

Trinity Fellowship Balancing Points

Teaching Points Beyond our Statement of Faith

Sincere believers may disagree with our stated beliefs. But for the sake of the unity and healthy functioning of the local Body of believers called Trinity Fellowship, we would ask that those who choose to fellowship with us not engage in teaching or promoting beliefs in contradiction to our stated positions. The core beliefs we hold to are found in our statement of faith, which corresponds to the [Statement of Faith of the Evangelical Free Church of America](#).

The following are brief statements that capture some of the additional teaching points that our fellowship has had to address in order to guide the assembly to unity around Christ. Many of them include links to more in-depth documents and resources.

[Word and words \(the Bible and Verbal Spiritual Gifts\)](#)

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1. Word and words (the Bible and Verbal Spiritual Gifts)

- a. We believe that the “words” of God speaking to believers today (e.g. New Testament prophecy) are to be received with an open but cautious attitude. These “words” (lower case “w”) must always be held underneath the authority of the “Word” of the Bible (upper case “W”). In teaching and in practice, we do not allow “words” to be put on the same level as, nor above, the “Word.” All “words” must be weighed against the “Word” and are to be rejected if there is contradiction or confusion.
- b. Our worship services are not designed to properly evaluate “words” under the “Word” in an orderly and effective manner. Therefore, it has not been our practice to encourage the use of these gifts in the public services.
- c. See the extended Elders’ position paper of [Guidelines for Gifts - Esp. Verbal Ones](#)

2. Creationism

- a. We believe the Bible teaches that God freely created all things from nothing and that He created human beings specially, in His image. We believe in the historicity of Adam and Eve. These are the essentials of a biblical creationist view.
- b. We allow for the diversity of opinion on the age of the earth. We affirm with those who hold to a “young earth” position that God could have created in 6 literal 24 hour days. But we also affirm that science has shown that creation has at least the appearance of great age. We recognize that it is within the scope of reasonable interpretation to say that Genesis 1 allows for an “old earth.” There is more ambiguity in Genesis 1 than some are willing to admit, but at the same time there is also more ambiguity in science than others hold to.
- c. While allowing believers to strongly defend their positions, we expect everyone to treat fellow believers who disagree with them with graciousness. On this subject, we do not believe that we should teach only one view as the absolute answer (which would label those who disagree as heretics) but rather teachers should present their views clearly while stating the position of openness taken by the church.

3. God’s Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

- a. We affirm both the complete and full sovereignty of God and the reality of human choices and the consequent responsibility people have for their choices. We welcome people who hold to a position that puts priority on the sovereignty of God and His election of His saints. We also welcome people whose position puts a stronger focus on the free choice of people in receiving and rejecting Jesus. Many in our congregation would be labeled “compatibalists,” who hold that both truths must be held in dynamic tension, not allowing an unbalanced view to minimize any of the diverse biblical passages on this subject.
- b. While allowing believers to strongly defend their positions, we expect everyone to treat fellow believers who disagree with them with graciousness. On this subject, we do not believe that we should teach only one view as the absolute answer (which would label those who disagree as heretics) but rather teachers should present their views clearly while stating the position of openness taken by the church.

4. Healing

- a. We believe God can and does heal through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. This healing will be complete on the day we receive our resurrected bodies. In the meantime, God often will hear our cries to Him for physical and emotional healing. James 5 makes it clear that it should be a regular practice for the elders of a church to be praying for the sick.
- b. We affirm that God is sovereign in His decision to heal. We cannot demand healing, nor does the specific wording we use in our prayers require God to heal (or to not heal

because we have not spoken the “right words”). We come to God as His children and express to Him our desires for the healing of selves, our loved ones, and friends. When we pray, we are to make our requests with confident faith, but also with humility, as Jesus modeled when he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “if it be Your will.” Approaching the Father in this way is not praying with less faith or confidence, but with a humble heart.

5. Water Baptism

- a. The Evangelical Free Church statement of faith, to which we ascribe, does not specify if baptism should include the baptism of infants nor if it should be limited to only believers. While we do not require having been baptized as a believer by a certain mode in order to be a member, we practice baptism of believers.
- b. We practice the dedication of children by parents, but reserve baptism to be the choice of the child when they put their faith and trust in Christ as their Savior. We do not require someone baptized as an infant to be re-baptized, leaving that decision to the individual’s conscience.
- c. We prefer to baptize by immersion but will use other modes if required by the health of the baptismal candidate.
- d. See the [Worship Flier Insert on Baptism](#)

