

POSITIONAL PAPER DEALING WITH VARIOUS OPINIONS ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

The First Baptist Church of Doylestown

In light of the highly controversial issue of divorce and remarriage in Bible teaching churches today, it would seem best for First Baptist Church, Doylestown to clearly state its opinions on this issue. The purpose of this paper is to clarify how our church can function in biblical unity in spite of possible differences of opinion on the issue of divorce and remarriage.

I. Marriage and Biblical Principles

Before the fall of man took place, God instituted marriage. (Genesis 2:18-25) According to Genesis 2:24, marriage was meant by God to be permanent. In accordance with Malachi 2 we believe marriage is a covenant between two people and God, whereby the two people leave their parents and cleave to one another, becoming one. (Genesis 2:24)

II. Divorce and Biblical Principles

Malachi 2 makes it clear that God hates divorce because divorce is the breaking of the covenantal promise between two people and God. While God instituted marriage He did not institute divorce. Once the fall of man took place, relationships were corrupted and therefore, Moses *allowed* divorce because of the hardness of man's heart (Matthew 5, 19, and Deuteronomy 24). Divorce was therefore a concession. God did not institute divorce; He regulated it. We believe divorce is not necessarily a sin (depending on the case), but it is a result of sin.

At First Baptist Church, Doylestown many of us believe there are two biblical grounds for divorce:

- A. The unrepentant, ongoing practice of sexual immorality on the part of one's mate. (Matthew 5, 19)
- B. The unbeliever's desertion of the believing spouse. (I Corinthians 7).

We do not believe two Christians should be divorced. In the case of the first grounds for divorce, church discipline (Matthew 18) should be applied. Wherever discipline is applied in the midst of a divorce situation, restitution will always be sought. (Galatians 6:1) If the person continues in the practice of sexual immorality, he should be put out of the church and treated as an unbeliever. (Matthew 18:17)

III. Remarriage and Biblical Principles

Many of the leaders of First Baptist Church believe that remarriage is possible after divorce if the divorce has been for either of the above two stated reasons.

However, we know everyone does not agree on this issue. Romans 14:5 tells us that we are to be individually convinced in our own minds as to our opinion, and yet the remainder of the chapter makes it clear that we must not judge one another for

differing beliefs. Such differences of opinion, therefore, should never lead to divisiveness or party strife.

IV. Application of Biblical Principles on Divorce and Remarriage

Divorce: In the case where one of our people is involved in a divorce, the pastors and Board of Elders would like to be involved with counsel and prayer for that individual. We believe we can also provide biblical counsel whether or not the divorce falls within biblically acceptable categories. Cases will be treated on an individual basis and should be addressed to any elder or to one of the pastors of the church.

Remarriage: In the case where a person has been divorced and now seeks remarriage, we suggest the person speak with the pastor who would be asked to officiate at the marriage ceremony. That pastor should then bring the case before our Board of Elders. Each case will be considered on an individual basis. Factors involved in the decision would include prayer, appropriate biblical principles, facts of the case and the Elders' beliefs. To the best of their abilities, the Elders will make a godly decision. Their decision will stand for our church.

In cases where remarriage is considered, the Board will want to be sure that all outstanding obligations to the first marriage have been met. This would include attempts at reconciliation. (See Jay Adams' book, Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible, page 96.)

Church Service: There are many issues which bear on a person's preparedness for service. According to a person's particular history of divorce and remarriage, service opportunities may or may not be approved within the local church. As stated above, these cases would have to be brought to the attention of the Elders on a case by case basis. Through prayerful consideration of biblical principles and the person's history, a determination as to the person's fitness for service will be made by the Board of Elders.

It is not the board's position to attempt to hinder anyone from being involved in ministry. We simply desire to see biblical principles thoroughly and prayerfully implemented in the lives of our people and the life of this church.

POSITIONAL PAPER ON WOMEN IN CHURCH MINISTRY

The First Baptist Church of Doylestown

The following paper is an overview of the position of FBC. These views are not considered mandatory for church membership but the position presented here is the policy for ministry of this church. We understand other churches may view these matters differently. It is out of a desire to conduct ministry “decently and in order” that we offer this paper. This paper is not intended to prove our position, only state it.

- I. **Authority** – We believe God has appointed hierarchical structures of authority to organize and maintain order among humans. (**Romans 13:1**) He has designated this authority in four primary areas. These are government, church, employer/employee and marriage/family. Failure to understand the biblical levels of the authority/responsibility structures has caused much confusion over the issue of women and their involvement in Christian ministry.
 - A. **Authority Is Not Superiority** - Note that **Genesis 2:22** speaks of woman as created from the side of man. Martin Luther was correct in observing woman was not created from the head of man to rule over him. She was not created from his back as a sign she should stay behind him. She was also not created from his feet to be walked on. She was created from his side as a sign of equality. The two were meant to walk together through life. There is total equality of worth between male and female (but there is not a sameness in function.)
 - B. **Authority Is Not To Be Grasped** – We believe authority is not a matter of choice but it is assigned or granted by God. Authority is granted, it is never to be grasped. (**Romans 13:1**)
 - C. **Authority is Not Ruling As Much As It Is Servanthood** – While the world may see authority as domination, the biblical view is more one of servanthood in carrying out assigned responsibilities. (**Mark 10:43-45**)
 - D. **Authority and the “Curse”** – When Adam and Eve fell into sin (**Genesis 3**) their relationship was deeply affected. We believe part of the effect of their sin was that woman would desire to dominate her husband resulting in permanent confusion of roles. (**Genesis 3:16**) This caused such confusion and corruption that male-female relationships were permanently affected.
- II. **Submission** – Ultimately, submission has to do with our individual relationship before God. This is the starting point and the finishing line of it all. We believe anyone who is in a position of authority will ultimately be accountable before God who is the source and bestower of authority.

- A. Balancing Submission in Male Dominated Cultures** – In our present world, submission has negative implications concerning male dominance and female inferiority. Reactions against this are understandable and often justified. We must remember there is good in submission. For example, we all know submission to God is desirable and expected.

Submission to authority in the armed services saves and protects lives as well as helps to guarantee national freedom. Have we been turned off to the benefits of submission because of the male dominance of women for thousands of years? We should rediscover God's original truth concerning submission.

- B. Submission versus Equality** – Submission in a relationship is often perceived as inferiority for the person submitting. This is sometimes true (as seen in our submission to Christ). But in human relationships we must remember all humans are created equal. Hence submission does not infer inferiority for God is no respecter of persons.

Equality is not based upon gender, intelligence, age, education, appearance, or nationality. Equality is built on the principle that both men and women are created in the image of God and that He loves us equally. Therefore we are of equal worth.

Just as equality is God-assigned, so also is authority. Equality speaks of value and authority speaks of function in relationships. Equality cannot eliminate submission and submission cannot eliminate equality. Both must stand.

- C. Submission versus Mutual Submission** – Paul clearly states there is actually a mutual submission that must take place among people. (**Ephesians 5:21**) Submission of wife to husband has to do with God-designated roles within the family. Mutual submission has to do with our relationships together as children of God.

III. Role Importance – The roles or functions of male and female are of equal importance.

- A. Role Equality in Marriage** – While male and female are of equal value, God did set up a structure of authority and responsibility in marriage. He stated that man would have responsibility of being head of the family. (**Ephesians 5:22**) This order was not based upon superiority but upon divine delegation. God simply stated it would be so in the marriage relationship. He did not explain why. This order has been this way from the creation of the family unit. Perhaps God's reason for this was based on the creative order. Man was created before woman. (This order is called headship. Cf **1 Timothy 2:13**).

By submitting to her husband the wife is ultimately submitting to God. However, if the husband was to lead in a way that does not follow Christ, the wife is obligated to follow Christ. (**Colossians 3:23**) If one in authority deviates from the will of God, he/she may well lose that authority.

- B. Role Equality outside Marriage** – The headship principle does not operate outside of marriage. Therefore while a woman is to be in subjection to her husband, she is not subject to other males. (**Acts 18:24-28**) The exception to this is wherever men or women are subject to anyone (male or female) in a God-appointed place of authority.

