

Personal Doctrinal Statement & Philosophy of Ministry

Joel D. Denney

Doctrine

THE WORD

The Bible is the complete, inerrant, infallible, God-breathed revelation, and it is the ultimate authoritative source of all absolute truth. The Bible is completely and fully inspired by God and without error. God's Word has absolute authority over our lives, and it is the believer's guide to living a holy life, and it contains the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is able to make one wise unto salvation. (2 Timothy 3:15-17; John 17:17; Psalm 119:89, 105; Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

THE TRINITY

There is one God who has existed eternally. Within the One Creator, God, are three distinct Persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each with entirely co-equal attributes. The Bible clearly teaches the doctrine of the Trinity. We see each Person of the Trinity active throughout the entire narrative of Scripture, each referred to as God, and each with distinct roles. (Genesis 1:1-2, 26; John 1:1-3, 14, 14:26; 1 Timothy 1:17).

JESUS – HIS NATURE

Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. The Word clearly teaches the eternal existence of the Son, and Jesus claims that He is God as well. The fullness of Deity dwelled bodily in Jesus. John's Gospel is clear, in that his main goal was that people would know that Jesus is God and able to save. Jesus also received worship as God. Jesus conquered death, and reigns eternally, making possible eternal life for all who trust in Him. (John 1:1-3, 14, 5:18, 8:58, 20:28-31; Colossians 1:15-17, 2:9; Hebrews 1:3).

JESUS – THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, and Mary conceived of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Without the virgin birth, sin would remain in the line of the Messiah, meaning that he would not be sinless, and he would be unable to produce the perfect righteousness needed for sinners to be saved (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22-23; Luke 1:34-35; Romans 5:12-19).

JESUS – HIS SINLESS LIFE

Jesus lived a completely sinless life, perfect in every way and in obedience to the Father's will. Because Jesus lived a sinless life, He was able to provide the pure sacrifice necessary to provide salvation. If Jesus had not remained sinless, He would not have been able to provide a perfect sacrifice, and we would have no hope of redemption. If the Lamb was blemished, the sacrifice would not be accepted before the Father; however, because Jesus was sinless, He was the perfect Lamb of God, able to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29-30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Hebrews 4:15).

JESUS – HIS MIRACLES

The miracles that Jesus performed were authentic, literal miracles. Jesus delivered people from demon possession (Mark 9:14-29), healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-15), made the mute speak (Matthew 9:32-34), and raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:38-44). These miracles are also significant in that there were specific signs the true Messiah would work, such as opening the eyes of the blind (Isaiah 35:5-6; Luke 7:21; Matthew 9:27-31), and in so doing, Jesus was displaying His authority and power as Messiah.

JESUS – HIS ATONING DEATH

Jesus' death upon the cross was necessary for the remission of sins, and His sacrifice upon the cross, in conjunction with His sinless life, provided the pure, acceptable atonement for sin before the Father. It was through His atoning death that forgiveness of sin for all was made available. And all who believe on Him will receive the forgiveness of sins. (1 Corinthians 15:3; Acts 10:42-43; 1 John 1:9, 2:2; Hebrews 9:23-28).

JESUS – HIS RESURRECTION

Jesus physically rose from the grave on the third day after His crucifixion in a glorified body. Without the bodily resurrection of Jesus, there would be no legitimate hope of eternal life, there would be no remission of sin, and no sure basis for the Christian faith. In the resurrection, God declared the sacrifice of Jesus acceptable. Without the resurrection, the teachings of Jesus would be rendered void, and we would be without hope (1 Corinthians 15:12-20). But, because of Christ's resurrection, believers have full hope of deliverance from sin and death, a bodily resurrection, and the reality of a coming life lived in eternity with the Lord. (Matthew 28:6; Romans 5:10; Romans 6:5-11; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, 50-57).

