

Berean Baptist Church - Elder Position Statement

Principles for Bible Teaching

The Elders of Berean Baptist Church desire to glorify God through Jesus Christ in all things. This includes the preaching and teaching of his Word. We desire the Berean's to read, teach and be taught from the Scripture in a way that drives us toward the Gospel and its central figure, *Jesus Christ*. We desire to magnify Christ and instill hope, making real and necessary connections between our Lord's commands and His provisions.

Colossians 3:16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom... And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Listed below are admonitions and cautions that will help to develop and constrain our teachers to a careful and Christ centered communication of the whole Council of God. This effort highlights important ideas to consider as we serve our Savior in a teaching ministry. It is expected that teachers in our ministries will strive to be governed by the admonitions, cautions and principles that follow

Admonitions:

1. Remember always, when teaching the Scripture, that *Christ is the Lord of the Story*. He always was, is and is to come. *Jesus Christ is the interpretive Key to unlocking the Old Testament*. The whole Bible should be interpreted and taught as Christian Scripture. Jesus taught that the whole of Scripture was generally in fact about Him (John 5:46, Luke 24:25-27). The authors of the Old Testament understood their message as stated at the time but did not in all cases understand the fulfillment of their message.
2. We should interpret the Bible both spiritually and logically: spiritually, the Holy Spirit is our teacher and guide; logically, we should use literal, grammatical and historical methods to attain the meaning for both the original audience and today. There should be flexibility for various teachers in this effort to connect the text and its meaning to Christ and His work.
3. The Scripture is never *only* moralistic. Every part of the Bible from the Old to New Testament and from beginning to end can only be understood fully because of and in light of Jesus Christ and his work. Think about the indicatives and the imperatives in the verbs/writings of the Scripture:
Indicative = what something/someone is
Imperative = what something/someone does

We should not levy imperatives (do this...or be like...statements) on God's people without reminding them of the indicatives (you can only do this... or be like...because of Christ!) that makes obedience and joy possible. Gospel obligations must be based on Gospel declarations!

4. The Bible is not a disjointed collection of unrelated books and stories, it is a finished and complete book designed to lead us to redemption and guide our lives. Because of this, it should also be viewed as a whole and a story of redemption. (II Timothy 3:16)
5. The way the New Testament authors used, understood and interpreted the Old Testament should guide our reading of it. Reasons to consider:
 - A. They were closer to the events than we are
 - B. They wrote under inspiration of the Holy Spirit
 - C. They were direct disciples of Christ
 - D. They modeled the extensive use of the Old Testament to communicate the Gospel
 - E. Some of them were Jews who grew up reading the Old Testament. (John 1:45, Acts 8:34,35)

Caution: The New Testament authors were writing, interpreting and applying Scripture under inspiration. Modern readers are not interpreting under the same circumstances. The meaning of the source text is fixed and singular from the Old Testament. The modern application (not interpretation) of such texts in the manner used by the New Testament Authors is legitimate and varies by reader.

Cautions:

1. These admonitions do not mean that morality is irrelevant. Nor does it mean that we shouldn't press people to action or obedience to the word of God.
2. These admonitions do not mean that we find or must strain to find Jesus in every verse of the Old Testament.
3. The use of Allegory or Typology should be constrained to their (1) genres or (2) clear careful uses of these literary tools.
4. The meaning of the text is never dependent on the skill or creativity of the interpreter. Yet, Christ gifts the church with those who can teach and apply his Word.
5. A goal of all teaching and preaching in the local church is to build unity among its members (Phil. 2:1-11). Accuracy and understanding of hermeneutical principles and interpretive methods are a process of sanctification and training. All, readers of Scripture in a church are not at the same place or degree of experience with this exercise. Humility will fuel the unity we all desire as we admonish with patience the development of the privileged careful task of reading, interpreting and applying Scripture.

The following articles comprise *Explaining Hermeneutics: A Commentary on the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics*. Oakland, California: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1983. They are a reliable collection of statements that reflect the hermeneutic principles generally affirmed by the Berean Baptist Church Elders. The reader is reminded that no composition of language or ideas outside of the Holy Scripture is inspired. Therefore, the statement is intended as a tool and guide that consists of principles for Bible interpretation. No document, including the one below is perfect, it merely acts as tool to guard Bible readers against misuse of inspired Bible texts.

Article I. WE AFFIRM that the normative authority of Holy Scripture is the authority of God Himself, and is attested by Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church.

WE DENY the legitimacy of separating the authority of Christ from the authority of Scripture, or of opposing the one to the other.

Article II. WE AFFIRM that as Christ is God and Man in one Person, so Scripture is, indivisibly, God's Word in human language.

WE DENY that the humble, human form of Scripture entails errancy any more than the humanity of Christ, even in His humiliation, entails sin.

Article III. WE AFFIRM that the Person and work of Jesus Christ are the central focus of the entire Bible.

WE DENY that any method of interpretation which rejects or obscures the Christ-centeredness of Scripture is correct.

Article IV. WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture acts through it today to work faith in its message.

WE DENY that the Holy Spirit ever teaches to anyone anything which is contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

Article V. WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit enables believers to appropriate and apply Scripture to their lives. WE DENY that the natural man is able to discern spiritually the biblical message apart from the Holy Spirit.

Article VI. WE AFFIRM that the Bible expresses God's truth in propositional statements, and we declare that biblical truth is both objective and absolute. We further affirm that a statement is true if it represents matters as they actually are, but is an error if it misrepresents the facts.