To illustrate, a woman who is governor of a state submits to her husband in matters of the home. This is headship. But the husband submits to the wife (who is governor) in matters of the state. This is the God-ordained authority of government. If we confuse these two God-given authorities we will confuse the order God gave us for living.

IV. *Offices and Spiritual Gifts within The Church*

- A. The Office of Pastor/Elder** – We believe the office of Pastor/Elder is restricted to males. This is not based on prejudice against females but upon a conviction that is founded in biblical teaching. The requirements of Elders stated in **1 Timothy 3** and **Titus 1** use male terminology. Since God inspires the Bible, we believe God selected that male terminology because He intended elders to be males.
- B. Any Other Office** – No other office in the life of the church is withheld from the female. However, both male and female who hold an office must operate submissively under the God-ordained eldership of the local assembly. This is no more true of females than male.

While the requirements of deacon (**1 Timothy 3**) are also written with male terminology, we see a separate category of female deacon referred to in **Romans 16:1**. Therefore there is an office called Deaconess.

- C. Spiritual Gifts** – We believe spiritual gifts are distributed to both male and female by the Holy Spirit. Gifts differ from offices in that officers hold a position of authority to which they were appointed. Gifts on the other hand are given to all of God's children at conversion. (**1 Corinthians 1:7**) God gives them as He wishes. These gifts are to be used by male and female under the direction of the leadership in the local church. We believe any gift can be given to male or female. The issue is how the gift(s) is used. It must be used within the parameters of God-ordained authority whether exercised by male or female.
- D. Women in Positions of Teaching** – There can be little doubt that the Spirit gives males and females the gift of teaching. The question is where can a woman use her gift of teaching? More specifically, can she teach other adult males?

We do not see that the Bible restricts women from this ministry strictly on the basis of sex. However, a woman who teaches in any ministry within a local church must be under the authority of the Elders. Actually, this principle is true for any teacher, whether male or female.

Far more than spiritual giftedness needs to be considered when selecting a teacher. A man or a woman with the gift of teaching may or may not be the right choice for a class or group. Other issues such as submission to authority, the person's walk with God, the attitude of the class, church unity and the subject taught are just some of the more obvious considerations. FBC will address these requests for teaching on a case by case basis. (See conclusion of paper.)

E. Single Women in Ministry – We have stated married women are to be in subjection to their husbands. This is so even within the structure of the church. However, the single woman is not under that structure of authority since she is not married. But she, like every other individual within the church, needs to be in submission to the God-ordained leadership of the local church.

V. Interpretation Of Key Passages – Following are several passages that are central in the discussion concerning the role of women in ministry. We provide this section to help the reader understand our basic approach to each text. Our purpose is not to give a complete exegesis or interpretation of the passage.

Genesis 1:27-3:19 – Here we learn that God created both male and female (1:27) in His image. They are of equal worth. (2:21) Their roles are not the same but complimentary. (2:18) The woman was created as a helper for man. After the first sin, we believe a power struggle began. (3:16-19) While the woman would desire to dominate her husband, the husband would withdraw into passivity. Today we believe tendencies for many marital conflicts are rooted in the fact that this power struggle continues.

Galatians 3:28 – Here the male and female are declared to be the same before God. Some have concluded that in Christ all distinctions between male and female are removed. Rather we believe this passage refers to our equality in receiving the grace of salvation. It quite obviously does not mean distinctions between male and female have been obliterated. Paul does not mean that Greeks; Jews, slaves and freeman have lost their recognizable differences. Rather he is teaching that each is as important as the other in God's sight and in the church. The same is true of male and female.

Ephesians 5:22-33 – This text is not referring to an individual's value but to roles of husband and wife. Note this passage falls within a larger context of roles. These include children and parents as well as employer and employee. (6:1-10)

The role of the wife is to submit to her husband and the role of the husband is to love his wife the way Christ loves His church. Either role is impossible to fulfill unless the Spirit of God controls the individual. (5:18) These are "fitting in Lord." (Colossians 3:18)

1 Corinthians 14:33-35 – We believe this passage is not teaching that women must be silent in the church. (1 Corinthians 11:5) This passage is giving instruction on orderliness in worship. Apparently some of the women in the assembly were disrupting services to ask questions. Women in that day were not usually given formal religious education. Their questions might have been very

basic and therefore handled more appropriately at home. In this passage Paul was promoting unity and orderliness in church worship. He was not trying to establish roles for women in the church.

1 Timothy 2:11-12 – This is probably the most difficult passage of all in this study. A basic rule of Bible study is that we interpret the difficult passages in light of the clear passages. Therefore we start with other passages that are clearer.

Verses 9-10 suggest that women concentrate on developing inner beauty rather than outer beauty. While outer beauty is not condemned, the emphasis should be on developing inner godly qualities.

Verse 11 states that women will learn best when they are quiet. Don't we all learn best that way? Apparently some of the women in that assembly were having a problem speaking out and disrupting services. Therefore Paul addressed the issued.

In verse 12 the word "man" may be translated "husband." This translation would place the teachings of this passage within the authority structure of marriage. In other words, teach him so as to usurp his position of headship in the family structure.

Verses 13-14 simply illustrate the creative order that establishes the God-given authority structure.

1 Peter 3:1-7 – The first couple verses in this passage show the part submission plays in evangelizing an unsaved husband. Once again it is important to emphasize that a wife is to submit to her husband (believer or unbeliever) as long as his leadership does not contradict the will of God.

The woman is to build her beauty from the inside out. Outer adornment is not condemned. But the priority is to be on inward beauty. In the same way that bodily exercise profits only a little so outward adornment profits only a little. But it does profit a little. Concentrate on the priority; namely, inner beauty.

A. VI. Conclusions

There are more difficult issues involved in this topic. We do not intend this paper to speak to every situation. We do believe God wants us to conduct the work of His local church in an orderly fashion. When questions or conflicts arise in specific situations, our Board of Elders will be responsible to speak to these. They will reflect on the position of this paper as well as seek the will of God through prayer and study. They will also consider what is best for the individuals involved and for the church. Their decision in the matter shall be considered final

POSITIONAL PAPER ON TEMPORARY SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The First Baptist Church of Doylestown

Since the rise of the Pentecostal movement during the early years of this century, there has been considerable question among God's people over the issue of cessation of gifts. This issue has become even more intense with the rise of the Charismatic movement, and most recently, the Signs and Wonders movement. The purpose of this paper is not necessarily to argue for a position, but to simply state the position of First Baptist Church. Scriptural references are added and should be read by the reader within their scriptural context.

THE PROBLEM

There are ten spiritual gifts that are sometimes held in question as to their use today. They are:

Prophecy	Apostle
Tongues	Wisdom
Knowledge	Interpretation of tongues
Miracles	Faith Healing
Discernment of spirits	

The problem of definition. The problem of the present day use of spiritual gifts begins with the matter of definition. It seems impossible to establish a clear New Testament description of these gifts. It is hard to tell whether or not they continue today because they are not clearly described in the Bible. Yet some people dogmatically claim they practice those same gifts today. In many cases they select certain of these gifts as a test of a Christian's spirituality.

The problem of similarity. With the problem of definition in mind, we can more clearly see the second problem of similarity. How can we clearly know that the gifts some people claim to have today are the same gifts that we see in the New Testament? Perhaps some of the gifts being practiced today are different than those mentioned in the Scriptures. Neither is there clear evidence that we are to have all the gifts listed in the Bible. (There are very few even among the Pentecostals who would claim the gift of apostleship, for example, because the Bible indicates a requirement of an apostle is to have been with Jesus Christ through the three years of His ministry and especially to have seen the risen Christ. Cf. 1 Corinthians 9:1) As we examine the gifts that are claimed for today, they often include phenomena differing markedly from those mentioned in the New Testament.

The problem of divisiveness. The promotion of the present day use of the spiritual gifts of the apostolic age has been the most divisive issue of this century in the evangelical community, frequently destroying the unity of the body of believers and splitting churches.

OUR POSITION

In view of these problems, First Baptist Church takes the position that there is enough doubt about the present day use of the gifts listed above that it seems presumptuous to publicly claim to be a recipient of them. We believe these gifts seem to have ceased as regular phenomena of

Christianity and characteristics of church life today. This is not to say that God cannot exercise these abilities at His will through His people on certain occasions for a specific purpose.

