

Doctrinal Position of the Horton Chapel Church of Christ

The New Testament clearly states the leadership of every autonomous church of Christ is the plurality of qualified older men the congregation has chosen to have oversight of the spiritual well being of the local congregation. The plurality of men called upon to lead the church is to be pure in the faith. Paul in speaking to the Ephesian elders reminded them of their duties when he said, "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with his own blood. I know after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them." (Acts 20:28-30)

To make sure we have no confusion and to let the congregation know where we stand doctrinally, the elders have outlined answers to several questions that have been raised in recent weeks. Scripture is used as the foundation for answering each question and in the explanation of doctrine. It should be noted there are other passages of scripture not listed that align and confirm where we stand on these questions.

1. Who, how many times is one required, and what is the New Testament teaching on baptism.
 - a. When the church was established on the day of Pentecost the people asked Peter "what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 2:37), his divinely inspired answer was "repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (v. 38). We read where over three thousand received the word, beloved the preaching of the gospel and were baptized on that day. (v. 41)
 - b. Those three thousand were then "praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." (v. 47)
 - c. Thus as the New Testament teaches, when one believes the Word of God, the gospel of Christ and repents of their sins and is buried with Christ in baptism as Paul teaches when he said "all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life," (Romans 6:3-4)
 - d. Paul explains also to the baptized in the church at Galatia that "for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27)
 - e. Paul told the Colossian Christian's they had been buried with Him in baptism which makes us alive through Christ having forgiven us all our trespasses. (Colossians 2:12-13)

- f. Paul himself in telling of his own conversion says the Christian Ananias told him, “and now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.” (Acts 22:16)
 - g. THUS, this church’s position is that when a person believes in Christ (Mark 16:16), confesses the name of Christ (Matthew 10:32), repents of their sins (Acts 2:38), and is baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son and The Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20) these things happen:
 - i. The one is saved, their sins are washed away, they are added to the church (the Church that we read about in the pages of the New Testament. not a manmade body that was established after Pentecost, after the written revelation of Scripture was complete).
 - ii. That they walk in a new life, that they have put on Christ.
 - iii. If they have been baptized for the Biblical reasons there would never be another reason to be baptized again.
 - iv. To do so would be making a mockery of the original baptism and that would be adding to the Word.
 - v. There never was an example in the New Testament, and that is this church’s doctrine, for one who was baptized for the right reason ever being asked by the Apostles or early Christians to do it a second time.
2. The Bible teaches that both men and women are to conduct themselves in a decent and respectable manner.
- a. “Likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel with modesty and self-control. Not with braided hair and gold and pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness-with good works.” (1 Timothy 2:9-10)
 - b. It is our position as a church that the word translated modest simply means decent and orderly.
 - c. A godly woman who is seeking godliness in her life, as well as any man should not wear anything that goes beyond what is decent and proper.
 - d. The emphasis is that a Christian should be concerned on the inner person, the true beauty only Christ can give. He urges balance and propriety.
 - e. Thus, it is our church’s contention that if this principle is violated the ELDERSHIP as spiritual overseers of the church could challenge a member on these issues.
 - f. And all other submits to their wisdom and oversight.
 - g. “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.” (Hebrews 13:17)
 - h. As in all things that are a matter of opinion the ELDERS have the final say of the conduct of the church.

3. Social Drinking
 - a. The Bible condemns drunkenness in such passages as 1 Corinthians 6:10, Galatians 5:21.
 - b. There are examples of drinking alcoholic beverages for the deacons were told to not be addicted to much wine (1 Timothy 3:8) and for medicinal purposes such as Timothy. (1 Timothy 5:23)
 - c. It is the policy of this church's elders that social drinking is unwise and not recommended, that to do so would be a stumbling block. (Romans 14:21) But again the Bible condemns drunkenness and to go beyond that is unscriptural.

4. The Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins
 - a. In 1 John 1:9 the Christian is told "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 - b. One realizes they have sinned when hearing or reading the word of God they realize they have transgressed the law of God. A Christian then confesses that sin to God and prays that God will forgive him.
 - c. The Bible says he is faithful to forgive and in 1 John 2:1-2 the reason one is forgiven is explained. "But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins."
 - d. Jesus takes up the case of Christians before God, and he is the sacrifice for our sins.
 - e. An example of this happening is found in Acts 8 when Simon sinned before God. Peter told him; "Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours and pray to the Lord, that if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven." (v. 22)
 - f. It is this congregation's position that according to the Scriptures when one sins before God, they need to repent, cease doing the sin, and pray or confess those sins before God. Then they will be forgiven.
 - g. In James 5 we are told to "Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed." (v. 16) In context this passage teaches that the sick man mentioned needed to confess to the church for his healing.
 - h. The scripture teaches we are all out to be praying for one another for many and various reasons. Colossians 4:2 "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving."
 - i. If one feels that they wish to ask for the prayers of the church when they have sinned that is an acceptable thing, BUT it is never commanded that every time one sins they must go before the assembly.
 - j. Prayer and confession with the subsequent repentance is what a Christian is to do to get forgiveness of sins, and that is done before God, not man. IT is a private thing between them and God and to demand that one must come before the assembly is unscriptural.

As members of the Horton Chapel church of Christ we are a New Testament church striving to be like and follow the teachings of the New Testament. Its members are under the oversight of the elders and all matters of opinion are to be decided by them for they are the ones who have the oversight of our souls.

If one refuses to be willing to listen to and be under the oversight of the elders, those shepherds have the right to judge and act in accordance of their responsibilities as overseers of the flock.

- a. In speaking of those who caused trouble in the early church, Paul reminded Timothy there were those who “have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.” (I Timothy 1:6-7)
- b. Elders who are to “care for the Lord’s church” (I Timothy 3:5) know that anyone who “teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teachings that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people...” (1 Timothy 6:3-5). When a situation like this arises as Titus was told, elders...” must hold firm to the trustworthy word that is taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.” (Titus 1:9). Those who refuse to listen to our elders then will be WRONG and not following sound doctrine.
- c. In Matthew 18 in telling us how to handle controversy in the church the elders of this congregation have the model to follow if one refuses to repent: After going to the troubler and talking to them at the mouth of two or three witnesses then the problem is to be told to the church. If the troubler refuses to listen, then Jesus said, “let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matthew 18:17) meaning he or she can be excluded from the fellowship and thought of as an unbeliever.
- d. As Titus reminds us “As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.” (Titus 3:10-11)
- e. The eldership has the right to ask the troubler to leave the flock for he is causing strife and dissension and disobeying the commandment of God to “Obey your leaders and submit to them.” (Hebrews 13:17)
- f. This would be done with the fervent hope the one would repent and make it right, hoping “God may perhaps grant them repentance, leading them to a knowledge of the truth and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.” (2 Timothy 2:25-26)