



Our Statement on Secondary Doctrinal Issues

In addition to our doctrinal statement on the core doctrines of our church, we believe it is necessary to provide our congregation with our viewpoint as a leadership on the 'secondary issues' contained in this document. These are not primary doctrines of the faith, but are nonetheless important for several reasons. First, all truth is God's truth. We must seek to understand God's mind on all issues of our lives. You can be sure that God has a stance on these issues and that His stance is recorded in His Word. This document contains our convictions about God's mind on these matters. Second, clearly in the last days, one of Satan's attacks against God's church will be to corrupt its doctrine. Sadly, his goal, which will be partially successful, is to corrupt the teachers of the churches so that they themselves spread the false doctrine (2 Tim 4:1-5). We desire to be accountable to our people. Study the Word, screen what we say with His truth, and help us stay in line with sound doctrine. Finally, Satan is busy at dividing the church. It is his goal to so segment the body of Christ that we are rendered powerless and ineffective. While we grieve at how many denominations have been formed over secondary issues, we believe it is nonetheless important that we present God's truth on these issues. It is possible that you may read this document and not be in full agreement with our teaching. Our hope is that in pursuit of unity in the body of Christ, you will decide not to divide over issues that are secondary. We believe that salvation is by faith in Jesus alone. May that provide for us a unity that can keep us together in spite of far less important differences. Yet, we must say, the teaching included in this document and our primary doctrinal statement does represent the doctrine of the leadership of this church. It is what we will faithfully proclaim. While Uniontown is large enough to house people with different beliefs, it would not be wise for the church to allow other viewpoints to be taught here. May God use this effort to both preserve the purity of His doctrine and the unity of His church.

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE AND MISSION OF UNIONTOWN

We believe that the chief end of humanity is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. The ultimate purpose in living is to know and glorify God and to attain eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, beginning within our own families and then reaching out to a suffering humanity that does not know of His love and sacrifice.

The essence of Christlikeness can be defined in one word: love. We are called to relate to God with loving worship and to relate to one another with loving ministry (Matthew 22:35-40). Therefore our mission is to become a holy people of the holy God glorifying Him by imaging and proclaiming Jesus.

TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP ROLES

We believe that both men and women should utilize their spiritual giftedness within the parameters outlined in Holy Scriptures. However, the general oversight and teaching ministries within the local church are limited by Scripture to men who meet the biblical requirements. The doctrine and direction of our church is overseen by a team of elders. The management of our staff is directed by an executive pastor. The elders and executive pastor are leadership positions filled by men who fit the qualifications for overseers outlined in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Women have vital oversight and teaching ministries within the church to women, children, and in joint-teaching roles with their husbands or other men. (1 Corinthians 14:33-37; 1 Timothy 2:9-15; 3:1-12; 5:9-16; 2:3-4). Women also serve in key roles on our staff or on our staff core teams. We believe the Bible describes these roles under the description of deaconesses (e.g. Romans 16:1, Phoebe). Thus, there is room for women to exercise the gift of leadership at Uniontown but always under the oversight and authority of the men whom God has called to lead His church.

BIBLICAL TEACHING AND PREACHING

We believe that the focus of biblical teaching and preaching is to speak the truth in love so that the entire body is equipped to love God, love believers, and love those who do not yet know Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16). All biblical teaching and preaching seek to explain the truth of Scripture and to relate that truth to the daily life and relationships of the hearer because knowledge without love puffs up self, while biblical knowledge applied in love builds up others (1 Corinthians 8:1).

Preaching at Uniontown is nearly always verse by verse, systematically working our way through a book in the Bible. We break the book into manageable chunks and present each chunk as a four to six week series. The title of each series reflects why the Bible was written: to point the way to God and to give wisdom on how to face the daily pressures of life. Our preaching often includes humor because laughter is a wonderful tool to break down walls of resistance and to maintain attention in our fast-paced, media-dominated, sound-bite world.