We also recognize that one result of the varied opinions on this subject may be the presence in our number of some who do not agree with the stated church position on the subject. We do not, therefore, make our position a requirement for membership. We simply ask that beliefs differing from this position not be taught or propagated in the ministries of the church. We are firmly convinced that the “unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” is a New Testament requirement for God’s people. (Ephesians 4:3 et al)

THE BASIS FOR OUR POSITION

Though this paper does not attempt a thorough study of this subject, we would like to point out a few biblical and theological ideas in support of our position on the subject.

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING

Purpose of the New Testament spiritual gifts. Hebrews 2:3-5 clearly indicates that the purpose of the special gifts was to authenticate the apostles and their fellow workers. At this period of the infancy of the New Testament church there was a radical transition underway from Judaism to the new message of Jesus Christ for Jew and Gentile. Apparently God used these unusual gifts at this special time of launching the Age of the Church to authenticate His spokesmen and their message. Some very special signs were necessary to support the infant New Testament church in the face of centuries-old, well-entrenched Judaism and paganism. (Cf. Ephesians 2:19-20)

Use of the New Testament spiritual gifts at that time. In the light of passages like Acts 1:22-25 and 1 Corinthians 9:1-2 many Bible scholars believe that the gift of apostleship was very specific and time-oriented. Yet today some Christians say there is no scriptural evidence that any gift has ceased.

Some have argued that since chapters 12-14 of 1 Corinthians speak about the spiritual gifts, they must be operative today. We contend that this is not necessarily true, for we would fully expect Paul to refer to these gifts since they were in evidence at the time he wrote. He did give specific instructions to the church at Corinth because they were abusing the use of gifts. The fact that Paul instructed believers of his day regarding the use of these gifts does not necessarily mean that they are to be in use today. In fact the verses mentioned above suggest these spiritual gifts are focused on the time-oriented

need of authenticating the birth of the New Testament church, its messengers and its message.

THEOLOGICAL TEACHING

Some Bible scholars feel there are four clearly defined periods when God authorized the practice of spiritual gifts. The first is the Mosaic period when Moses and Joshua were gifted to perform

miracles to authenticate themselves as the messengers of God and to authenticate the written revelation He was giving them. After this period miraculous works subsided.

The second period of miracles came at the time of the prophets, Elijah and Elisha. Again the purpose of this miraculous power was to authenticate these special messengers of God and their message at a critical period in Israel's history.

The third period was the Messiah/Apostle period where again the miracles were performed to authenticate the individuals and their message. Jesus was authenticated as Messiah and Fulfiller of the Old Testament prophecy. The apostles, along with their co-laborers, received these gifts to help them in their task of establishing the young church (Ephesians 2:19-20) and to authenticate them as writers of the New Testament.

The fourth period is yet future and will take place during the time of the tribulation. God's two witnesses of Revelation 11 will be able to perform miracles to authenticate themselves as God's spokesmen. Interestingly, the Antichrist will also attempt to authenticate himself by performing miracles.

Within each of the four periods of miracles, God always used miracles to authenticate His men and their message. There are other occasional uses of miracles in the Scriptures, just as we see occasional miracles today. However, these four periods of miracles seem to be the exception rather than the usual way God is working. While the need for authenticating God's messengers and their message is the basic reason for miracles in these four special periods, today's "miracle workers" do not have need to authenticate the Gospel, now well established. They usually claim these spiritual gifts as a regular part of their ministry, not a matter of authenticating themselves and their message.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we wish to state that this papers is not meant to prove our position in great detail. The purpose is to state the position of the First Baptist Church and provide some scriptural support for our belief. It is not our purpose to condemn those who do not believe as we do. However, we do mean to state our position so all can understand what we believe.

Statement of Faith

The Word of God

We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God, inerrant in the original writings (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We believe the Bible is complete as the revelation of God's will for salvation, and the supreme and final authority in all matters pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). God has miraculously preserved the text we now have so that what we have is authoritative. We believe in a historical, grammatical interpretation of God's Word.

The Trinity

We believe in one sovereign God, who created and sustains all things. He eternally exists in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1, Matthew 28:19-20).

Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ is God's eternal Son, and has precisely the same nature, attributes and perfections as God the Father (John 1:1-3). We believe He is not only fully God, but also fully man (Philippians 2:5-8). We believe He was miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary (Matthew 1:18-25). We also believe in His sinless life, His death for our sins, His bodily resurrection from the dead and His ascension into Heaven (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Today, we have access to the Father through Him.

Holy Spirit

We believe the Holy Spirit is fully God (Matthew 28:19-20). He implements Christ's work of redeeming the lost and He empowers the believer for godly living and service (Ephesians 1:13-14; Acts 1:8)

Man

We believe God created man (male and female) in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). We further believe that man, as a result of the fall is a sinner by nature and choice and is therefore spiritually dead (Genesis 2:15-17).

Salvation

We believe in salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). We believe man needs to trust in Christ only, for the forgiveness of sins. He died in our place on the cross and rose from the dead for our justification. (John 3:16) This results in a salvation received apart from human effort. We do believe salvation results in righteous living, good works, social concern and action. (James 2:14-18)

The Church

We believe the Church is the spiritual body, formed and gifted by Christ (Matthew 16:18 and Ephesians 4:7-13). We believe the true church is composed of all persons who are trusting in Christ for salvation (1 Corinthians 12:13). Our local assembly is made up of members who have been baptized by immersion upon credible confession of faith and have associated themselves for worship, instruction, evangelism, and service. We

believe in two ordinances of the local church. They are 1) believer's baptism by immersion (Matthew 28:19-20) and, 2) the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-29). We also believe the local church should be self-governing.

Last Things

We believe in the bodily resurrection of the saved and lost (Matthew 12:36 and Romans 14:10), and the eternal existence of all believers in heaven and all unbelievers in hell (Matthew 25:46). We believe someday Jesus Christ will return for His Church and will reign eternally (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Revelation 20:4).

APPLICATION AND POSITIONAL PAPER CONCERNING WATER BAPTISM

The First Baptist Church of Doylestown

It is most unfortunate that the ordinance of water baptism, which expresses our identification with the Lord, has been such a focus of controversy. In this paper we wish to present what we consider the Bible teaches on the subject, and yet at the same time be charitable toward those who take a different point of view.

OUR BELIEFS

Water Baptism is a Biblical Obligation for Christ's Followers.

The Bible does not present baptism as an option for believers to accept or reject. Rather, it is an obligation to be followed by believers. We are baptized because He expects it of His followers.

B. Jesus himself included the baptizing of believers as part of the Great Commission. (Matthew 28:19-20) Therefore this is a work that the church needs to be doing.

C. The early church accepted water baptism as an obligation for all new believers. (Acts 2:41; 8:12; 8:36-38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:33; 18:8) Therefore baptism is a biblical part of the Christian experience, which every believer should seek.

Water Baptism is a Testimony of Our Identification with Christ and His Church.

D. Identification with Christ: Baptism is a picture of what happened to us when we accepted Christ. Romans 6:1-10 indicates that we "were baptized into Christ Jesus;" that is, into his death, burial and resurrection. So water baptism not only pictures Christ's own death, burial and resurrection, but also water baptism is a picture of what has happened to us. That is, our old life is now buried with Christ and we are raised to new

life in Christ. This is the work accomplished in us at conversion by the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:13)

E. Identification with God's people, His church; Water baptism becomes a public witness to the fact that we are now members of God's family. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says that we are "all baptized by one Spirit (the Holy Spirit) into one body," the body of Christ, the true church. So water baptism is a declaration to the world that we are now identifying ourselves with that special body of people, the followers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Water Baptism is by Immersion

The mode of baptism has been an area of major disagreement among Christians. There are several modes practiced by different groups within Christendom:

F. Immersion - the total submerging of the body in water. Usually done by the subject being lowered into the water one time backwards.