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, a Personal being, not an impersonal force. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 14:26). For the believer, He seals them, and indwells each believer. He also leads each believer in sanctification (becoming more like Jesus). He testifies of Jesus and empowers the believer for the work of ministry, giving gifts to be used for the edification of the Church. The Holy Spirit comforts and protects believers and intercedes for them in prayer. He is also the author of Scripture (John 14:26, John 16:5-15; Ephesians 1:13-14; Galatians 5:22-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Romans 8:26-27; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

THE HOLY SPIRIT – BAPTISM

At the moment of salvation, the believer is indwelt with the Holy Spirit, where the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the believer's life at salvation (en). The believer is baptized into the Body of Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:13). The Holy Spirit is the Helper, the Comforter who is with the believer day-to-day (para). There is a subsequent baptism, or filling, of the Holy Spirit (epi) to the conversion experience (the conversion experience of the believer is where the Holy Spirit indwells, seals, and is with the believer). The subsequent experience of baptism of the Holy Spirit (after the conversion/indwelling experience) is for the believer to have power to be a witness of Christ to the world and for service in the body of Christ through the spiritual gifts.

Just before Jesus ascends to Heaven, He promises He will send the Holy Spirit to give them power to be His witnesses in all the earth (Acts 1:8) and commanded them to wait in Jerusalem until the Spirit empowered them. We read in Acts 2 that the Holy Spirit came upon the believers in the upper room. They had previously trusted Jesus and had been indwelt with

the Holy Spirit, and they were waiting and anticipating the baptism of the Spirit in obedience to what Jesus had said. This empowering is the overflow of the Holy Spirit in their lives for service in God's Kingdom, that they would go out in the power of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of Jesus and to use their spiritual gifts in edifying the Church.

One is filled with the Holy Spirit by yielding to Him, asking the Lord to empower him or her for service in His Kingdom, and seeking to be used by God. Jesus says that those who seek, knock, and ask are those who find, have the door opened, and receive; each of these promises relate to the promise of the Holy Spirit. Each believer needs this empowering baptism of the Holy Spirit for effective service to the Lord (Luke 3:16, 11:9-13; Acts 2:4, 17, 9:44-48).

THE HOLY SPIRIT – GIFTS

All of the spiritual gifts that we see in Scripture are still in operation today. The Holy Spirit distributes gifts to each member of the Church as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:11), so that each may use them for the edification and profit of the Church (1 Corinthians 12:7, Ephesians 4:11-12). Paul especially encourages the believers to seek out the Spiritual Gifts, that they may prophesy, and that speaking in tongues ought not be forbidden (1 Corinthians 14:1-5, 39). No Scripture teaches that any gifts of the Spirit will cease in the Church, or after the apostolic age.

God is a God of order, and we have instruction to use the gifts of the Spirit decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40). Therefore, during a teaching service, the Spirit will not interrupt Himself (example being someone shouting out in tongues during a teaching, etc.). While someone is teaching the Bible during a service, the gift of teaching, exhortation, or prophecy is in use. In conversations between services among believers, gifts like encouragement, exhortation, word of knowledge, or other gifts may be used. Pastoral leadership ought to provide dedicated times for the gifts to be exercised corporately and guide them to operate in the manner taught in Scripture, such as our Encounter service where we are seeking the Lord to move through the gifts.

ORDINANCES – BAPTISM

Water baptism is an outward, physical representation of the inward, spiritual transformation that happens at the moment of salvation in the life of the believer. The immersion in water represents the believer having died in the likeness of Christ, and the raising up out of the water represents the resurrection of the believer to new life in Christ. The biblical model for baptism is full immersion into water. The Greek word βαπτίζω literally means “to immerse, to submerge, to cleanse by dipping or submerging”. There is no biblical precedent for sprinkling as the form of baptism of believers, rather full immersion.

Water baptism is not necessary for salvation, as salvation is by grace through faith, and it is not of works (Ephesians 2:8-9). However, believers are instructed to be baptized as a matter of obedience to the Lord, declaring publicly before others their trust in Jesus as Savior. This was one of Jesus' commands to the disciples as they went out into the world, to baptize as they went out into the world with the Gospel (Matthew 28:19; Romans 6:3-4 [The baptism in Romans 6:3-4 is about the salvation experience, but provides a picture of what water baptism represents]).

