



Calvary Chapel Outreach Fellowships

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CALVARY CHAPEL POSITIONAL PAPERS

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Dear Pastor,

We can all rejoice in the freedom we have as Calvary Chapel pastors in seeking the direction of the Holy Spirit as we ask God to direct our ministries. Pastor Chuck has always allowed us the opportunity to freely exercise the gifts and the calling of God on our lives.

Every Calvary Chapel has the freedom to ordain men and send them forth from our churches to any part of the world. In our break-out session for pastors involved in ministry in Africa we had about one hundred ministering in that Continent. This included six schools that were training African pastors to teach expository sermons from the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. We have learned that our Calvary Chapel in Idaho has been able to assist in planting many churches in Iran. Others are involved all over our planet as the Lord has been able to direct individual ministries. It is not our desire to inhibit in any way the Lords calling on Calvary pastors. This freedom is enjoyed as we remain governed by God, His Word and our love and respect for our fellow pastors.

As we have grown around the world we continue to witness God's blessing on ministries that are fully committed to teaching through the Bible sharing the whole council of God. In addition to the many sermons by Pastor Chuck that define the place of Calvary Chapel in the general body of churches, there are several positional papers that help define our calling as Calvary Chapel pastors.

The **FIRST** of these paper's is in the form of a letter from Pastor Chuck, dated August 17, 1981. At that time some Calvary Chapel pastors chose to become part of a group that provided stronger denominational ties and changes concerning the practice of spiritual gifts in the church. The relevant part of the letter stated:

"It has been drawn to my attention that some of the pastors feel, that I have been guilty of quenching the Spirit of some of the Calvary Chapels or their ministers. We want to assure you that we have no desire to quench the work of the Holy Spirit. I believe that the real power of the church is found in The Holy Spirit working through the Word of God in the lives of the believers in God. I do believe that if you have only the Word of God working in the lives of the believers that you are missing a very vital ingredient. I also feel that if you have the Holy Spirit working in the believers of God without the Word, that you also are missing a very important ingredient."

I feel that it is important that we recognize that Calvary Chapels are not another Pentecostal church. If you desire to emphasize the experience aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit, it would probably be well if you would seek an affiliation with Pentecostal churches, Assemblies of God, Foursquare, or Church of God, because they seem to have the more experience, oriented type of ministry, where I believe that Calvary Chapel has basically been established by God to fill in the broad gap between the Baptists and the Pentecostal churches. We have the Spirit of God working, but the real emphasis is on the solid foundation of the Word being the basis through which the Spirit works as He confirms the Word with signs following. But, when you reverse the order where the experience, and the signs become the primary thrust, then you are moving more toward the Pentecostal position, and you should seriously, consider dropping the affiliation or relation with Calvary Chapel, especially dropping the use of the Calvary Chapel name.

We pray for each of you, that God will guide you in your ministries, and will continue His blessing upon your churches, and upon your own walk and relation with Him. We so look forward to the opportunity of being with you who will be able to go to Israel with us in the first part 'of December. I believe that God has some marvelous, rich blessings in store for each of us."

Yours in Him,
Chuck

A **SECOND** positional paper from Pastor Chuck was distributed in the Pastors folder at our June Senior Pastors Conference in 2006. That letter stated the following:

Parson to Parson,

The time has come for us to restate the position of Calvary Chapel on a number of issues. We do this because Calvary Chapel has become known to represent a fairly definable entity in its approach to sound biblical teaching and approach to biblical doctrine. It's not that we believe we have the "best" or "only" way; it's simply the way we approach God's word within Calvary Chapel. And likewise, if a different approach is to be taken, then all we ask is that the name Calvary Chapel not be attached to it.

