

# | Closed-Handed Theology |

*But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.*

Titus 2:1

*Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

1 Timothy 4:16

Paul encouraged pastors to keep a watch on their doctrine carefully because their doctrine directly affects how they pastored people. What you believe about God, man, Jesus, sin, and the church will come out in your counsel and leadership.

## **Closed-handed vs Open-handed**

Many people debate the finer points of doctrine all the time. Our biggest goal as a church family, in regards to doctrine, is to be biblically faithful in what we teach. We break doctrine into two main categories: closed-handed doctrine and open-handed doctrine. Closed-handed doctrines are unchangeable teachings that all Christians should hold to be true. Open-handed doctrines are teachings that are either not explicit or essential to true faith in Christ. As Christians we hold these loosely and accept disagreement.

## **Closed-Handed Doctrine Group Leaders Must Hold to:**

### **Trinity**

God exists eternally in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Triune God is co-eternal in being, co-eternal in nature, co-equal in power and glory, having the same attributes and perfections. The Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit. The Son is neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 45:6-7; Psalm 110:1; Matthew 3: 13-17; Matthew 28: 17-20; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

### **God the Father**

God, our heavenly Father, is the creator and sustainer of all things. God is sovereign over everything big and small, good and bad. God is holy. He cannot be united with sin. He loves mankind so much that he gave his son as a sacrifice to redeem us from our sin so we can be reconciled to him. God is patient, holding back his wrath that more people can come to repentance before judgment. God is love, peace, joy, gentleness, kindness and self-control, therefore he wants us to imitate his attributes by living by the spirit. (John 3:16, Gal 5, 2 Peter 3:9)

### **Jesus**

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, who became man without ceasing to be God. Jesus, who was fully God and fully man, was the only human to live a sinless life. He accomplished our redemption through

His death on the cross and his physical resurrection from the dead. He then ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God. Jesus is coming again to judge the living and the dead, inaugurating His eternal reign over glorified creation as King for all eternity. (Matthew 1:22-23, Isaiah 9:6, Luke 1:35, John 1:1-5; 2:1-2; 14:10-30, Hebrews 4:14-15; 7:25; 9:24, I Corinthians 15:3-4, Romans 1:3-4; 3:24; 8:34; 14:9, Acts 1:9-11, Ephesians 1:7, I Timothy 6:14-15, II Timothy 4:1, Titus 2:13 I Peter 1:3-5, 2:24; 4:5)

### **Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son as God. He is present in the world to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement in congruence with its need for Jesus Christ. He baptizes every believer from the moment of salvation into the body of Christ, sealing them unto the day of redemption. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth, gifts of ministry, and guidance for the Church. The Christian seeks to live under His control daily. (II Corinthians 3:17, John 16:7-13; 14:16-17, Acts 1:8, I Corinthians 2:12; 3:16, 12:1-11, Ephesians 1:13, Galatians 5:25, Ephesians 5:18, Romans 8:9)

### **Sin**

Humanity was created to live in perfect relationship with God, joining in the fellowship of the Trinity. However, the first humans rebelled against God and chose to live outside of God's perfect rule. As a continuing part of that rebellion, mankind in its natural state is sinful and separated from God. Because of sin, we have all earned God's wrath towards us and are deserving of an eternity in hell. (Romans 3:23)

### **Salvation**

Salvation is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose death, burial, and resurrection was for the atonement and forgiveness of our sins. Only by placing faith in the person and work of Jesus is one reconciled to God and able to experience true life and joy. Justification comes by grace through faith alone in Christ alone. No amount of good works or personal effort will be enough to save us from the due penalty of our sin. (Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8-10, John 14:6; 1:12, Titus 3:5, Galatians 3:26, Romans 5:1. 1 Peter 1:18-19)

### **Scripture**

The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to all mankind, written by human authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the verbally inspired word of God, the final authority for faith and life, inerrant in the original writings, infallible, and God-breathed. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matthew 5:18; John 16:12, 13, Psalm 119:105, 160)

### **Eternity**

Man was created to exist forever. Man will either exist eternally separated from God by sin or in union with God through forgiveness and salvation in Jesus Christ. Upon death, mankind will spend eternity in one of two destinations: Heaven or Hell. Heaven is the literal destination of eternal union with God for those who have professed faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord, and Hell is the literal destination of eternal separation from God for those who have rejected the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (John 3:16, I John 2:25; 5:11-13, Romans 6:23, Revelation 20:15)

## **Open-Handed Issues**

These issues can be discussed and debated, but open-handed issues are not to cause division within the church. These are things like: form of baptism, alcohol use, tobacco use, worship style, political affiliation, end times eschatology, etc.