WORSHIP FORMAT

Worship is a verb. It is not something that we come to church to observe. It is something we come to church to do. We come to give God the honor that is due Him. Since God is our Savior and has done so many wonderful things for us, we come to His house to celebrate Him. We celebrate God by singing upbeat songs of praise, clapping (Ps 47:1), shouting (Ps 20:5), dancing (Ex 15:20), standing (Neh 9:5), and giving Him a generous offering of our money (Deut 12:4). But God is also holy. We show our recognition of His holiness by singing slower songs of dedication, confessing our sins, kneeling at the altar, and bowing our heads in reverence. Both aspects of worship – celebration and reverence – are necessary if we are truly encountering God and giving Him the honor that is due Him.

At Uniontown, we primarily sing the songs of our day, songs written within a few years of our current time. Repeatedly, the Bible tells us to sing a new song. We honor that command from God by introducing to our worship nearly 20 songs a year. Several of the old hymns of the faith have stood the test of time not only because of their rich content but because the beat of the song makes it still singable today. We incorporate those hymns into our worship as they fit the theme of the morning. Our goal is not to preserve tradition or to educate people on the history of hymnology. Our focus is worshipping God and we choose the songs that will allow us to do that the best. Our focus is not on the music but on the God to whom we direct our praise.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER AND THE MODERN TONGUES MOVEMENT

1. We believe that all believers are baptized in the Holy Spirit. Receiving the Holy Spirit is not a subsequent event after salvation.

We must be careful when interpreting Scripture to use the whole of Scripture and not individual verses to determine doctrine. We must also realize the purpose of individual books of the Bible. This is critical when trying to interpret individual verses within a particular book. With these principles in mind, we can address the verses often used to show that tongues and the baptism of the Spirit are acts that occur sometime after a person is saved.

The Book of Acts is a transitional book. It's a book aimed at describing the 'acts' of the apostles and the early church. Why was a transition needed? Some background is needed to understand this. Salvation has always been by faith. In the OT, the object of that faith changed from time to time. For Adam and Eve it was faith in God through the observance of a single command. For those after the giving of the law, it was faith in God through the observance of a whole set of laws. But it has always been by faith that a person is saved. After Jesus' finished work on the cross, salvation continued to be by faith. But now salvation is by faith in what Jesus did for us. God was in the process of bringing all nations into a saving relationship with Him through Jesus. After the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost, believers immediately were baptized in the Spirit. This is obvious from Acts 10 where the Gentiles received the Spirit upon salvation. The disciples of John also received the Spirit the moment they placed their faith in Jesus. Only in Acts 8 do we see baptism come after salvation. Why is that? Remember again, this is a transitional book and we should expect some events to occur for the first and only time. The Samaritans were a rival religion to the Jewish faith and were considered at best 'half-breeds.' There is something unique about who they were (something which we don't completely understand) that set them apart and gave them an experience that no other believers had. They received the Spirit secondarily, but that event only strengthened the faith of the Jews that they could indeed be saved. God in His wisdom didn't give them the Spirit until Peter and John came from Jerusalem to Samaria. The testimony of these two giants who witnessed the baptism personally would prove to be very persuasive later to the Jewish believers that God could also save the likes of a Samaritan. Apparently that's at least a part of why God allowed it to happen that way.

Charles Ryrie (The Holy Spirit, p. 74) says this about the baptism of the Spirit:

This (and perhaps the temporary character of certain spiritual gifts) is the most confusing aspect of the entire doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Confusion of this sort is most difficult to combat since it is bound up with experience; and it is always difficult, if not impossible, to show that experience is wrong – especially if the doctrine might be stretched to cover the experience.