G. Triune Immersion - the method practiced by somewhere the subject is immersed three times face forward.

H. Effusion or Pouring - the water is poured over the subject.

I. Sprinkling - the water is sprinkled over the subject.

In fairness to those who believe in pouring or sprinkling, we should understand that they believe this symbolizes the incoming of the Holy Spirit, or the cleansing, which takes place at conversion. The immersionist believes the mode he uses symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

We believe immersion is the mode which best represents the biblical data. The Greek word "baptize" is usually translated "to dip" or to "immerse." The Greek language has other words for pour and sprinkle, yet these words are never used where the word baptism occurs. So while there may be differences of opinion on this issue, we believe that immersion is the best representation of the biblical data.

Water Baptism Does Not Save

There is no saving value in the ordinance of baptism (no matter what mode was used or when it was administered). You will not be any more saved after baptism than before baptism. However, there should be a real joy experienced because the expectation of the Lord has been fulfilled, a public confession of faith has been given, and a public identification with Christ and His church has been made.

The few verses that give the impression that baptism is necessary for salvation are offset by the many, which teach that salvation is by grace, through faith only, and completely apart from personal merit or religious ordinance. (Romans 4:5; Titus 3:5-6; Ephesians 2:8-9)

Water Baptism Is A Christian Ordinance

Baptism is a CHRISTIAN ordinance. It is to be administered to believers only. There is no explicit reference anywhere in the Bible to support infant baptism. Nor is there any teaching concerning the baptism of unbelieving adults.

We believe any form of so-called baptism prior to conversion is not biblical (Acts 19:1-5), but baptism should be performed after the person is genuinely converted.

Baptism of Children

Scripturally speaking, we like to see a new believer in Christ identify quickly with Christ in believer's baptism. Since this holds true for new believers in general, we see no reason why it should not be pursued with children as well. The only additional issue with children would be: can the child understand the identification analogy involved with baptism. If this can be understood, and if the commitment to be baptized can be entered with seriousness, a pastor should meet with the parents of the child, as well as the child, to explain the biblical understanding of baptism. At the judgment of the pastor and the parents, and with a clear personal testimony, a child may be baptized with believer's baptism. We believe that most children should be ready for this important step approximately by the age of eight-to-ten. The determination of the timing should normally be left to the parents.

CONCLUSION

Although as a Baptist Church we could not conduct a baptismal service unless it was by immersion, we believe we should not sit in judgment upon those who see this differently. However, anyone joining this church needs to have been immersed either before coming to the church or by this church. We believe this to be compatible with our Baptist beliefs and interpretations.

BAPTISMAL INSTRUCTIONS AND APPLICATION FORM

The First Baptist Church of Doylestown

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTIONS

A. Each baptismal candidate will meet with the pastor either alone or in a small group for biblical instruction concerning baptism. This will also be a time of talking about preparations for the service.

B. We will provide a baptismal robe that will fit you. The men's robes are black and the ladies' robes are white.

ARRIVAL INSTRUCTIONS

A. When you come to the service please bring the following:

Towels	Brush/comb
Plastic bag for wet clothes	Hairdryer (if desired)
White Handkerchief	Change of clothing
Bathing suit	

B. Be at the church 30 minutes prior to the service. Last minute instructions will be given at this time.

C. Dressing rooms are upstairs on the two sides of the baptistry. The men's room is on the piano side of the auditorium, and the ladies' room is on the organ side.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR BAPTISMAL SERVICE

A. You will then be led into position and instructed what to do. Hold your left wrist with your right hand. Hold your nose with your left hand. The pastor will take hold of your left forearm and support your back with his other hand. After the pastor finishes his declaration of baptism, you will be immersed backwards in the water until your whole body has gone under the surface. You will then be immediately returned to the upright position.

B. Please try not to shake your wet hair or head as you come up out of the water.

C. You will then be led from the baptistry and may go to the assigned place to change. The service will continue so please change quietly.

FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

A. After you have changed, you may go back and join the rest of the service. If possible, please use the back entrance to the auditorium. This means you will have to go downstairs.

B. After your baptism you will be given a baptismal certificate as recognition of this important step in your walk with the Lord.

If you have any further questions, please ask the pastor who will be officiating at the service.

The First Baptist Church of Doylestown
311 W. State Street
Doylestown, PA 18901

BAPTISMAL APPLICATION FORM

If you desire baptism, please read the Church Positional Paper on Baptism, complete this form and turn it into the church office. One of the pastors will contact you soon.

Name of person desiring baptism: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Today's date: _____

Have you come to know Christ personally?

Office use only:

Date this form was received	
Date & initials of the pastor with whom the candidate met.	
Date of the scheduled service	
Initials of the pastor that baptized the candidate.	

POSITIONAL PAPER ON THE LORD'S SUPPER

The First Baptist Church of Doylestown

Since Bible teaching churches differ in their beliefs concerning the Lord's Supper, it would seem beneficial to state our beliefs for anyone attending worship services at First Baptist Church. We believe that the Lord's Supper is one of two biblical ordinances for Christians to observe. The other ordinance is Believer's Baptism (see separate positional paper).

Scriptural Teaching - On the night that Jesus was to be handed over for crucifixion, He ate a final meal with His disciples. At that time, He instituted what we call the Lord's Supper. (Matthew 26:26-29) The supper was established as a "forget-me-not" supper. His body was to be represented by the bread and His blood by the cup.

In 1 Corinthians 11:23-34, Paul further explains the significance of the Lord's Supper. Verse 26 states that our participation in the Lord's Supper declares His death on our behalf. The supper was instituted to help us reflect, in a meaningful manner, upon what Jesus did to provide our salvation.

Verse 27 and following warn us to come to the Lord's Supper with our sins confessed and fully mindful of what the supper represents. We should therefore judge our lives by the standards of the Scriptures to be sure that we are pure before Him.

Symbolism - There are three major views concerning the Lord's Supper.

1. Transubstantiation - the belief that the bread and cup are supernaturally changed into the body and blood of Christ. Those who partake are literally partaking of the body and blood of Christ.
2. Consubstantiation - the belief that the elements remain as bread and drink but they contain the presence of Christ's body and blood. Therefore, as one partakes of the elements, he actually partakes of elements that have the presence of the body and blood of Christ within them.
3. Memorial View - the belief that there is no supernatural changing to the elements, but the elements are symbols of His body and blood. (First Baptist Church holds this view.)

Frequency - We generally celebrate this ordinance in the morning service on the first Sunday of the month.

Method of Celebration - We believe that the Lord's Supper is the pinnacle of Christian worship. Since it is not our supper but His, we celebrate what is often call "Open Communion." This means you need not be a member or even a regular attender at this

church to participate. You simply need to be a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Children and the Lord's Supper - Since we follow the method of "Open Communion," we believe individual participants decide whether or not they will participate on the basis of their personal saving belief in Christ. But we recognize that children may not be able to make this decision without some help. Therefore, since children fall under the authority of their parents, we believe that believing parents should determine the time when their children are prepared to receive the ordinance. The issues which need be addressed are: Can the child understand the symbolism of the elements? Can the ordinance be received with seriousness by the child? From time to time, we will remind parents of their responsibility to oversee their children in the receiving of these elements.

Children are encouraged to participate in the Lord's Supper as soon as they are spiritually and emotionally prepared. But this should be done under the direction of their parents.

Discipline - 1 Corinthians 5 contains an example of a man who was disciplined by his church for living in sin. On the basis of this Scripture, we believe any individual under the church discipline of any Bible believing church, or any person dismissed from the membership of any Bible believing church, should not receive the elements of the Lord's Supper. (cf 1 Corinthians 11:28-32) Restitution must be made first. Purity and obedience to the Word of God is very important to us at First Baptist Church.

If you have any further questions regarding our beliefs concerning the Lord's Supper, please speak with a pastor or elder of this assembly.

POSITIONAL PAPER ON THE BELIEVER'S RESPONSIBILITY IN SOCIAL ISSUES

The First Baptist Church of Doylestown

For the purpose of this paper the topic of the Christian's involvement in social issues will be divided into three categories. The first part of the paper will address how we believe the individual Christian should handle issues of human compassion. The second part will deal with the responsibility of the individual believer in making a difference in society. Many segments of society are loaded with anti-biblical influence. Opportunities abound for believers to become involved and thereby make a difference in our society and world. This section will deal with the believer's responsibilities in these areas. The final section of this paper will deal with how we believe the local church (a collective group of individual believers) is to address the issues involved in parts one and two.