ORDINANCES – THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance given to the Church by the Lord to remember His atoning death upon the cross. The blood of Christ is represented by the cup, and Christ's body that was broken is represented by the bread. The bread and cup are not and do not literally become the body and blood of Jesus upon consumption. Jesus commanded His followers, when sharing communion, to remember Him. In taking of the Lord's Supper, we are proclaiming

His atoning death until He returns. (Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

THE CHURCH

The Church is comprised of all who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ. It is made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus, Christ having brought the two together into one body. He is also the Cornerstone of the Church, holding it all together. Jesus is the head of the church, directing the will of God on earth through the Church (Ephesians 5:23-24). The Church is not merely a building. The Church is to glorify God by living lives of sacrifice to Him, by drawing others to Him/reaching the lost, serving others, to make God known to all, and to carry out God's will on the earth. The early Church devoted themselves to study of God's word, to prayer, and to fellowship, all of which are signs of a healthy church. (Mark 16:14-18; Ephesians 2:11-22, Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; 1 Peter 1:4-7; Acts 2:42).

THE CHURCH – RAPTURE

The Rapture of the Church happens prior to the Tribulation period, and nothing needs to happen before this event. During the Rapture, the dead in Christ will be resurrected first, and then those who are alive in the Lord will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The return of Christ for His Bride in the Rapture is imminent (1 Corinthians 15:50-55; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 5:9-10).

THE CHURCH – 2ND COMING OF CHRIST

The Rapture is a time of deliverance for believers. It is a separate event prior to the Tribulation where the Christians alive at the time will be caught up in the air to meet Jesus, and the dead in Christ will rise. Believers will be raptured and those who are dead in Christ will be resurrected because believers are not appointed to wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

Jesus' physical return to the earth will happen at what is termed the Second Coming of Christ. This is a time that is after the 7-year Tribulation, where Jesus will set foot on earth on the Mount of Olives and defeat the powers and kings of the world that have gathered against God and Jerusalem (Revelation 19:11-21). The Second Coming of Christ is a time of judgment upon those who are against Christ, and the forces of the enemy, and Jesus will completely restore Israel, being faithful to His promises throughout the Old and New Testaments to Israel.

THE CHURCH – REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

There is no biblical premise for Replacement Theology. Replacement Theology is the teaching that the promises and prophecies of God toward Israel in the Bible are applied directly to the Church, and no longer to Israel. The Church has not replaced Israel. There is this time gap understood as the Church Age where the Lord is bringing in the fullness of the Gentiles, but God's covenant with His people Israel remains intact, and He will fulfill the many promises of deliverance of Israel found throughout Scripture. One prophecy is an especially clear revelation in the 70 Weeks of Daniel which references God's full restoration of Jerusalem. This prophecy was given directly to the people of Israel, and Daniels 70th Week is yet to come (the Tribulation), after which, Christ will deliver and fully restore Israel, and will rule and reign on earth. The Bible also teaches specifically the sealing of the 144,000 Jewish believers in Jesus through the Tribulation (Revelation 7:4-8; 14:1-5). These promises, and many others, are directed toward Israel, and I believe God intends to fulfill these prophecies literally, just like every other promise he made to them. Paul also teaches that Israel's heart has been hardened for a time, but a remnant will be preserved, and God will ultimately complete His promises of restoration and deliverance to Israel. (Daniel 9:24-27; Romans 11:1-27).

Philosophy of Ministry

BIBLICAL COUNSELING

The Bible is authoritative over every aspect of our lives, including relationships, emotions, and lifestyle. Biblical Counseling is not simply space where problems are divulged and people are told what they want to hear. Biblical counseling at its foundation is for believers who are submitted to God's Word. This isn't to say that counsel cannot or should not be given to unbelievers if they inquire about the Lord. Yet we believe that the Holy Spirit works in the lives of people, through God's Word, to affect change toward Christlikeness.

Within biblical counseling, we must listen to the concerns of those in need, but we must be diligent hear God's instruction, and be faithful to give that wise counsel that has its root in Scripture, speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). The Holy Spirit is also the Helper and the Comforter (John 16:7), and He is able to bring wisdom and peace to those in trouble. Biblical counseling is part of a whole—the greater discipleship of the church (teaching God's Word, fellowship, devotion to prayer and service in His kingdom).