There are four reasons to believe that the baptism of the Spirit is universal among all believers in this age:

- A. 1 Corinthians 12:13 clearly shows that all believers are baptized by the Holy Spirit. The Greek phrase *en pneumatikē* is the same phrase that occurs in Acts 1:5 and is exhibited throughout the Book of Acts. Paul did not say that only the spiritual element had been baptized, but indeed all the believers had been. The truth is if someone is not baptized in the Spirit, they are not a part of the body of Christ. (Compare Galatians 3:27).
- B. Colossians 2:12, baptism is the act whereby we are identified with Jesus in his death and resurrection. This cannot refer to water baptism since water doesn't save (1 Peter 3:21-22). We are left to conclude the baptism here is by the Spirit, without which the work of Christ has not become effectual in our lives. In other words, without the baptism of the Spirit we are not saved.
- C. Ephesians 4:5 says there is only one baptism and that it belongs to all believers just like 'one Lord' and 'one faith' do.
- D. The New Testament has no references encouraging believers to seek the baptism of the Spirit. You would expect that if this were a later work, all believers would be exhorted to ask for something of such importance.

2. We do not believe that anyone has the power to pray over another with the laying on of hands to give them the Holy Spirit.

At times in Scripture in the transitional book of Acts God used key authority figures like Paul, Peter, and John to be present when He sent His Holy Spirit (Acts 8, 19). He did not use these men because they had the gift of giving the Spirit (Acts 8:19-20) but because their testimony of observing the salvation of questionable types (Samaritans, Gentiles, Disciples of John) would prove persuasive to the Jewish church. God gives the Holy Spirit to all believers at the moment of salvation. He is the Giver of the Spirit, not man.

3. We do not believe that tongues are necessary for praying in the Spirit.

Jesus clearly prayed in the Spirit but did not use tongues (Luke 10:21). Tongues was never a 'more Spirit-filled way to pray.' In fact, when Paul tells the Corinthians to 'speak to themselves and to God,' it is not the ideal situation but the result of an interpreter not being present (1 Cor 14:28). It's important to note in that place, that the person should keep quiet when doing this. Thus, no one should be able to hear the person praying in the Spirit. The truth is as Paul clearly states, all our praying should be in the Spirit, but it should also be

with our mind fully aware of what we are praying (1 Cor 14:15). One of the key jobs of the Spirit is to teach us how to pray even when we are unable to verbalize the true emotion of our hearts (Romans 8:26).

4. We do not believe the gift of tongues ever represented someone 'going deeper,' 'getting more of God,' or getting to a higher level spiritually. In the Book of Acts, tongues verified that non-Jews could be saved (Acts 8, 10). In Corinthians, the gift of tongues was simply one of the many gifts given by the Spirit to certain individuals. Clearly, not everyone spoke in tongues as Paul shows by his rhetorical question, expecting a negative answer (1 Cor 12:27-30). Thus to speak in tongues was no more godly an act than having God-given administrative skills or showing hospitality to strangers. The danger of this higher level kind of thinking is that it produces division. Paul dealt with that interestingly enough particularly in the church at Corinth, a church that abused spiritual gifts. Where did it lead them? They began to assign greater significance to certain leaders who had reached the highest level (1 Cor 3:4-6). Paul gives them the answer that we all need to remember, 'So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow' (1 Cor 3:7).

5. We do not believe the modern tongues movement practices the spiritual gift of tongues revealed in Acts 2 and regulated in 1 Corinthians 14. The miraculous gifts of the early church was a temporary gift that served to validate the work of the apostles, to show non-believers the power of the gospel, and to prove to the Jews that non-Jews could indeed be saved. We believe this gift is not active today and has not been active since the days of the early church.

6. We believe that this is a non-essential doctrine, and that it should not serve as a wedge between those who have placed their faith and trust for their salvation in Jesus Christ. We love our Charismatic brothers and sisters in Christ and look forward to eternity when God will put aside our differences once and for all and unite us together in pleasing worship to Him. While our church is open to believers who hold to Charismatic beliefs, it is requested that behaviors associated to the modern tongues movement not be exercised or promoted at any function associated with this church (1 Cor 11:8; 12:4-11; 14:1-4; Eph 4:7-12; Heb 2:1-4).

THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

We believe that human life is of inestimable worth and significance in all its dimensions, including the unborn, the aged, the widowed, the mentally handicapped, the unattractive, the physically challenged, and every other condition in which humanness is expressed from conception to the grave.