This paper is not meant to be the final word on these difficult subjects. Instead this is simply an attempt to clarify and articulate what we believe a biblical position to be. It is hoped this paper will cause discussion and growth in this important area.

1. The Individual Christian and Human Compassion –

A. The Issue - Our world is crippled by injustice. While most of us in America have much, there are those who do not have enough to sustain life. The issues here are enormous. Examples of such issues include hunger, adequate housing and clothing, lack of pure water and good medical care, oppression of poor and marginalized people by ruthless leaders in both political and economic arenas, etc.

B. The Challenge - Our mailboxes regularly are filled with opportunities to give to such causes. Our telephones ring with opportunities for giving to such causes. The media reminds us of still other such opportunities. The needs are so great and yet our resources are limited. How can a person decide with which opportunity (ies) to become involved? Should we try to spread our resources between as many as possible, thereby diluting our focus? Should we say no to all but a select few opportunities and try to support them to a greater degree?

C. A Possible Solution - We must remember, we each have limited resources. Yet we are a part of a larger, diverse body with additional resources. Individually we cannot do everything but we can do something. In doing our something we must learn to be content. **(Phil. 4:12)** When assaulted with the injustices of this world we cannot cop out by asking why God does not do something about such

issues. He has done something. He has created us. Therefore we believe it is necessary to prayerfully determine what our part is.

II. The Individual Christian and Taking a Social Stand

A. The Issue - There are other issues going far beyond the above stated needs of compassion. Some issues of our day are moral issues, which contradict the Bible. Examples of such issues include abortion, drug and alcohol abuse, crime, homosexuality, religious persecution and other Godless standards of our society.

B. The Challenge - The challenge here is somewhat similar to the challenge in part one. Yet often times this issue becomes more intense. Christians recognize that compromised biblical standards will have a lasting effect on our children and grandchildren. Furthermore, many suspect God will soon judge us as a nation for such compromise. What part is the Christian to play in all this? We have already been told of our responsibility to be “salt and light” in our world. (Matt. 5:13,14) Yet most of us recognize that we can become so caught up in “fighting the cause” that we neglect our primary responsibility of discipleship.

C. A Possible Solution - We must remember the words of Paul in 1 Timothy 2:1. Our greatest responsibility is to pray. This cannot be overstated. Paul said, “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone...” Verse 2 includes government officials in this. Note how the text says the prayers are to focus on the people – it does not say focus on the issues. Verse 2 also states that we are to live peaceful and quiet lives. The ability to do this is wrapped up in prayer. (Verse 1)

We therefore believe a strong prayer life is the first step in balancing a believer’s social involvement. This strong prayer life will also help to adjust the believer’s attitude. Too often Christians think of the politicians and social concern enthusiasts as the enemy. Verse one says that we are to give thanks for everyone. This kind of praying will cause attitudes to be more godly and holy. (Verse 2) Let us remember that prayer does break down strongholds. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

Many social activists quote Matthew 5:13, 14. In that passage Jesus said we are to be the salt and light of the world. Some would use these metaphors to demand all believers be heavily involved in social issues. Occasionally these verses are used to bully people into social involvement. We believe these tactics are incorrect. We must never forget that Jesus lived during the days of the godless Roman government. Jesus’ primary goal was not to change the government but to influence people one life at a time. If Jesus was saying that he and his disciples were primarily out to change the country then they failed. The Roman government collapsed from moral deterioration. It would be far better to interpret the salt and light metaphors as referring to the believer’s influence on the people around them.

III. The Responsibility of the Local Church in Issues of Social Concern

A. Remembering the Past to Achieve Balance -Let us remember that before the days of big government, compassion issues were largely in the hands of the church. Today, the issues are so great that the church may not be able to handle them without assistance. However, we must remember our main goal is to make disciples.

B. A Possible Answer - Whatever the church can do, it should do. The church can probably do more with less when compared to big government where there is so much waste. The starting point for the church is to follow the biblical injunctions. Examples of this include Paul's statements to care for the widows, etc. James says we are to look after the orphans and widows. The writer of Hebrews tells us that we are to look after those of the household of faith first. Many such references exist in the Bible.

A prayerful following of these biblical injunctions will set us on the road to using our finances, gifts and people according to their individual callings by God. Our first calling is to make disciples. We are not called to establish the Judeo-Christian ethic throughout the world. We will not attack people or government. Yet we will hold to our biblical convictions. We will declare the message of the Bible whether society agrees or disagrees.

We believe we should be an informed and voting people. Some Christians will find their calling in lobbying and running for public office. Others will work for issues of human compassion. We will respect the calling of each one of God's children.

C. People Are Our Focus - We must always remember that even with the most sinful issues, hurting people are involved. Let us clearly state that the homosexual or the mothers having an abortion are not our enemy. We believe in loving them and providing a biblical support base that will encourage them to come to the Savior. Marginal people need help in learning to support themselves. These examples are representative of the social implications of the gospel.

APPLICATION AND POSITIONAL PAPER ON PARENT DEDICATION - CHILD PRESENTATION

The First Baptist Church of Doylestown

In many Bible believing churches a service of baby dedication is conducted in which Christian parents publicly present themselves and their children to the Lord. We frequently refer to this service as parent dedication and child presentation.

IV. What Parent Dedication - Child Presentation Is Not

There are three things that we believe concerning this service:

1. There is no biblical command that such a service should be conducted. Having said that however, there is a biblical precedent for presenting our children to God. This is seen in the case of Hannah presenting Samuel in the temple (1 Samuel 1:24-28) and also in the case of Mary and Joseph presenting Jesus. (Luke 2:22-24) In both cases, this was done in obedience to the Mosaic Law, but no such command is enjoined upon the New Testament Christian. On the other hand, many Christians feel that Hannah as well as Mary and Joseph have established a good pattern and they want to follow their example. We agree that this is a fitting thing for parents to do and we believe that there is great testimony value in such a service.
2. There is no saving value in this service. This presentation of the child is no guarantee that the child will become a Christian. Parents cannot transfer their salvation experience to their children. We believe that our children will have to make a personal decision for themselves when they can comprehend the Gospel. There is no such thing as proxy salvation in the Bible.
3. There is no magical effect upon our children as a result of public presentation. However, parents should dedicate themselves to God in the holy task of training their children for Him. Presenting the child is easy, but dedicating ourselves to the task of being a Christian parent is plain hard work.

V. What Parent Dedication - Child Presentation Is

What does it mean to dedicate ourselves and to present our children to God?

1. It means that you publicly acknowledge your child as a gift from God and present him/her to the Lord so that His will might be realized in the life of the child. Psalm 127:3 declares, "Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from Him" (NIV). That being the case, our first

responsibility is to recognize that our children have been entrusted to us by God. It becomes our parental responsibility to bring up our children in the ways of the Lord and His Word.

2. Proverbs 22:6 states, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (NIV). One who trains others must be trained himself. If you are to train your children in the fear of the Lord, you must be familiar with the heavenly manual for training children that is God's Word. In the Word we learn the principles of teaching, rebuking, correcting and training. (2 Timothy 3:16-17) These are essential elements in child training. Timothy had a rich heritage from his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois in that they taught him the Scriptures as a child. (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14;15) The Apostle Paul addressed an important word to fathers in Ephesians 6:4; when he said, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (NIV)

3. We encourage the congregation to pray for and with the parents as they seek to live for Christ and to train their child for Him. Every parent sooner or later realizes that parenting is no easy task. We need to encourage each other and support one another in those stress periods when our children go through difficult times. There is no easy formula; every child is different. How great it is to know that we have praying supportive Christian friends who are upholding us before God. Parent dedication is not saying, "I have all the answers," or "I will be a perfect parent." It is saying, "I cannot do it alone and need the help of my Christian brothers and sisters."

VI. Conclusion

Undoubtedly, you can see from our church beliefs that, if you as a Christian parent do not take your responsibility seriously, there will be very little value in such a public service. However, if you dedicate yourself to God and to the task of raising your children for Him, we believe you will have a rich and rewarding experience.

**PARENT DEDICATION - CHILD PRESENTATION
APPLICATION FORM**

The First Baptist Church of Doylestown

Please fill out the form below and return it to the church office. One of the pastors will be in touch with you soon.