6. Debt

- a. We believe Christians are to be “debt-averse,” committed to spending within our God-given means. However, we do not think it is necessarily sinful to incur debt. Debt is only sinful when we, individually or as a church, do not pay what we owe on the schedule that we have contractually obligated ourselves to.
- b. See the Elders’ position paper on [Debt](#)

7. Male Eldership

- a. Men and women have equal standing as heirs of Christ and yet are to fill different roles. The roles in both the home and the church are complementary, with two equals serving in different functions.
- b. Within the local church, the leadership given by the elders is limited to men. We do not find that there is sufficient textual basis to say that the biblical passages, which clearly limit the elder role to men, should be discounted because they are culturally limited to the first century.
- c. While we believe we have come to this position from a posture of submission to the authority of all of God’s Word, we understand that others may not agree with our conclusions. However, this issue is not one where we can practically allow for the

- implementation of both views (a church can NOT simultaneously have AND not have women elders). We welcome folks who have a different position but ask that they not engage in teaching or promoting beliefs in contradiction to our stated positions.
- d. See the Elders' position paper on [Elders and Deacons](#)
 - e. See the Elders' position paper on the [Office of Elder & the Role of Women](#)

8. Divorce and Remarriage

- a. The Bible strongly affirms that God's ideal is marriage between a man and a woman for a lifetime. We underscore this ideal by requiring pre-marital preparation for all couples.
- b. We believe there are two biblical grounds that allow for divorce and remarriage. These are sexual immorality and desertion by an unbeliever. Though these grounds allow for a divorce, the preference is always to work toward forgiveness and reconciliation.
- c. The requirement that an elder be "the husband of one wife" focuses on his qualification of being a "one-woman man" rather than having only had one wife or of not being a polygamist. A divorced man, who over the years since the divorce took place, has proven himself to be a "one-woman man," may be considered for affirmation to an elder role within the local church.
- d. See [teaching notes](#) from Gerhard deBock
- e. See [Flow-Chart for Assessing Biblical Grounds for Divorce](#)

9. Grace Only vs. Lordship Salvation

- a. At the root of this debate is what one must do to be saved. We believe the Bible teaches that we must repent and believe, accepting Jesus as both Savior and Lord of our lives. In the words of Wayne Grudem, "Repentance is heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience . . . We cannot say that someone has to actually live that changed life over a period of time before repentance can be genuine, or else repentance would be turned into a kind of obedience that we could do to merit salvation for ourselves."
- b. We believe that true, saving faith always leads to a changed life. The changed life does not save us, but it is the fruit by which the tree is known. This does not mean that a person will exhibit sinless perfection this side of glory, but that a chart of the process of their being made more holy (sanctification) will manifest a positive, upward movement over time.
- c. See [teaching notes](#) from Gerhard deBock

10. Church Membership

- a. We believe that faith in Christ joins all believers to the universal Church. We also believe that it is normative for all Christians to be active members of a local expression

- of that universal Church. It is only in the local assembly that the “one another” commands directed to believers in the New Testament can be fully obeyed.
- b. See the Elders’ position paper on the local church: [We Love the Church](#)

11. Holy Spirit - Baptism, Sanctification, Gifts

- a. We believe that all those who trust Christ and are saved are baptized by the Holy Spirit, identifying them with Jesus’ Church. While many believers experience substantial moments of growth in their walks with Jesus, these are best not called the “baptism in/with/by the Holy Spirit.”
- b. We do not want to inadvertently divide the body into the “haves and have-nots” by teaching that there are two stages or levels of Christians. This two-step approach has many different expressions including separating the believers into those who have/have not experienced the baptism of the Spirit (as a second work of grace), those who trust Jesus as Savior but who have/have not made Him Lord of their lives, or those who have/have not reached “sinless perfection.”
- c. While we ask people to not engage in teaching or promoting beliefs in contradiction to our stated positions, on this and other matters, that does not mean that we expect folks to lie about their personal experiences. The sharing of one’s beliefs and experiences in a home setting is not a violation of our position. It is only when a person starts to advocate (promote) or actively teach others that they SHOULD or MUST experience this gift or experience to give evidence that they are baptized in the Spirit, or to be equipped to fully walk in fulness of the Spirit, or to be a mature believer, that the individual contradicts our stated restriction.
- d. We would ask that the tongues-gifted person sharing their story be cautious not to teach nor suggest that all SHOULD or MUST speak in tongues. We must likewise make sure that we do not mandate that any of the spiritual gifts we enjoy, and are equipped to serve with, are the ones everyone should have.
- e. See the Elders’ position paper on [The Work of the Holy Spirit](#)