DIVORCE

Marriage is sacred to the Lord, and is a Covenant made between God, Husband, and Wife. The Lord hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), and God desires that each marriage remain intact. I believe that there are two circumstances that Scripture speaks of that give basis for divorce:

- 1.) Adultery (Matthew 5:32, 19:9). Jesus addresses the issue of divorce, and instructs that if there is infidelity, it is a basis for divorce.
- 2.) An unbelieving spouse leaves the marriage, refusing to remain married (1 Corinthians 7:5). Paul gives instructions that believers who have come to be saved since being married are to remain married and not seek divorce from an unbelieving spouse. So, this is not something that is to be sought out, but if the unbelieving spouse leaves the marriage with no hope of reconciliation, there appears to be a basis for the believer to let that spouse leave.

Though these circumstances are given in Scripture, I firmly believe that God's primary will is that marriages stay intact, and divorce is an absolute last resort for these two circumstances. All efforts for reconciliation should be exhausted, as it is God's heart for there to not be divorce.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

The funds that are given to the church are given to the Lord. As with anything, we must be faithful stewards of that which God gives. One basic, but useful tool is to have budgets arranged and decided upon by the elders for various ministries/ministry functions, for salaries for staff, etc. I will be active in casting the vision for the ministry, giving input into what I believe the Lord would lead me to do with the ministry funds, but also to hear the input of godly men (through budgets, conversation) in how to prayerfully use the funds received. I, along with the leadership, must be careful to utilize the budget, and also instruct those who serve alongside to be mindful of budgets that have been set up based on the principle of good stewardship. The practical ways I see this worked out is through purchase requests, establishing yearly budgets, and looking over regular reports.

The pastor must also be an example to the flock, being diligent to maintain accountability with the financial management with the church. Stewardship is the plumb line in Scripture with how pastors are to deal with financial responsibilities, seeking to be honest and diligent regarding how the Lord desires funds to be managed within the ministry. This should also be reflected in the pastor's personal life, managing finances well as a good steward in the home.

The pastor should not be greedy or allow the desire for riches to dominate (Matthew 6:24; 1 Timothy 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7; 1 Corinthians 4:2). Faithfulness and stewardship are key.

TITHES/OFFERINGS & FUNDRAISING

I appreciate the approach to having boxes to receive tithes and offerings, and I would utilize that approach. There's nothing wrong with passing a plate/bucket around, and there's nothing more spiritual about putting a box out in the back of the sanctuary. Whatever the method, it should be emphasized that giving should be from the heart to the Lord.

In accordance with teaching the whole counsel of Scripture, as it addresses giving financially to the Lord, we ought to be faithful to communicate to the body how we are to give (with a cheerful heart, as a generous giver; 2 Corinthians 9:5, 7) and what the needs are of the Church, but to trust the Lord that He will work on the hearts of His people, and that He will provide all that is needed financially for ministry.

I believe that God will provide all that is necessary for His ministry to function. Also, with consideration of larger projects (building projects, etc.), or any ministry function, I have great reservation of holding any special/church-wide fundraisers or building campaigns (hiring firms to facilitate, thermostat-type fundraising drives). I do not believe it is wrong to let the body of Christ know a vision for a certain ministry/step of faith, and to let the body know about financial needs – this does need to be done. It is necessary to let the body of Christ know what the ministry needs are and to instruct the Church to give as God leads them; however, I believe that the Lord will provide for the needs of His ministry as He leads. I don't think it's wrong to host smaller fundraisers, such as selling coffee or other things of that nature, to put toward a certain ministry (for youth winter/summer camp scholarships, etc.).

CHURCH GOVERNANCE

I am convinced that an appropriate, biblical model for church government is a pastor-led, elder-supported church (to use a combination of common terms, a fusion of Episcopalian/Presbyterian model). There seems to be few examples of specific instruction on church governing styles throughout the NT, but the NT does seem to give some support toward elder-led and pastor-led styles, whereas the congregational style is not prevalent, nor is there really any NT support for such a government style in the Church. It is clear from the NT that there were elders who were appointed to oversee and care for the church (1 Peter 5:1-5; 1 Timothy 3:1; Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23). There is authority given to one who appoints elders as well (Titus 1:5), so it seems as though Titus was to implement the vision the Lord gave Him through the church, but to appoint elders to help carry out that vision. Also, in the OT, Moses led Israel with a supporting base of elders. The Lord spoke to Moses, gave Him direction and commands, and he then led Israel in the ways of the Lord, yet was supported by the elders of Israel (Exodus 18).