Today's date: _____
Telephone number: _____
Name of Father of Child: _____
Name of Mother of Child: _____
Name of Child: _____
Date of birth of Child: _____
Location of birth of Child: _____

Does the Father of the child know Jesus Christ as Savior?

Does the Mother of the child know Jesus Christ as Savior?

Which service is your preference 9:00 AM or 10:30 AM?

Office use only

Date application was received by the church office	
Officiating pastor met with the couple <i>(date and initials of the officiating pastor)</i>	
Approval of the pastor of the church <i>(date and initials of the pastor of the church)</i>	
Date of Dedication	

POSITIONAL PAPER CONCERNING MUSIC AND WORSHIP SERVICES

The First Baptist Church of Doylestown

This positional paper was developed by our Board of Elders and represents the official church position on this subject. It should be understood that this statement supersedes all previous statements and should help the reader understand the approach we take in these issues.

The issue of styles of music used in evangelical worship services has been under heavy debate for at least fifteen years. The worshipper favoring contemporary worship desires music that is more “relevant” to the sounds of the day. The traditionalist worshipper enjoys music that reflects the sounds of the last 150 to 200 years. In recent years there has been a cry for the blending of these two positions. Blending seems to be an “all things to all men” philosophy but the end result often leaves both the traditional and contemporary advocates unsatisfied. We believe there is a better road for the local church to travel.

Christians who believe the Bible is “God breathed” believe that God has given us a book that contains everything we need for godly living. (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**) Therefore the Bible should contain instructions for settling such church controversies. At The First Baptist Church of Doylestown we believe the Bible often provides this direction through biblical principles. Our conviction is that if the principles that apply to worship and music are followed there can be both an appreciation for diversity in music and a true unity that will help us accomplish the Great Commission. (**Matthew 28:18-20**)

The biblical principles that we reference regarding this issue are:

Principle #1 – A style of music is largely a matter of personal preference

In Romans 14 Paul helps us understand there are disputable issues about which each of us feels strongly. In Paul’s day one such issue was eating meat that was previously offered as a sacrifice to a pagan god. Some Christians felt strongly that they should not eat that meat. Other Christians felt eating such meat was perfectly acceptable. The Bible gives no clear commandment regarding this unique cultural situation. Therefore Paul states this matter and other similar matters are simply personal convictions. (**Romans 14:5-8**)

From this we conclude that when the Bible does not give clear direction on disputable matters each Christian should develop a personal conviction. In the case of meat, the stronger brothers will eat the meat and the weaker brothers will not. Neither should look down on the other. (**Romans 14:3-4**)

In applying this biblical principle to music used in worship we see that Christian people have developed diverse personal convictions. We applaud this. The question is how do we worship together in light of these strong preferences.

Principle #2 – Accept one another instead of passing judgment

Paul makes it clear that we should not judge one another regarding disputable matters. (**Romans 14:13**) When our personal convictions are intensely strong it is easy to cross the line and believe our way is best. In the area of music we accuse one another of formalism or emotionalism. The “us” and “them” mentality quickly develops. Paul warned us to not pass such judgment or to stop judging if we have already started. The evangelical church in America would be wise to obey this Pauline principle.

Paul goes even further. Not only are we not to judge each other but we are to accept each other. (**Romans 14:1**) Acceptance calls for a godly tolerance. This is part of what Paul meant when he said we are to “bear with one another in love.” (**Ephesians 4:2**) This will take true humility, gentleness and a deep commitment to unity on more important issues. (**Ephesians 4:2-6**) The idea here is that unity of the family is more important than anyone’s personal preference.

Principle #3 - Consider others needs as more important than yours

Once an attitude of humility and nonjudgmentalism is established we move to the next step of considering others interests as more important than ours. (**Philippians 2:3-4**) The ultimate example of this attitude is seen in Jesus Christ. (**Philippians 2:5-11**) Christians who consider others interests as more important will usually not get caught up with the debate concerning styles of music they prefer in worship.

Principle #4 –Sometimes Christians are not able to fellowship together because their personal preferences remain too important – Acts 15:36-40

Paul and Barnabus had a strong disagreement concerning whether or not to include John Mark in a missionary trip. Their personal convictions were so strong that they could not work together. Fortunately God used their disagreement to send out two missionary teams instead of one.

Eventually Paul changed his opinion concerning John Mark. (**2 Timothy 4:11**) We would prefer to learn from this situation and resolve our issues before separation is necessary. We believe unity over the most important issues is a stronger witness than division over less important issues.

Principle #5 – We desire to use musical sounds that reflect the cultural sounds of our community – 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

In this great missionary passage, Paul states his intention to adapt in every cultural situation for the purpose of sharing the gospel. (**1 Corinthians 9:22b**) Paul was also clear that he would not compromise any biblical principle in the process of cultural adaptation. (**1 Corinthians 9:21** “...though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law.”)

At this time we believe the style that best suits our community and church is the Maranatha style of worship. This is the style used in Promise Keeper and Women of Faith rallies across the United States. This approach, while maintaining some traditional and contemporary hymn arrangements blends in numerous older and newer worship choruses. We believe it is important to intentionally and continuously introduce new worship songs that are particularly relevant to Generation X. Furthermore, pastoral leadership will intentionally train youth for service on our worship teams as instrumentalists, vocalists and worship leaders.

We believe this represents the best blend of music that will help us reach new people in the community, continue reaching the youth culture and still connect to our rich traditional evangelical roots.

In addition, a variety of physical gestures are considered acceptable in congregational worship. Gestures will not be dictated from the pulpit but worshippers should feel free to worship through clapping, raising hands or kneeling before God. These gestures based upon personal preference should flow from hearts of praise toward God.

Perhaps in future years we will alter this Maranatha style of worship. Such decisions will be strategically based on what best draws in adults and youth of our community as well as what best ministers to the congregation of the church. We sympathize with those who struggle with these changes in worship styles yet we believe our congregation can and must make these adjustments. As leaders we will be glad to try to help individuals make this adjustment. We believe this strategic approach will aid help us in making the greatest possible impact in our community.

A worship service should be directed toward God. However since God does not dictate styles to be used we need to develop the worship service in a way that we believe honors Him. The selection of music used in our services is in the hands of the Pastor of Worship and Music who is overseen by the Senior Pastor and the Board of Elders. This selection of musical styles is viewed with both an outward focus (evangelism) and with an inward focus. (Shepherding of the flock under our care) If we favor one it would be the outward focus because Christians should culturally adapt to the unbeliever. (1 **Corinthians 9:22b**)

We desire to have corporate worship experiences where the whole family of God can worship together and where there is a great appreciation for stylistic diversity. All this should result in a family oriented worship experience that glorifies God, energizes believers and reaches out to the lost.

POSITIONAL PAPER ON JAMES 5 – ANOINTING WITH OIL

The First Baptist Church of Doylestown

We believe the Elders in a local church have a biblical ministry to those of their congregation that experience serious physical, spiritual and/or emotional illness. In light of the confusion these days regarding healing and healing ministries, it seems best if the leadership of First Baptist Church, Doylestown clearly state their beliefs concerning the ministry of James 5.

VII.

Main Points

- A. The main purpose of the passage (v.s. 13-18) is prayer not anointing with oil. Note the recurring references to prayer.
- B. The individual who is sick should call for the Elders to come and pray. This is evidence of the individuals:
 - 1. faith in the healing power of God,
 - 2. and submission to the spiritual authority God has appointed in the church.
- C. The individual is to be prayed for and anointed with oil in the name of the Lord. This means that prayer is offered on the basis of what Jesus Christ has accomplished for us. It also means that we are praying in accordance with His will.
- D. We believe the prayer of the Elders offered in faith (v. 15) is a critical point in this process. (Mark 2:5)
- E. The teaching of the passage is illustrated by a reference to the life of Elijah. (v.s. 17-18) Because of the sin of a godless king and a rebellious nation, God through his prophet Elijah stated there would be no rain for 3 ½ years. (1 Kings 17:1) But once there was repentance, the punishment was lifted. Therefore we would believe that if the person calling for anointing and prayer is sick because of sin, true repentance will lead to healing.

VIII.

