

## What We Believe—Distinctives of Ambassador Bible Fellowship

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These distinctives do not need to be held by all of our members (except the first two), but we want to be upfront with everyone concerning our doctrinal positions on those secondary matters of the Christian faith. Any member who disagrees with these positions is asked to honestly state their theological views, and if they disagree with these official positions, members are asked not to teach anything contrary to these views.

### I. Freemasonry and Secret Societies (Membership Requirement)

We believe that secret societies such as Freemasonry and all of its auxiliaries (Order of the Eastern Star, Rainbow Girls, Order of DeMolay, Job's Daughters, etc.) are incompatible with Biblical Christianity. Freemasonry denies many historic Christian doctrines such as the inerrancy and sole sufficiency of Scripture, the biblical understanding of God's character and attributes, the doctrine of the Trinity, salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, the deity of Jesus, the depravity of man, and the existence of Satan. Additionally, masonry teaches the universal brotherhood of all men and that all mankind will be saved eventually, that a man is saved by his own works and that it is the one immutable religion upon which all other religions are built upon (including Christianity). Such teachings are destructive and subversive to the church and we firmly hold that membership in the local church and involvement in freemasonry or a similar society is incompatible.

### II. Marriage and Sexuality (Membership Requirement)

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one Biblical meaning: namely, marriage is an ordinance instituted and sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive husband-wife union – the meaning that is clearly and uniformly delineated in Scripture. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur exclusively between a man and a woman who are joined in marital union to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged outside a marriage between a man and a woman.

We believe that the only legitimate and accepted form of sexual intimacy is that which occurs within the Biblical definition of marriage. Any form of sexual intimacy outside of the marital union of a man and a woman is in violation of God's ordained purpose for mankind, and constitutes immoral behavior. We hold that sexual immorality includes adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography, transgender function, or disagreement with one's biological sex. We hold that these or related immoral behaviors are sinful and offensive to God, the Sovereign Creator and Judge of all mankind.

We believe that God graciously offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and repent of their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness offered through faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that this offer of mercy and forgiveness includes the full array of sins of immorality noted above in this section.

We believe that every human being is to be afforded dignity and respect without discrimination of persons. We repudiate degrading attitudes or actions communicated toward an individual that demeans personal dignity as a creature made in the image of God.

We believe that the preservation of the function and integrity of the Church as the local Body of Christ requires that all persons employed by Ambassador Bible Fellowship in any capacity, and that all volunteers serving within the function of the Church and any of its ministries, agree with this Statement on Marriage & Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly in abiding conformity. Furthermore, all individuals involved in any ministry operation, activity or event at Ambassador Bible Fellowship are expected to uphold the principles and perspectives set forth in this Section, and individuals or organizations desiring use of any facility of Ambassador Bible Fellowship must also comply with the policies and practices set forth in this Section.

### III. Expository Preaching and a Literal-Grammatical-Historical Hermeneutic

We believe that God's Word is truth, and that it has the power to sanctify the believer (John 17:17) and bring salvation to the unbeliever (Rom. 10:13-15). Thus, the primary responsibility of a preacher and of the church, is to teach the word of God in its literal, grammatical, and historical context. Expository preaching may be defined as "laying open the text to public view in order to set forth its meaning, explain what is difficult to understand, and make appropriate application."<sup>1</sup>

While there will be occasional messages that are on a specific topic of doctrine or aspect of Christian life, the majority of the sermons coming from the pulpit of ABF will be expository in nature, working through an entire book or section of a book in a verse by verse fashion over an extended period of time, in order to better understand the truth contained therein. When done effectively, expository preaching will follow the Biblical model of Nehemiah 8:6-8, in which Ezra and the other scribes, read from the Law of God, translated it, and explained it to the people with the ultimate goal that the people would understand God's Word and be motivated to apply it to their lives.