While there is no specific NT prescription for church governance, what the NT does place undeniably emphatic importance upon is the character of those who are serving in Church leadership – especially in the overseeing offices of the church (what we would call pastors, elders, deacons/ministry leaders). I believe that the Lord works through godly men within the Church to care for the body of Christ and to shepherd and lead. This is a pattern of male leadership within the church, which has its root in the creation account. This limits, then, the role and responsibility of pastoral leadership and doctrinal authority to men who are qualified according to Scriptural standards found specifically in 1 Timothy and Titus.

With regard to specific ministry vision, I believe the lead pastor has the freedom and authority by the Lord to direct the ministry as the Lord leads him, but there should be accountability and input from supporting elders (and within the bylaws of the church, the bylaws

being upheld by the group of elders). Elders provide important ministry to the body of Christ, tending to and guiding the flock as well.

PASTORAL ACCOUNTABILITY/

The pastor ought to have freedom to direct the ministry of the church as God leads, yet in the areas of morality, holiness, finances, and doctrine, there must be accountability. While there is freedom to implement the vision the Lord has given, there are biblical standards that must be adhered to by the elders and pastors. Inevitably, ministry ventures will intersect with matters of finance, etc. To give an example: While the pastor may have the freedom to take a step of faith in the direction of a building project, the pastor would not have authority in and of himself to incur indebtedness on the Church's behalf to do so. The supporting elders have authority to uphold the bylaws and biblical principles set forth for church leadership.s

THE ROLE OF THE ELDER BOARD

If a pastor goes wayward in morality or in sound biblical doctrine, the authority resides within the supporting elders to confront remove the pastor or other elder from leadership (also the reverse – if there is an elder that must be removed from leadership, the authority resides in the remaining elders to make the decision to remove). Also, if there is some other course of action to be taken, this is to be determined by the board of elders and enacted.

Ultimately, each form of church government has the possibility of failing – it is contingent upon men who can sin; yet, what is of utmost importance is being careful to lay hands on/appoint elders, selecting godly men who love the Lord and have given their lives to follow him.

Also, I believe it is important that the elders are well involved the finances of the church – determining budgets, how ministry funds will be used/allocated, and approving use of funds for various functions/benevolence. Within this style of church government, the pastor should not have freedom to spend unlimited amounts of money to carry about a ministry vision (a limit should be decided upon by the elders), rather, the elders provide necessary accountability for financial decisions to protect the body, and so be good stewards of the resources of God's house.

Furthermore, the elders should be involved in the life of the body of Christ, ministering, teaching if called upon, and serving the body of Christ.

THE ROLE OF THE PASTOR

The pastor's role is to care for, feed, and protect the flock that God has entrusted to him. He must serve as an example to them, being devoted to prayer and to the Word (Ezekiel 34:1-10; 1 Peter 5:1-4; 2 Timothy 4:2-5; Acts 6:4). The principal way this role is carried out is by the upholding of and teaching of God's Word and the faithful teaching of the truth and principles found therein, through whatever role a pastor has on staff (Titus 2:1). He is to edify the Church, causing the people to mature into the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16). The pastor is not to harshly rule over the flock, but to be one who leads by example. He is to protect the flock, discerning the intents of those who would seek to come into the church and lead some astray (Matthew 7:15-20; Titus 1:9, 10-14). The pastor also is to disciple and give counsel to the people, rooted in the Word of God, and to lead people into a lifestyle of worshipping God in all they do.

THE ROLE OF THE PASTOR'S WIFE

I believe the role of a pastor's wife is to be a woman who prays for her husband, supporting him in ministry, and even ministering alongside him to the women and children of the

church. She is to be an example to the body of Christ, and to younger women of how to live for and follow Christ. Not only this, but she is also incredibly important and valuable in raising the children in the home. I believe that the pastor's wife's priority is her marriage and children, then the ministry (especially in the years where the children are younger, her primary ministry is in the home to children – not to the total exclusion of supporting the ministry). Just as Eve was created to be a helper for Adam, the pastor's wife is to be the helper of her husband.