Observations

- A. It should be observed that in no time of biblical history were miracles ever experienced daily and consistently. If they were they probably would not have been called miracles. Miracles by definition are divinely caused exceptions – they are not the norm.
- B. The interpretation stated under “Main Points” above helps to explain James 5:19-20 which otherwise seems like a strange ending to the book.

In the case of serious sickness caused by sin, repentance can save a life.

C. We believe God's promise to heal in this passage (v. 15) has to be understood within the theological framework of praying within His will. (1 John 5:14-15)

D. The oil may be symbolic of any of several possibilities including:

1. the Holy Spirit
2. quality medical therapy
3. the blessing of a restored life (Psalm 23:5; 133:2)

The point is not so much to understand what the oil may represent. The important thing is to obey the passage as best we know how.

IX. Conclusions Concerning the Passage

A. Any seriously ill person under the spiritual authority of the Elders of this church should feel free upon the leading of God to call upon the Elders for prayer and anointing. We do believe God heals.

B. When called upon, the Elders will set aside a time for prayer and anointing with oil. As many Elders as possible will be present. An explanation of the passage will be offered. They will ask if this sickness may be the direct result of sin. If so confession will be encouraged.

C. Whether the sickness is sin based or not, there will be a time of prayer preceded by an anointing with oil.

D. We will trust God for healing in accordance with His will. This healing may be instantaneous or progressive depending on His will.

POSITIONAL PAPER ON HOLY LIVING

The First Baptist Church of Doylestown

The issue of how to live a holy life in this society is an extremely complicated one. Yet the Bible is clear that we must do so. (Matthew 5:48) This paper outlines our church approach to holy living. It is not the purpose of this paper to clarify issues that the Bible already makes clear, but instead to state the biblical principles necessary to help believers make decisions on the questionable areas of conduct. These issues are questionable because the Scriptures do not directly mention them. They include things like moderate drinking of alcohol, television, movies, some forms of music, dancing, diet, cigarettes, the use of cosmetics, etc.

X. Common Errors

There are two prevalent errors Christians sometimes make. Both are extremes and need to be avoided. First, there are those who follow the path of legalism. A legalist is one who thinks that by obeying a certain set of rules, he can either earn his eternal life and/or earn the title of "spiritual" in Christian living. While obedience to the law of God is very important, we believe a person can neither earn salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9) nor earn the state of spirituality. (Colossians 2:6-7) The law was not given to help people be good but to show them how evil they really are. (1 Timothy 1:8-11) Eternal life and spiritual living can only be received by trusting God. God then gives the power to overcome sin and be obedient. (Romans 14:17-18)

Second, there are those who follow the path of antinomianism. These individuals believe that only faith is necessary for salvation and holy living. This, too, is an error. James makes it very clear that faith which produces no good works is not true saving faith. (James 2:14-18) True saving faith will produce good, fruitful works. Often this error leads to very selfish living on the part of the Christian. He/she wants his freedom in Christ and he does not intend to give it up for anyone or anything.

Since the principles of the Bible strike a balance between these two extremes, we must look to these principles for guidance. We would expect to find the answers to questions concerning Christian conduct within the Scriptures, because Paul told us that everything we need for Godly living is in the Scriptures. (2 Timothy 3:16-17) Therefore, in determining our Christian conduct, we must implement these principles. If we do not, we will go the way of these two extremes.

Many a Christian has erred as a legalist. Besides being unbiblical, the practice of this position shows Christians to be inconsistent. A generation ago, many Christians assumed certain styles of clothing, music and forms of entertainment were wrong. Interestingly, this present generation considers many of those same things to be acceptable. This can be seen in the examples of television and Sunday sports. Just a generation ago, both were condemned in many Christian

circles. Today nearly everyone owns one or two televisions, and professional Christian athletes are considered heroes. This seems to superficially suggest that God's standards for holiness change. Of course, we know that this is not true. Therefore, we conclude one of three possibilities to be correct. The last generation was wrong for setting those standards, or we are wrong in not holding to them, or both.

The options can be narrowed by considering the example of television. There are no verses against television, but there are verses that deal with what we should allow to enter our minds. (Philippians 4:8) The things that are not good for us to be thinking about are counter-productive for our Christian lives. But this does not make the television itself wrong. To condemn the television is legalism. The television is a thing which cannot have morality apart from human contact. We give it morality in the way we use it. Conversely, to say that everything on the television is acceptable is antinomianism. Certainly, many shows on television do not fit the principle of Philippians 4:8.

Clearly, much Christian thinking regarding worldliness is too shallow to produce true holy conduct. We need to get back to the biblical principles that define what is best for our conduct.

XI. Biblical Principles

What follows are several principles from Scripture. We believe these will help us make decisions concerning questionable things. We recognize these principles to be a mark of Christian maturity. As Christians, we must constantly be growing in these principles (1 Corinthians 8:9-13) to please our Lord. The principles are categorized under four key questions which will help in determining whether a questionable thing is permissible.

A. Is this Issue a Truly Questionable Issue?

1. The Principle of the Clarification - Psalm 119:9, 11 and Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Bible will help us sort out whether the issue in question is a questionable issue. Is this questionable or have we just rationalized it as being questionable? Are we prohibited from doing this thing?
2. The Principle of Civil Authorities - Romans 13:1-2 causes us to ask if the issue in question is something which has been forbidden by anyone with authority over us. If so, the questionable thing is to be avoided.
3. The Principle of Purity - Philippians 4:8 states a whole set of criteria to consider before undertaking a questionable thing. Does the issue in question fit the criteria stated?
4. The Principle of Anticipation - 1 John 3:3 refers to the concept of Christ's return which motivates us to live in purity. If the questionable

thing does not cause us to live in purity, we should not do it.

B. Will this Issue be Best for My Spiritual Development?

1. The Principle of Expediency - 1 Corinthians 6:12 states that while all questionable things may be lawful, they may not be expedient (appropriate or advisable).
2. The Principle of Enslavement - 1 Corinthians 6:12 and Hebrews 12:1-2 state that while all questionable things may be lawful for us, we will not be mastered or enslaved by any of them. The question here is, will this issue control us?
3. The Principle of Edification - 1 Corinthians 10:23 states that while all questionable things are lawful for us, they are not all edifying for us.
4. The Principle of Conscience - Acts 24:16, Romans 14:23, 1 Timothy 1:5 and Hebrews 13:18 all state that we should not violate our God-given conscience.
5. The Principle of Thankfulness - Ephesians 5:20 causes us to ask the question as to whether or not we can thank God for the questionable thing that we are considering.
6. The Principle of Doubtfulness - Romans 14:23 states that if we have doubts in our mind about an issue, we will not do it because the doubt demonstrates it to be wrong for us.
7. The Principle of Clothing - Romans 13:14 states we are to be clothed with Christ and not with our sinful desires. Which nature does the questionable issue feed?
8. The Principle of the Temple - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 states that if the questionable issue is bad for our physical body, which is God's temple, then it is not for us to do.
9. The Principle of Brinkmanship - 1 Peter 1:16 calls us to move away from the brink of sin and toward holiness which pleases God. The question should not be: "Is this thing OK for me to do?" but "Will this cause me to be more like Christ?"

C. Will this Issue be Best for the Christians Around Me?

1. The Principle of Liberty - 1 Corinthians 8:1-6 teaches that some Christians correctly understand they have the freedom to do things that are questioned by others. But this liberty does not mean that we have to do this. It may not be the loving thing to do for the sake of our brother. Therefore, we will willingly give it up for our brother's sake.
2. The Principle of the Stumbling Block - 1 Corinthians 8:7-12 states that if a particularly questionable issue is done by one believer, in the presence of another who thinks it is wrong, the first brother sins. The

reason for this is that the weaker brother may be caused to go against his personal convictions.

3. The Principle of Surrendered Rights - 1 Corinthians 8:9-13 states and illustrates that if we see a brother that will be offended by a questionable thing we do, we will waive our right to do that thing.

4. The Principle of Priority - Philippians 2:4 states that we should not be looking out for our own interests (freedoms) but for the interest of others.

5. The Principle of Example - Philippians 2:5-8 gives a clear example of Christ sacrificing for us. We also must be willing to sacrifice for others. We recognize this will cost us our freedoms at times.

