines of the infallibility of God's Word, the virgin birth of Christ, His sinless life, death for our sins, bodily resurrection, ascension to glory, and personal return to rule the earth. These things are the essence of Christianity, and agreed upon by virtually all born again believers.

If moving away from essential doctrines to those less essential, we risk setting up barriers in the church. This is something we at Calvary Chapel have no desire to do. Still, Calvary Chapel is distinct from denominational churches and other Protestant groups. People want to know what those distinctions are. We have addressed those questions here.

THE BALANCE

In a broad general sense, Calvary Chapel is the middle ground between fundamentalism and Pentecostalism in modern Protestant theology. In fact, we believe that this is at least part of the reason why God has raised up this ministry.

Fundamentalism is that portion of Protestantism which holds to the literal interpretation of the Scriptures. It holds they are divinely inspired and inerrant. Hence, the "fundamentals" of the faith are emphasized. The modern news media and the liberal church may scorn fundamentalists as backward and stupid. The truth is fundamentalism has preserved the integrity of God's Word. Fundamentalism has held to the essential doctrines of the orthodox faith.

Pentecostalism grew out of the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, as a modern movement at the turn of the 20th century. It has spawned denominations emphasizing the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the exercise of spiritual and Scriptural gifts of the Spirit. These things had fallen dormant in the mainstream churches. Pentecostalism is also criticized by the liberal church and news media as being emotionally driven. However, the movement has restored to the church the importance of gifts of the Spirit and the power of God for today's believer.

Fundamentalism, while it clung to the integrity of God's Word, tended toward legalism, rigidity, and unacceptance of spiritual gifts. Pentecostalism, on the other hand, became enthusiastic and emotional at the expense of the teaching of God's Word.

Calvary Chapel finds a balance between fundamentalism and Pentecostalism. At Calvary Chapel we believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the Bible. We encourage their exercise, but always decently and in order. Our main emphasis is on the Word of God, which we look to as our primary rule of faith. To quote Pastor Chuck Smith, "We believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the Scriptures, and that they are valid for today if they are exercised within the Scriptural guidelines. We as believers are to covet the best gifts, seeking to exercise them in love that the whole Body of Christ might be edified. We believe that love is more important than the most spectacular gifts, and without this love all exercise of spiritual gifts is worthless."

Because of this focus on balance, Calvary Chapel services are designed to be centered around the verse-by-verse teaching of God's Word. Special "after glow" services are provided where the gifts of the Holy Spirit can operate freely under the leadership of mature Christians. Many Pentecostals think Calvary Chapel is not emotional enough. Many fundamentalists think Calvary Chapel is too emotional. Achieving that balance indicates, in the opinion of Larry Taylor, that we are right where God wants us to be.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Calvary Chapel also differs from most mainline churches in its style of church government. Most denominational churches maintain a congregational form of church government, a Presbyterian form, or an Episcopal form. These three terms should not be confused with denominations bearing the same names. Other churches of different names may share the same styles of government.

The congregational form of church government is an American invention, appealing to our "American" sense of democracy. Basically, the congregation as a whole in this style of church government makes all decisions by voting on matters of importance. It appoints committees from its ranks to run the daily operation of the church. Most Congregational, Baptist, Pentecostal, Brethren, and non-denominational churches are thus organized. The congregation votes on hiring a pastor, on spending money, and on all other important matters. Though democratically oriented people may like the idea of congregational government, it is not without its flaws. At best, it often causes the pastor to be directed by the sheep he is supposed to lead. At worst, the pastor is reduced to a hireling.

The Episcopal form of church government is used by Episcopalian, Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox, and Methodist churches (and others). It is controlled by a church hierarchy which may have differing names. Basically, there is a bishop, or someone of similar stature, called by a different name. This person oversees the churches, appoints pastors to pulpits, sets policy, and guides the vision of the local congregations. This style of church government grew out of European monarchies. It unfortunately leaves little freedom for the local pastor or congregation to follow the leading of the Spirit.

The Presbyterian form of church government is typical of the Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Decisions of church policy are placed in the hands of a select group of elders. These "presbytery" are appointed in by various means, depending on the church. The congregation is responsible to the pastor. The pastor is, in turn, is responsible to the elders. This system, too, places the God-appointed leader, the pastor, under the leadership of some of those he is supposed to lead.

Calvary Chapels are differently organized. Church government at Calvary Chapel is very simple, not a complex bureaucracy. Committees and sub-committees are essentially non-existent. Basically, at Calvary Chapel we believe the pastor is responsible for the church, and responsible to hear from God. The pastor is responsible to faithfully feed and love God's people. Elders are appointed in the larger churches to help the pastor care for the spiritual needs of the congregation. Appointed deacons help the pastor to care for the material needs of the church.