First of all, Calvary Chapel is not a denomination; but rather a movement. We often receive inquiries as to whether or not Calvary Chapel is a member of some national or international group affiliation. We answer such inquiries with our stated position that each church is independent and has established its own set of bylaws. We are ministers who hold basic common beliefs, and maintain them within a range of practices. We believe that every minister is responsible to Jesus as the chief Shepherd, and will ultimately answer to Him for his ministry and not to us. We love and respect each other and rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with those who weep. As with the Apostle Paul, we do not feel that we have apprehended that for which we were apprehended, neither are we perfect, but this is what we seek to do. Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching for those things that are before, we press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Secondly, we hold to the supremacy of Jesus as the head of the body, His church. We look to the Holy Spirit to guide and direct each decision in the building up of the body of Christ. Having begun in the Spirit, we do not seek to be made perfect in the flesh, but seek to continue to be led by the Spirit. We believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God and is infallible and the final authority for our faith and practice. We believe that God established the model for the church in the book of Acts, and seek to follow that model as much as is possible. We feel that church history is for the most part a sad commentary of the failure of men who sought by human genius and resources to perfect that which was begun in the Spirit. The messages of Jesus to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 record how early in the history of the church those problems that needed to be repented, began to be manifested. So much for church history, but it is something that we must not simply disregard. We must realize that it shows us so clearly how the enemy has, is, and will continue the attacks upon the church and upon our individual ministries. How our heart grieves for the many who have started the race but have failed to complete it.

In the book of Acts we see that the activities of the church were described as:

1. Continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, which we understand to be a systematic teaching of the Bible.
2. Fellowship, which we understand to be a loving and caring relationship with each other. As John wrote, "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that you may have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ."
3. The breaking of bread. This to us is a tangible representation of the unity that we share in Christ for we understand that the bread speaks to us of the body of Christ which was broken for us, and as we all eat the bread and it is assimilated into our bodies, we are spiritually united through Jesus with each other; in the fact that the bread that is nourishing me and is becoming a part of me, is also nourishing you and becoming a part of you. Thus, we are united together in Christ. He dwells in me; He dwells in you.
4. Prayer. Through prayer we unite our hearts with the heart of God that we might see His will accomplished in the church and throughout the world.

We believe that when the church will make these four things the major activities of the church, that happened in the book of Acts, the Lord will add daily to the church such as should be saved. Thus, we do not look to the myriad of church growth programs that are being promoted for the building of the church but to Jesus Himself, who said that He would build His church. We do watch as the many programs come and go in which man by his wisdom tries to do the work of God more effectively, but rather than entering into the programs of man, we seek to continue to be led by the Spirit of God. We realize that the Scriptures warn us of aberrant doctrines that would come into the church, even going so far as to deny our Lord Jesus. Second Peter chapter 2, verse 1 tells us, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privately shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." Likewise in Jude, chapter 1, verse 4 we read, "For there are certain men crept in unawares,

who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We see a tendency toward this in what is commonly called the “Emergent Church” teachings. Some of the concerns that we have are with the speculations and positions that they are suggesting:

1. That Jesus is not the only way by which one might be saved. It seems that they are postulating a broader gate and a broader path to heaven, a sort of “all roads lead to heaven.” That good people by every religious persuasion may be received into heaven. We feel that this goes against the plain teaching of the Scriptures and negates the need of the cross for the expiation of our sins. Paul wrote of those men in his letter to the Philippians and called them enemies of the cross of Christ. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life, no man can come to the Father but by Me.” This is not relative truth, but absolute truth.

2. The soft peddling of hell as the destiny for those who reject the salvation offered through Jesus Christ. There are suggestions of universalism in their teaching, that all will ultimately be saved.

3. We have difficulty in their touchy-feely relating to God, where the experience of certain feelings become the criteria for truth rather than the word of God.

4. We have great problems with the use of icons to give them a sense of God or the presence of God. If they want to have a tie with the historicity of the church, why not go back to the church in Acts, which seems to be devoid of incense, candles, robes etc., but was filled with the Spirit.

5. We do not believe that we should seek to make sinners feel safe and comfortable in church. Is it right for me to speak comfortable words to a man who is going to hell unless he turns from his sin? If I fail to warn him of the consequences of his sin, and he dies and goes to hell, will God require his blood at my hand? When is godly sorrow and conviction of sin such a wrong thing?

6. Should we seek to condone what God has condemned, such as the homosexual lifestyle? Should we tell them that their problem is a genetic disorder rather than a blatant sin that God condemns over and over in the Bible? How long before they tell us that they have discovered that rapists, pedophiles, and adulterers have a genetic disorder and need to be understood rather than condemned?

7. Should we look to Eastern religions with their practices of meditation through Yoga and special breathing techniques or repeating a mantra to hear God speak to us? If this is needed to enhance our communication with God, why do you suppose that God did not give us implicit instructions in the Scriptures to give us methods to hear His voice? Is it the position of my body or my heart that helps me to communicate with Him?