### IV. Literal Six Day Creation

We believe that God created the heavens, the earth and all that is contained within them in six, literal, twenty-four-hour days (Gen. 1:1-2:4) and that there was no death in God's creation prior to the sin of Adam and Even in the garden (Rom. 5:12; Gen. 3). The normal reading of Genesis 1-2 leads to an understanding of six literal days, and this is undoubtedly how Moses (the author of Genesis) and the second generation of Israel (the original audience of Genesis) would have understood the passage (Ex. 20:11). While there are many usages and meanings of the word "day" in the Hebrew language (Gen. 3:14; 5:4; 6:4; 10:25; 49:1), when "day" is connected

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<sup>1</sup> Richard L. Mayhue, *MacArthur Pastor's Library on Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), 8.

with a numerical adjective, it is always in reference to a literal twenty-four-hour day (cf. Gen. 7:4, 10; 21:4, etc.). Additionally, in Matthew 19:4-6, Jesus connected the creation of male and female (Gen. 1:2-2:25) with "the beginning" (Gen. 1:1).

## V. Biblical Counseling

We believe that the word of God is completely sufficient to address and counsel the souls of men through every issue of life (2 Pet. 1:3). God is the ultimate counselor of the soul (Isa. 9:6) and His word can regenerate hearts (1 Pet. 1:23), foster reverence for God, protect from sin, provide wisdom, discernment, comfort (Ps. 119:9-11, 38, 66, 76, 133), as well as to instruct, reprove, correct, train in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16-17), restore the soul, make the simple to be wise, cause the heart to rejoice, and enlighten the eyes (Ps. 19:7-9). Soul care is the prerogative of Scripture, the Spirit, and the Church. Biological ailments of the body and the brain are the prerogative of those trained in nutrition, medicine, and exercise. It is also understood that a believer's spiritual condition can affect his physical health (Ps. 19:7-8, 32:1-7) and vice versa (1 Kings 18:45-19:8). Therefore, our counseling is based upon scriptural principles rather than those of secular psychology or psychiatry. Unless they specifically state otherwise, none of those who counsel in this church are trained or licensed as psycho-therapists or mental health professionals, nor should they be expected to follow the methods of such specialists.

## VI. Bible Translations

We believe that the Scriptures are inspired and inerrant in their original autographs and that there are many good translations of God's Word in the English language. As languages are fluid and change over time, it is helpful to have translations that clearly convey the original languages in a modern vernacular. Our Lead Pastor currently teaches from the ESV, but there are many other translations that are acceptable, and we do not exalt one translation as "the only Bible" to read and study.

## VII. Sovereignty of God in Salvation

### A. Divine Election

We teach that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:4-11; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1Pet. 1:1, 2).

We teach that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Ezek. 18:23, 32; 33:11; Jn. 3:18, 19, 36; 5:40; 2Th 2:10-12; Rev 22:17). Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith and all who come in faith the Father will receive (Jn. 6:37-40, 44; Ac 13:48; Jas 4:8).

We teach that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part nor to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Eph. 1:4–7; Tit 3:4–7; 1 Pet. 1:2).

We teach that election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love (Ro 9:11–16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Mt 11:25–28; 2 Tim. 1:9).<sup>2</sup>

#### B. Eternal Security

We teach that all the redeemed once saved are kept by God's power and thus are secure in Christ forever (John 5:24, 6:37-50, 10:27-30, 17:15-20; Romans 5:9-10, 8:1, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:24, 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24). However, believers must never take advantage of their salvation by using Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living (Romans 6:15-22, 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, 25-26; Titus 2:11-15).

#### C. Fruit of Salvation

We are convinced that repentance and faith are two sides to the same coin (Mk. 1:15; Acts 20:21). Meaning that all true believers will turn from sin (repentance) and turn to Christ (faith). Repentance and faith cannot be separated in relation to salvation. "Faith" without repentance is merely an intellectual assent to the existence of God and the truth of the gospel and does not lead to salvation, since "the demons also believe and shudder" (James 2:19). In the same way, attempting to reform your life by "getting right" (i.e., repentance without faith), will never lead to salvation (Gal. 2:16; 3:11).

Since these two (repentance and faith) cannot be separated, all genuine believers will evidence deeds appropriate to repentance (Acts 26:20; Mt. 3:8) as well as manifesting the fruit of salvation/genuine faith (James 2:14-26): love for God (Deut. 6:5) and others (John 13:34-35), prayer (1 Thess. 5:17), the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), devotion to God's glory (1 Cor. 10:31), spiritual growth (John 15:1-6) and obedience to God's word (John 14:21).