Human life is a gift from God to be cherished from the time of conception until natural death. All humans have the God-given right and responsibility to enjoy the length of life willed by their Creator. God is sovereign over the giving and taking of life. Human life begins at conception, each soul an immediate creation of God, and continues until the soul is separated from the body in death. We are therefore pro-life (Genesis 1:27; Psalm 139:13-16; Job 10:8-10; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Romans 5:12; 1 Peter 4:1-2).

HUMAN SEXUALITY

We believe that all humans are created by God as either male or female. Sexual relations between husband and wife are commended by God, solely to be enjoyed within the marital estate. Premarital, extramarital, and homosexual relations are prohibited in Holy Scripture (Genesis 1:27; 2:18-24; Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Hebrews 13:4). Let's be clear on this. God hates the sin but loves the sinner. As a church, our goal is to love people who are ensnared in these lies of Satan. Sinners of all kinds are welcome at Uniontown. But because of our love for them, we have to tell them the truth – this is not God's way to live. Come as you are. Meet God here. And He will change your life.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

We believe that the institution of marriage is intended by God to be a permanent, lifelong relationship between a man and a woman, regardless of trials, sickness, financial reverses or emotional stresses that may ensue. We believe that the foundation of a healthy marriage is mutual love for Christ and mutual submission to one another with the husband called to love, nourish and cherish his wife and the wife called to love, encourage and respect her husband.

Concerning Marriage Preparation. Any couple desiring to be married by our church is expected to meet biblical standards. All couples preparing for marriage are exhorted to abstain from sexual relations until they enter the marriage covenant. Cohabiting couples are required to take up separate residences and commit to a lifestyle of sexual purity prior to entering our church's pre-marital process. Marriage preparation will be offered only to those couples willing to adhere to these standards. Wedding ceremonies will not be performed for couples unwilling to abide by these biblical guidelines.

We believe that children are a heritage from God and a blessing from his hand. We are therefore accountable to Him for raising, shaping, and preparing them for a life of service to His Kingdom and to humanity. Husbands and wives have joint responsibility for the physical and spiritual well-being of one another and their children in marriage. Additionally, God has called men to the responsibility of loving leadership within their homes (Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Ephesians 5:22-31; 6:4; Colossians 3:21).

Concerning Family/Baby Dedication. God's design for the family is that a man and woman unite as husband and wife. Marriage is indisputably God's way of establishing a family. It is God's will that marriage precede childbearing, but we recognize that this is not always the case among couples. An unmarried couple desiring to dedicate a child to the Lord must adhere to the same standards mentioned above: purity, abstinence, and separate residences. A single parent wishing to participate in a dedication service must also live according to God's standards by maintaining a pure lifestyle while celibate.

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

We believe that the blessings and obligations of marriage are permanent. They are legitimately terminated only by death, adultery, or desertion. (Jeremiah 29:6; Malachi 2:16; Mark 10:7-9; Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:1-17). We believe that spousal abuse is a form of desertion when the abuse is persistent, and the abuser is unrepentant and rejects efforts to restore the relationship. Husbands who abuse their wives have in fact deserted their vows to love them as Jesus loves the church.

A woman is not bound by the marriage vow to remain in a dangerous environment and should not stay in the home if her or her children's safety cannot be assured. Our church maintains an active role in protecting and helping the victims of spousal abuse. We see it as a growing problem in marriages today. Our goal is twofold: to provide immediate relief and protection from the abuse and to help both parties receive God's healing individually so the marriage covenant can be restored. In some cases, these marriages cannot be restored because one or both parties are unwilling to submit to God's will.

Divorce without biblical grounds, like any transgression of God's plan, is forgivable and the person is capable of restoration to any function in our church other than eldership (1 Timothy 3:1-7). Those who have been divorced without biblical grounds are to remain single. Divorce with biblical grounds or divorce prior to salvation would not prohibit the individual from any ministry in our congregation for which they are otherwise equipped, including eldership. We offer hope and healing to those experiencing the pain of the dissolution of a marriage relationship.