8. The great confusion that exists in the divergent positions of the Emergent Church results from their challenging the final authority of the Scriptures. When you no longer have a final authority, then everyone’s ideas become as valid as the next person’s, and it cannot help but end in total confusion and contradictions.

There are those who say that Emergent movement has some good points, but so does a porcupine. You are better off if you don't get too close!

So, let us not turn to our own understanding, but rather return to our own first love; and teach that the Bible is indeed the true word of God; and teach it in its entirety; nothing less and nothing more.

A **THIRD** positional statement is found in the CCOF publication entitled: “Line upon Line”, published 2007. Pastor Chuck’s introductory statement is copied below:

“How do you read a personal letter? Do you tear open the envelope and randomly start reading a line here and a line there to find out what the correspondent has to say? Do you browse only a portion of the letter? Do you only read the opening or the ending of the letter?”

No, you start at the beginning of the letter-and from the "Dear" to the "Yours Truly"-you read it straight through to comprehend the full meaning of what is being communicated!

If this is true for a letter from a friend, how much more should it be when we read and teach through God’s Word? If God’s people are to understand the fullness of God’s will and character, they need a well-balanced meal: the whole Bible.

If a person only ate hot fudge sundaes, he may seem content for a while, but he will become fat and sickly, and eventually his health will fail. If one is to be healthy, they need the vegetables, the fruit, the meat, and potatoes in order to keep the body fit and running properly.

Sadly, some pastors just give the dessert-a verse here, and a topic there; they like to fatten the people with sweets and nice tasting treats. Yet they are troubled when the people are sick and weak.

It is only by going straight through the full counsel of God that makes a healthy people, a hearty, well-fed congregation. One of the Calvary Chapel distinctives is teaching straight through the books in the Bible. God has blessed this distinctive. There has been tremendous growth and great fruit from the teaching of God's Word. The people are well fed and hungry for more! For this, we thank the Lord!

Unfortunately, there is the temptation with some pastors to attract people with sweet-tasting sermons and slick church services, entertaining them with a lot of things other than sound Bible teaching. True the people may say, "Oh, isn't that guy a crack up?" or "Isn't he a great speaker?" But the reality is you're giving the people the whipped cream, the hot fudge sundae, and something that is very exciting to their taste buds-but it doesn't develop a strong, healthy body.

The solution to the dilemma of dessert-only teaching is to go straight through the Bible, book by book, verse by verse, and line upon line-in order that people might get a balanced diet, and begin to understand the Bible's teachings on a whole range of issues and topics.

Why is balance important? Many of the issues in the church today are multi-faceted; there are usually two sides. And if we only emphasize one side of an issue, we may be in error of neglecting the whole counsel of God's view on the topic. You have to give them a balanced teaching to arrive at the truth.

As an example, there is the truth of the sovereignty of God. He is sovereign. There is no denying that truth. But if you only emphasize the sovereignty of God, and you never deal with the human responsibility of man, you're not giving the people the whole truth, because the sovereignty of God is balanced by the human responsibility that God requires of man. And thus you have the balanced truth. So when we go through the entire Bible, there will be that built-in check and balance system to help keep us objective and in line with the full teaching of the Bible.

My challenge to you is this: if this through-the-Bible teaching is not a distinctive of your ministry, I would encourage you to go to another church or a denomination and learn how to entertain and have a relevant program that will appeal to people's 'felt needs!' But the reality is this dessert-only or seeker-based philosophy of ministry is not Calvary Chapel; we do not seek to entertain, but to feed the people as Jesus commanded. And the only way to produce healthy, spiritual people is teach them the full counsel of God, expositing and expounding the truths found in His Word.

How many of you want to spend your whole ministry trying to patch up disgruntled people, feeding them whipped cream and hot fudge sundaes, all the while dealing with all the health problems of a sick congregation? Not me!

I encourage you to teach the Word of God-from Genesis to Revelation. Watch the growth. The most exciting thing in the world is to watch people grow from being nourished and strengthened and fed the whole counsel of God's truth."

Pastor Chuck Smith Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa

In addition to these positional papers are Pastor Chuck's sermons that identify the Calvary Chapel model. It is a model that continues to bear fruit as we witness the blessed work of the Holy Spirit applying the truth of God's Word throughout the world. It is our desire to hold fast to God's revealed truth.