"Therefore, it is clearly contrary to the New Testament evidence to speak about the possibility of having true saving faith without having any repentance for sin. It is also contrary to the New Testament to speak about the possibility of someone accepting Christ "as Savior" but not "as

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<sup>2</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006).

Lord," if that means simply depending on him for salvation but not committing oneself to forsake sin and to be obedient to Christ from that point on."<sup>3</sup>

#### VIII. Complementary Roles of Men and Women

We believe that God created men and women to be equal, as both are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), but within this equality men and women are to have differing but complementary roles in marriage (Genesis 2:18). This was God's original design for creation and He Himself declared this order to be good (Gen. 1:31). This creation order is the foundation for the Apostles' teaching concerning the role of women in the church, that they should not teach or exercise authority over men (1 Tim. 2:11-15; 1 Cor. 11:3; 14:33b-35). We firmly believe and teach the complementary roles of men and women in the home and in the church as they are presented in Scripture (1 Corinthians 11:3, 8-12, Ephesians 5:22-33, 1 Peter 3:1-7, Colossians 3:18-19, 1 Timothy 2:8-15, Titus 2:1-6). We also acknowledge that there have been abuses and perversions of God's design for the harmonious and complementary roles of men and women and we are grieved by these abuses. We value the God-ordained role that women have in the church to disciple other women (Titus 2:3-5), to disciple children (1 Tim. 2:15; Dt. 6:5-9; Eph. 6:1-4) and to use their spiritual gifts for the edification of all the saints (Eph. 4:15-16; 1 Tim. 3:11).

#### IX. Spiritual Gifts

We teach that there were two kinds of spiritual gifts given to the early church: temporary confirming gifts and permanent edifying gifts. With the New Testament revelation complete, the confirming gifts are no longer a necessary criterion (1 Corinthians 13:8b-12) for evaluating the validity of a man and his message since they can be counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive even believers (1 Corinthians 13:13-14:12; Colossians 2:18; Revelation 13:13-14). Thus, we teach that the temporary confirming gifts—miraculous healing, speaking in tongues (unlearned languages), interpretation, and the working of sign miracles—gradually ceased as the New Testament Scriptures were completed and their authority became established (compare 1 Corinthians 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4; and Acts 19:11-12 with 1 Corinthians 12:1-31). We teach that no one individual possesses the gift of healing today, but that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith on the part of every believer, and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1-6; John 5:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15).

If you would like more resources on this topic we would encourage you to listen to the following seminars by Dr. Nathan Busenitz on the modern claims for continuation of the

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<sup>3</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 714.

miraculous gifts:

[Closet Cessationists](#)

### [Charismatic Counterfeits: Do the Modern Gifts Meet the Biblical Standard?](#)

#### X. Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that baptism is an act of obedience and a part of our Christian discipleship, commanded of all believers (Matt. 28:18-20), however, baptism as a human act is not able to save anyone. The Scriptures clearly state that no one is saved through any of their own works or actions (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5), rather we are justified (saved) on the basis of faith in Christ's person and work. The fact that baptism does not save is clear in Scripture as we see examples of some being saved without being baptized (the thief on the cross; Luke 23:39-43) and others being baptized without being saved (Simon the magician; Acts 8:9-24).

While baptism is not effective for bringing about salvation in the believer, it is effective for our sanctification, as it serves as a visible illustration and proclamation of the gospel. We believe that baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him (Col. 1:27) in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Rom. 6:1-11; Col. 2:11-15). Baptism is also a sign of fellowship and corporate identification with the visible Body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42).

We see baptism as the inauguration of the believer's identification with Christ, and participation in the Lord's Table as the continuation of the believer's identification with Christ. While we do not require people to be members of ABF to partake of communion with us, we open the Lord's Table only to those who have been baptized by immersion in agreement with the understanding of baptism described above.

For additional information on our position, listen to this message entitled "[Publicly Identifying with Jesus](#)"

#### XI. Pre-Tribulation Rapture

We teach the personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ before the seven-year tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Titus 2:13) to translate His church from this earth (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-5:11) and, between this event and His glorious return with His saints, to reward believers according to their works (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).