WE DENY that, while Scripture is able to make us wise unto salvation, biblical truth should be defined in terms of this function. We further deny that error should be defined as that which willfully deceives.

Article VII. WE AFFIRM that the meaning expressed in each biblical text is single, definite and fixed.

WE DENY that the recognition of this single meaning eliminates the variety of its application.

Article VIII. WE AFFIRM that the Bible contains teachings and mandates which apply to all cultural and situational contexts and other mandates which the Bible itself shows apply only to particular situations. WE DENY that the distinction between the universal and particular mandates of Scripture can be determined by cultural and situational factors. We further deny that universal mandates may ever be treated as culturally or situationally relative.

Article IX. WE AFFIRM that the term hermeneutics, which historically signified the rules of exegesis, may properly be extended to cover all that is involved in the process of perceiving what the biblical revelation means and how it bears on our lives.

WE DENY that the message of Scripture derives from, or is dictated by, the interpreter's understanding. Thus we deny that the "horizons" of the biblical writer and the interpreter may rightly "fuse" in such a way that what the text communicates to the interpreter is not ultimately controlled by the expressed meaning of the Scripture.

Article X. WE AFFIRM that Scripture communicates God's truth to us verbally through a wide variety of literary forms.

WE DENY that any of the limits of human language render Scripture inadequate to convey God's message.

Article XI. WE AFFIRM that translations of the text of Scripture can communicate knowledge of God across all temporal and cultural boundaries.

WE DENY that the meaning of biblical texts is so tied to the culture out of which they came that understanding of the same meaning in other cultures is impossible.

Article XII. WE AFFIRM that in the task of translating the Bible and teaching it in the context of each culture, only those functional equivalents which are faithful to the content of biblical teaching should be employed.

WE DENY the legitimacy of methods which either are insensitive to the demands of cross-cultural communication or 'distort biblical meaning in the process.

Article XIII. WE AFFIRM that awareness of the literary categories, formal and stylistic, of the various parts of Scripture is essential for proper exegesis, and hence we value genre criticism as one of the many disciplines of biblical study.

WE DENY that generic categories which negate historicity may rightly be imposed on biblical narratives which present themselves as factual.

Article XIV. WE AFFIRM that the biblical record of events, discourses and sayings, though presented in a variety of appropriate literary forms, corresponds to historical fact.

WE DENY that any event, discourse or saying reported in Scripture was invented by the biblical writers or by the traditions they incorporated.

Article XV. WE AFFIRM the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text.

WE DENY the legitimacy of any approach to Scripture that attributes to it meaning which the literal sense does not support.

Article XVI. WE AFFIRM that legitimate critical techniques should be used in determining the canonical text and its meaning.

WE DENY the legitimacy of allowing any method of biblical criticism to question the truth or integrity of the writer's expressed meaning, or of any other scriptural teaching.

Article XVII. WE AFFIRM the unity, harmony and consistency of Scripture and declare that it is its own best interpreter.

WE DENY that Scripture may be interpreted in such a way as to suggest that one passage corrects or militates against another.

WE DENY that later writers of Scripture misinterpreted earlier passages of Scripture when quoting from or referring to them.

Article XVIII. WE AFFIRM that the Bible's own interpretation of itself is always correct, never deviating from, but rather elucidating, the single meaning of the inspired text. The single meaning of a prophet's words includes, but is not restricted to, the understanding of those words by the prophet and necessarily involves the intention of God evidenced in the fulfillment of those words.

WE DENY that the writers of Scripture always understood the full implications of their own words.

Article XIX. WE AFFIRM that any preunderstandings which the interpreter brings to Scripture should be in harmony with scriptural teaching and subject to correction by it.

WE DENY that Scripture should be required to fit alien preunderstandings, inconsistent with itself; such as naturalism, evolutionism, scientism, secular humanism, and relativism.

Article XX. WE AFFIRM that since God is the author of all truth, all truths, biblical and extrabiblical, are consistent and cohere, and that the Bible speaks truth when it touches on matters pertaining to nature, history, or anything else. We further affirm that in some cases extrabiblical data have value for clarifying what Scripture teaches, and for prompting correction of faulty interpretations.

WE DENY that extrabiblical views ever disprove the teaching of Scripture or hold priority over it.

Article XXI. WE AFFIRM the harmony of special with general revelation and therefore of biblical teaching with the facts of nature.

WE DENY that any genuine scientific facts are inconsistent with the true meaning of any passage of Scripture.

Article XXII. WE AFFIRM that Genesis 1-11 is factual, as is the rest of the book.

WE DENY that the teachings of Genesis 1-11 are mythical and that scientific hypotheses about earth history or the origin of humanity may be invoked to overthrow what Scripture teaches about creation.

Article XXIII. WE AFFIRM the clarity of Scripture and specifically of its message about salvation from sin.

WE DENY that all passages of Scripture are equally clear or have equal bearing on the message of redemption.

Article XXIV. WE AFFIRM that a person is not dependent for understanding of Scripture on the expertise of biblical scholars.

WE DENY that a person should ignore the fruits of the technical study of Scripture by biblical scholars.

Article XXV. WE AFFIRM that the only type of preaching which sufficiently conveys the divine revelation and its proper application to life is that which faithfully expounds the text of Scripture as the Word of God.

WE DENY that the preacher has any message from God apart from the text of Scripture.

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