In addition, our churches have church boards, as required by most states. Our church boards vary in size, depending on the size of the church. These boards are usually made up of mature Christian businessmen who can advise the pastor on church decisions. Board members also provide advice on business matters, such as property management and investments. At Calvary Chapel, church organization is de-emphasized. Only the organization needed to run the church is instituted. The pastor guides the church as he is led by the Holy Spirit. We trust God to put pastors where He wants them to be.

DOCTRINE

We at Calvary Chapel believe in all the fundamental doctrines of the evangelical Protestant church. For example, we believe in the inerrancy of Scripture - that the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is the inspired, infallible Word of God.

We believe that God is eternally existent in three separate persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe that God the Father is the personal, transcendent, and sovereign creator of all things.

We believe that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human; that He was born of a virgin; lived a sinless life; provided for the atonement of our sins by His vicarious death on the Cross; was bodily resurrected by the power of the Holy Spirit; ascended back to the right hand of God the father; and ever lives to make intercession for us. Jesus poured out His Holy Spirit on the believers in Jerusalem after He ascended to Heaven. This enabled His believers to fulfill His command to preach the Gospel to the entire world, an obligation shared by all believers today.

We believe all people are by nature separated from God and responsible for their own sin. By the grace (unmerited favor) of our Lord Jesus Christ, all are freely offered salvation, redemption, and forgiveness of sins. A person who repents of sin, placing trust for salvation in Jesus Christ, as personal Savior and Lord, is immediately born again and sealed by the Holy Spirit. All that person's sins are forgiven, as he/she becomes a child of God, destined to spend eternity with the Lord.

As previously mentioned, we believe in the proper Scriptural exercise of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Bible, the greatest gift of all being God's love.

At Calvary Chapel, we await the pre-tribulation rapture of the church. Calvary Chapel is strongly committed to a belief that the church will be raptured before the seven-year tribulation period described in Revelation Chapters 6 through 18. While we recognize other believers may hold a different view, this is our view of the Scripture's teaching on this subject.

We believe the second coming of Jesus Christ with His saints to rule on the earth will be personal, pre-millennial, and visible. This motivates us to heartfelt worship, committed service, diligent studying God's Word, and regular fellowship with other Christians. We also participate both in adult baptism by immersion, and in Holy Communion.

Calvary Chapel rejects the teaching of "amillennialism" which spiritualizes scripture and denies the literal 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth as described in Revelation chapter 20.

WHAT WE DO NOT BELIEVE

At Calvary Chapel, we reject some popular doctrines of some Christian groups, believing them to be in error Scripturally. This does not mean that we will not fellowship with those holding these views. It simply means such views are outside the boundaries of what constitutes a Calvary Chapel church. For

example, we reject, as we have already mentioned, "amillennialism", post-millennialism, as well as a mid- or post-tribulation rapture view. At Calvary Chapel, we are strongly pre-millennialists and pre-tribulation rapturists.

We also reject the belief, held by some Pentecostals and charismatics, that Christians can be demon-possessed. The Scripture says "greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world." This makes no sense if a believer can be simultaneously indwelt by both the Holy Spirit and evil spirits. Christians can be attacked by demons, but they cannot be possessed or controlled by them.

In addition, we reject "five-point Calvinism". For our purposes here, it suffices to say Calvary Chapel rejects two of the five points of five-point Calvinism. First, Calvinism teaches that Jesus' atonement on the Cross was limited. Limited atonement is the tenet that Jesus died only for a chosen group, His "elect", not for the sins of the entire world. At Calvary Chapel, we believe that Jesus died on the Cross for the sins of all people. Anyone who wants to can accept Him as Lord and savior and be born again. Strict five-point Calvinists believe only the elect can be saved, and God has elected others to spend eternity in hell.

Secondly, we reject the Calvinistic teaching called "irresistible grace". This is the belief that man cannot, even if he wants to, resist the wooing and calling of God to salvation. Instead, at Calvary Chapel we believe man has a free will, and can resist the call of God if he so chooses. Therefore, those who hold to five-point Calvinism are outside of the borders of what defines Calvary Chapel.

At Calvary Chapel, we also reject the teaching of "positive confession". This is the doctrine put forth by the faith movement teachers, stating we as human beings can have unlimited health and wealth. This doctrine holds because we, like God, have the ability to create our own reality by the confession of our lips. The doctrine teaches if a person confesses health and wealth consistently, that is what they will have. Conversely, the Christian living in sickness or poverty is settling for less than his full inheritance in Christ.