D. Will this Issue be Best for the Testimony of Christ?

1. The Principle of Personal Testimony - 1 Corinthians 10:31 challenges us to closely examine the questionable to see if it will bring glory to God or simply gratify personal pleasure.

XII. Implications

The implication of these combined principles is that we as a local body of believers are willing to waive our rights of freedom concerning questionable things. In fact, in many cases we would be wise to do so for the sake of ourselves, others and the kingdom. We challenge our attenders to set questionable things aside and to give full attention to glorifying God. We do not want to be found in pursuit of legalism or in following our own selfish desires by insisting on our freedoms. In accordance with Hebrews 13:17, the spiritual leaders of this church charge each person within this local assembly to live in light of these principles.

XIII.

Admonishment and Discipline

Since one may not be sure how to keep these biblical principles, this section is added to provide a Scriptural procedure. It is the responsibility of each Christian, whether a church leader or not, to live in light of these principles. Should anyone of us see a brother or sister in violation of these principles, it is our individual responsibility to go to that brother or sister and confront them. The attitude of this approach is clearly spelled out in Galatians 6:1. The attitude of the approach must be one that desires restoration. The biblical procedure of confrontation is clearly spelled out in Matthew 18:15-17.

Step one (verse 15) clearly states that the one who is sinned against (or in this case the one who sees the sin) must go to the sinner and confront him/her privately. No church leader or other Christian should be brought into the situation at this point.

If the sinner does not admit to sin and the sin can be proven, step two (verse 16) should then be undertaken. The "one or two" to be taken should probably involve at least one leader from the church so that, should step three be necessary, the leadership would have already been involved in dealing with the situation.

If the sinner still does not turn from the sin, the third step (verse 17) must then be undertaken.

This is a serious principle of the Word which cannot be overlooked or conveniently neglected. The attitude of confrontation must not be one of nailing the sinner for the sin but to lovingly restore the sinner to God and holy living. We must learn to "speak the truth in love". (Ephesians 4:15)

POSITIONAL PAPER CONCERNING DOCTRINAL AND DENOMINATIONAL DIFFERENCES

The First Baptist Church of Doylestown

C. S. Lewis once said, "When all is said about divisions of Christendom, there remains, by God's mercy, an enormous common ground." (Christian Reflections, ed. Walter Hooper, Grand Rapids Mich. Erdmanns, 1974, preface) As one looks at the universal church of Jesus Christ, this enormous common ground is not always easy to see. In fact, some Christians are not able to distinguish between true believers of differing traditions and those who are not Christ followers at all. Many Christians wage war with other Christians over issues that the Bible never clearly distinguishes. We believe this hurts the mission to which we are called. The purpose of this paper is to state our church's position concerning the issues of doctrinal agreement and disagreement among God's people.

1. Core Doctrines

1. The Christian faith is built upon a few core doctrines that have always been held by mainstream Christians through the centuries. This set of doctrines separate believers from non-believers. They are so critical to our faith that they cannot be denied by those who claim to be Biblical Christian believers. That is why they are called "The Fundamentals of the Faith."
 - The trinity
 - Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man
 - Jesus as the virgin-born Son of God
 - The substitutionary death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead
 - The literal, personal, visible return of Jesus Christ to gather His followers and to judge the world
 - All mankind is sinful by nature and practice
 - Salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ only
2. Another critical doctrine is the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible as our infallible guide in all matters of faith and practice (doctrine and Christian living). We believe the Scriptures to be inerrant in the original manuscripts.
3. Interestingly, those who deny the inerrancy of the Scriptures do not agree which parts are in error. Such a subjective way of handling the word of God we find totally inadequate for processing truth.
4. While a clear understanding of these doctrines may not be necessary for salvation by faith, acceptance of these fundamental truths becomes the foundation of growth in the Christian life.

1. II. Less Essential Doctrines

1. Aside from the essential core doctrines of the Christian Faith as listed above, there are numerous other doctrines that are important but are not essential to saving faith in Jesus Christ. They include such doctrines as the diverse interpretations concerning spiritual gifts, modes of baptism, varying views of predestination and election, -- just to mention a few. These doctrines and others like them are of great interest to many believers and usually become seriously held convictions.
2. Differences of opinion on these less-essential matters have often led to the formation of new movements, denominations and sects within Christianity. This is not all bad, as denominations tend to attract people of similar beliefs. This grouping of Christians allows us to focus on our mission, rather than expending our energies in arguing and dividing over these less-essential doctrines.

2. III. Our Position

1. We believe the Bible was given to us to reveal God and His marvelous work of redemption; and to call us to connect with Him through His Son, Jesus Christ; and to align ourselves with His purposes in the world. Hence we must seek to obey and proclaim His Word, beginning in the heart of Bucks County and reaching out to all the world.
2. At First Baptist Church we choose to focus our unity on the core doctrines of the Faith as clearly taught in the Bible. We must guard those essential doctrines of the Christian faith. To compromise them in any way is heresy. But to elevate less-essentials to the level of core doctrines is wrong because that brings division to the body.
3. As to the less-essential doctrines, our church name, our membership in CBAmerica and our commitment to the historic Baptist distinctives all demonstrate that we are a Baptist church. The Baptist distinctives are:
 - The Bible as our infallible guide for faith and life
 - The priesthood of all believers. A regenerate church membership
 - Baptism of believers by immersion only
 - The autonomy of the local church
 - The separation of church and state
4. We do not hold the Baptist distinctives to be of equal value with the core doctrines of the faith, though they do define our convictions in these areas. The unity that comes from holding those convictions allows us to focus on the task of building up His Body, the church, and reaching out to all the world.

5. Though we are committed to these convictions, we do not hold them as a basis of fellowship or non-fellowship with other members of God's family. We definitely do not believe that a person's salvation is determined by the denomination to which he belongs.
6. We believe that to make the less-essential truths a basis of fellowship is clearly a sin that the New Testament warns us against. (Eph. 4:1-6; I Cor. 3:16-17)
7. Beyond the core doctrines and the Baptist distinctives, we recognize that there are numerous other differences among our attenders. We accept this diversity as healthy, so long as no individual destroys our unity by openly and offensively seeking to "convert" others to his/her particular view on the less-essential areas of doctrine.
8. It is hoped that this environment will allow for healthy discussion and further study. Ultimately it is our desire that this policy will allow us to concentrate more on our mission than on less-essential doctrinal differences.
9. There are certain issues among the less essential Christian doctrines and practices where we feel it is necessary for First Baptist Church to take a stand for the sake of unity in the body and/or clarity of the message we preach. In such cases our staff and elders have prepared or will prepare Positional Papers to clarify our belief and/or practice.

Full acceptance of the position affirmed in these papers is not required in order to become a member. However, if a member's difference from First Baptist church's position on these issues is promoted in such a way as to cause division and party spirit in the body of believers here, that person may be brought before the elders for church discipline. This is because we believe we have a sacred trust "to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. 4:3)

3. IV. Points of Support

1. Jesus Prayed that we would be one as He and His Father are one. (John 17:21)
Divisiveness over differences on less essential and non-essential doctrines destroys the unity Jesus prayed for.
2. One important key to reaching the world for Christ is the unified testimony of God's people. Jesus prayed for this unity"---so that the world may know that You sent Me." (John 17:21b) Unity communicates that Jesus was sent to this world by the Father. The world needs to hear and see this message in and through the unity of the followers of Jesus.
3. He called for a unity of love and respect for each other, - a unity in diversity, not a sameness in the areas of non-essentials.
4. In Mere Christianity C. S. Lewis likens the church of Jesus Christ to a big house with many rooms. Members of the family each have their own bedroom, but there are rooms where they all come together and are comfortable together. Just so, there is a place for our own room of belief, but there are rooms where we are all comfortable

together in fellowship and service. We must not make the same demands on the family areas of our doctrine as we do on our “bedroom” of personal convictions.

5. For centuries Bible scholars have tried to resolve differences in interpretation on the less-essential doctrines without success. Let us not make the mistake of elevating less-essentials to the place where they destroy the unity which is the gift of the Holy spirit to His people and which God demands that we guard with all diligence. (Eph. 4:1-3) Since greater minds than ours have failed to eliminate less essential doctrinal differences among god’s people, let us not expend our efforts in trying to force everyone into one tight mold.