CHRIST'S LAW AND CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

We believe that Jesus Christ, having satisfied the demands of God's law through his perfect life and atoning death, rightfully establishes Himself as the standard for Christian living. Jesus, not the Mosaic Law, is the believer's standard of righteousness, because the law reached its fulfillment in Him (Mt. 5:17; Rom. 10:4). Therefore, Christians are called to follow Jesus' example and obey His teachings, including those commands He has given to us through his apostles (Mt 28:20; Jn. 14:15; Rom. 15:2-5; 1 Pt. 2:21). This is the rule of life the Bible refers to as the "perfect law", "royal law", or "law of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2; Js. 2:8). However, because all of Scripture is ultimately the revelation of Jesus and his righteousness, Christians must carefully study the entire Bible in order to be firmly established and fully equipped (2 Tim. 3:16,17). While the Bible is clear that no one will be justified (declared righteous) by observing the law (Rom. 3:20), Christians will be edified (built up) by the study of the law and the application of underlying principles found as they pertain to daily living.

In matters of conscience (questionable issues, disputable matters—Romans 14-15) not specifically addressed in the Word of God, we believe in Christian liberty in which each believer gives an account of himself to God, makes every effort to live at peace with and mutually edify one another, and lives to please his neighbor and not himself.

RACIAL EQUALITY AND RECONCILIATION

We believe that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). We believe that it is the responsibility of all people to recognize the lingering effects of the long history of racism in this country and to seek racial reconciliation. We also believe that racism, like all sin, can be confronted and overcome only through prayer and by actively seeking to be obedient to Scripture. Therefore, we are committed to reaching beyond any racial barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.

SCHOOLING AND EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN

We believe that the ultimate responsibility for training up a child falls upon the home (Deuteronomy 6:1-9). Therefore, it is the right and responsibility of each family to select the means of education most appropriate for each child. Home schooling, private schooling, Christian schooling and public schooling all are legitimate means of educating our children; each with a variety of benefits for the individual child.

PREDESTINATION AND FREEWILL

What is predestination?

The Canon of Dort (early 17th century)

The unchangeable purpose of God whereby, before the foundation of the world, out of the whole human race which had fallen by its own fault out of its original integrity into sin and ruin, He has, according to the good pleasure of His will, out of mere grace, chosen in Christ to salvation a certain number of specific men, neither better nor more worthy than others, but with them involved in a common misery (l. 7)

What is freewill?

God has given men the freedom and ability to choose to believe in Him for salvation or to choose against Him for damnation in Hell.

Scriptural support for predestination

God chose Israel out of all the nations to be His covenant people (Deut 4:37; 1 Kgs 3:8)

God chose particular people to serve Him (e.g., Moses, Aaron, David)

The Bible teaches that God chose us to be saved (Romans 8:28-39; Ephesians 1:3-11)

Scriptural support for freewill

Salvation is for those who believe or receive it (John 3:16; John 1:12)

It is possible to reject God and His truth (Romans 1:18f)

Which is it?

We categorize this doctrine as a mystery. The Bible teaches both our election and our freewill. Somehow, as only God in His sovereignty and infinite wisdom can bring about, God chooses us but utilizes our own decision for Him.

Is it possible for two things to be contradictory or mutually exclusive and yet to be true? Consider the virgin birth. Mary got pregnant but did not have intercourse. God brought this about by the Holy Spirit. Consider Jesus. He clearly emptied himself of His glory (Phil 2) but at no point lost His divinity. Yet, He also clearly became a man (John 1:14). Could He be man and God at the same time? Are not these things mutually exclusive? Here is our first lesson in sovereignty – God can do whatever He wants and His ways are high above ours. In other words, He won't fit in our box. We believe that predestination and freewill fit into this category. That's why the church has debated it for so long. That's why there are good people on either side of the debate.

We believe that the Bible teaches both predestination and freewill. Somehow in God's wisdom, they blend together. We must consider it a mystery and put off our final understanding of it for heaven. Meanwhile, we must respect those who differ with us (who believe either predestination or freewill is exclusively true).