At Calvary Chapel, we observe that many believers, both in daily life, and of the Bible, are often afflicted. This is, we believe, not because their confession is wrong, but simply because believers live in a foreign world. We believe the "health and prosperity doctrine" is a perversion of Scripture, and is often used to fleece the flock of God. We believe we must always submit to His perfect will, even in affliction. Man cannot command God to heal or provide.

We also reject teachings using human prophecy to supersede the Word of God. Some "Christian" groups claim to have prophets and apostles whose stature is greater than those who wrote the Bible. These groups claim the teachings of their prophets and apostles are more valid than, and take precedence over, the Word of God.

At Calvary Chapel, we believe the Bible is the final authority and the complete Word of God for His church today. No prophecy or teaching can ever supersede it. Some churches have incorporated human secular psychology and philosophy into their teaching programs.

Sermons may be based more on secular humanistic theory than on the Word of God. We respect our fellow believers who work in mental health related fields. Nonetheless, we at Calvary Chapel believe the central mission of the church is to proclaim God's Word to a lost and hurting world. It has been our experience moreover, that humanistic psychology and philosophy often do more harm than good. People respond best when God's Word is proclaimed in the power and love of the Holy Spirit. It is God's Word that changes lives for the better. At Calvary Chapels, our services remain centered on the teaching of the Bible. This is not to imply we object to the work of the many dedicated Christian mental health professionals. We thank God for them. Our point is, simply, in our church services we emphasize the teaching of God's Word.

Again, Calvary Chapel rejects the over-emphasis of spiritual gifts and experiential signs and wonders, when it diminishes or excludes Biblical teaching. We are a Bible-based ministry, avoiding

programs and gimmicks in favor of the simple teaching, in love, of the Word of God to His people. Our services focus on a personal relationship with God through worship, prayer, and the teaching God's Word. We offer both expository and topical studies. We do not allow speaking in tongues loudly during services because we do not believe the Holy Spirit would interrupt Himself.

WORSHIP

Many people are under the impression a particular style of worship is insisted upon at Calvary Chapel. That impression of "style" is the soft "Contemporary Sound" made popular by Maranatha! Music and Asaph Records (both originated at Calvary Chapel). Most Calvary Chapels do utilize a form of contemporary worship, though a great variety of styles of music is found. Some worship teams are very traditional and conservative, with organs or pianos and hymns. Other worship teams incorporate electric guitars and drums. There is no set style of worship. This makes a Calvary Chapel unique, as there is wide latitude in worshipful expression. All of us desire that whatever the style of worship, it comes from our hearts.

Some of our churches are filled with elderly people in suits and ties, some are filled with young people in jeans and tee shirts. Many are a combination of all different ages, styles, and races of people. We come together with one common focus: our love for Jesus Christ, and the desire to know Him more intimately.

Larry Taylor mentioned that when speaking at one of the larger Calvary Chapel affiliates, he noted seven different ethnic groups of people were present. These people ranged in age from teenagers to the very elderly. The group gathers there every week, united in and filled with, the love of Jesus - typical of a Calvary Chapel church. Most Calvary Chapels are places where anybody, with any style of dress or musical taste, or culture, feels welcome.

CONCLUSION

By clarifying some of what we believe at Calvary Chapel, our purpose has been to help others less familiar with the movement to gain insight into who we are. It is not our intention to say we are right and others are wrong, nor is it our intention to argue our position with any Christian believer. We are content to agree to disagree. We desire to have nothing but love and fellowship with anyone who calls on the name of our Lord in truth and sincerity.

There are many additional areas of policy and doctrine we could discuss. While we could write volumes in an effort to defend all our positions against other positions, this is not our desire. Our desire is to simply adore Jesus, and we invite all God's people to join us.

On the other hand, others have started churches and called them Calvary Chapel, while holding views and practices very different from what we have described. In our opinion, it would be better if these churches would take a different name more accurately reflecting what their beliefs and practices. This would help to avoid confusing people looking for a ministry in accordance with what we have described.

Many different kinds of people attend and pastor Calvary Chapel affiliated churches. Still, all the Calvary Chapel leadership (men such as Raul Ries, Greg Laurie, Mike MacIntosh, Jeff Johnson, Jon Courson, Skip Heitzig, Don McClure, Steve Mays, Oden Fong, and Wayne Taylor) agree on the essential elements of the basic tenets of Calvary Chapel, as explained here. Their individual styles of ministry, methods of preaching, and visions for outreach vary greatly.

As an individual believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, we welcome you to our churches and Bible College programs, regardless of your background or doctrinal position.

We seek the unity of the Spirit in a bond of peace and love, and believe that God has called us to a unique ministry that fulfills His special purpose in this generation. May God bless you as you seek to draw near to Him in love.