

Distinctives

Believers in Jesus Christ come from a wide variety of backgrounds and often interpret Scripture or doctrines differently. Living Hope Bible Church practices a literal grammatical-historical hermeneutic method of interpreting Scripture, which takes into account the original author's intent, historical, cultural and literary context, and what the author intended to convey to the original recipients. We encourage open and honest conversation regarding biblical observation, interpretation, and application.

To help us work through these differences, the following criteria provide guidance in regards to essential doctrine and secondary issues:

- In essentials: unity
- In non-essentials: liberty
- In all things: charity (love)

Our essentials are non-negotiable in the sense that we take a strong position on these doctrines or issues; these essentials are found in our doctrinal statement.

Regarding non-essentials, the church may take a less rigid position recognizing that many of its attendees and even members may hold to a different conviction or interpretation. Some of those relevant secondary issues are addressed here in our Distinctives. We provide these Distinctives to encourage church unity, transparency, and honesty.

It is important to understand that anyone may attend, serve and even be a member of Living Hope Bible Church and not agree completely with these Distinctives. However, attenders, members, and those who serve in leadership or teaching roles are asked to respect these Distinctives and not promote positions contrary to them.

NEW TESTAMENT ORDINANCES: BELIEVER'S BAPTISM AND COMMUNION

We believe Christ instituted the ordinances of believer's baptism and communion to be observed by the church until His return.

We practice believer's baptism through immersion, where a believer publicly identifies with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. The Bible is clear that a profession of faith in Jesus should precede baptism. Baptism is our external declaration of our internal faith and conversion. It publicly declares our personal commitment to Jesus as our Lord.

Because of this, we do not baptize children who are unable to articulate a personal repentance and faith in Jesus. Scripture teaches that infants and young children of believing parents may be dedicated to the Lord but should not be baptized until they can personally articulate their faith and fully comprehend the purpose of baptism.

We practice believer's communion. Communion is a memorial of Christ's death, with the elements representing His body and blood. It is an expression of our faith in His future coming that is to be continually practiced by all believers. While all are welcome to attend our gatherings, we believe communion is limited to those who have professed faith in Christ. (Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-30; Luke 3:21, Acts 2:41; Acts 8:35-38, Acts 16:30-34)

END TIMES

We understand people hold a plethora of opinions and positions regarding end-times fulfillment and prophecy. We believe in and expectantly await the glorious, visible, personal and pre-millennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The blessed hope of His return has vital bearing on the personal life, service and mission of the believer. We believe He will exercise His role as final Judge, and His kingdom will be consummated. (Matthew 24:29-31; Acts 1:6-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Revelation 19:11-16, 20:2-7)

SIGN GIFTS

We believe that the moment people are saved, the Holy Spirit indwells them. They become a temple of the Holy Spirit and are immediately baptized by the Holy Spirit (the work of regeneration). The Holy Spirit equips and provides for the ministry of the church through various spiritual gifts given to believers.

We understand that the same Holy Spirit that empowered the Apostles and early church lives in all believers today; we do not seek to put limitations on the power of the Holy Spirit and His ability to operate as He sees fit. However, we believe that the Apostles personally commissioned by Jesus had a unique ministry in the gospels and the book of Acts.

Some gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues, infallible prophecy, and the gift of miraculous healing, were given to certain individuals as authenticating signs for the early church and not as final evidence of God's presence in a believer's life, nor as confirmations of a "second blessing" or subsequent filling of the Spirit. The gift of tongues in the New Testament presents itself as a known language (Acts 2:6-13). We maintain that while God may do what He pleases, we do not believe the normative distribution of these authenticating sign gifts is present in the life of the church today. Christians should be open to God choosing to work in these ways but cautious of their normative appearance in the church. (Acts 8:14; 10:44-48; 11:15-18; 19:1-6; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; 1 Peter 4:10-11)

CREATION

We believe that all things were created by God out of nothing (Genesis 1:1-31). The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were all present and active at the time of creation. We teach that Genesis 1-2 is a historical narrative that provides an accurate account of how God brought the universe into existence. Accordingly, we teach that the universe was created in six literal days, was very good, and is continuously sustained by God; thus it both reflects His glory and reveals His truth (Exodus 20:11; Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-20). Human beings were directly created in the very image of God and are not the product of any evolutionary process. We reject any form of macro-evolution, including theistic evolution (Genesis 1:1-2:25). We understand many Christians hold to other views regarding the age of the earth and biblical length of creation, and those believers are welcomed and encouraged to be in fellowship with us.

DISTINCT GENDER ROLES

God created men and women with equal value, dignity and purpose. Just as God created men and women with unique and complementary physical differences, God created men and women with unique roles. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways.

Scripture teaches that the spiritual gifts may be expressed through any believer and should be used for the good of the body of Christ. However, we see a biblical distinction between gifts and roles. For example, women can and do possess the gift of teaching, and they are encouraged to use that gift in this body (Titus 2:3-4). But, in accordance with 1 Timothy 2:11-12, we regard the specific role of pastor as one designated for men. Furthermore, women are endowed with leadership gifts, yet the specific role of elder in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9 belongs to men.

Consequently, we reserve the office of elder and pastor for males. We believe these role distinctions between men and women are necessary to follow the biblical pattern and for the Church to grow and function as God intends. Therefore, it is our goal to thrive within these principles while not imposing them on other areas that Scripture does not address.

On a practical level, women are encouraged to serve and lead throughout our church. Women teach at our Women's Bible Studies, Training Days, facilitate Home Groups, and many other events. They also play vital roles in the planning and execution of weekend worship services and other weekly ministries. Women serve as directors on our staff and lead many of our ministries.

In short, we want men and women to flourish in our church as co-laborers in the gospel and as fellow heirs with Christ, working hard for the glory of the Lord and good of His Kingdom. We believe the Scriptures are timeless and stand as the sole authority in the Church. When we live according to the commands of the Scriptures, we find that both men and women flourish.

ETERNAL SECURITY

We believe that all the redeemed, once authentically saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secured in Christ forever; believers who are truly regenerate cannot lose their salvation, or become unregenerate (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; Ephesians 4:30; Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 6:1-12; Jude 24). We teach that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an excuse for sinful living (Romans 6:15-22; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, 16, 17, 25-26; Titus 2:11-14). Our eternal security is purchased by Christ, promised by the Father, and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

FUTURE REVISIONS TO THE DISTINCTIVES

Our Living Hope Bible Church Distinctives may be amended by the unanimous approval of the elders. Copies of any amendments must be made available to members not more than thirty days following such amendments.