

Statement of Cooperation

The Elders of the Bible Church of Owasso recognize that throughout the centuries a great diversity has developed in Christendom. There are huge divides between denominations and even within denominations based on doctrinal differences. As one evaluates these differences, many of them are extremely important and others relatively minor, depending on which doctrinal issue they involve. If we as a church decided that we would only cooperate or use materials of some individual or group that agreed with us in *every area of doctrine*, we in essence would not be able to use any outside material!

We recognize that as faithful pastors and teachers of God's Word that we are called to teach the *entire* Word of God. Indeed, "*all* Scripture is profitable" (2 Timothy 3:16 & 17). Paul "kept back *nothing* that was helpful" (Acts 20:20), and declared the "*whole* counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) as he went house to house teaching God's Word. Jesus Himself told the disciples that they should be "teaching them to observe *all things* that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19 – 20). Even in the Old Testament Joshua told the Israelites "This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, in order that you may observe to do *all* that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have good success." (Joshua 1:8)

With this being clear in Scripture, the Elders of the Bible Church of Owasso want to affirm *that there are no unimportant doctrinal issues in Scripture*. We also recognize, however, that doctrinal issues *vary* in their level of importance. Every doctrine in the Bible is "truth", however, all "truth" is not equally at stake in its affect on the body of Christ. As we look at various doctrinal issues the level of importance we place on them is primarily based on the question: "*What is the end result of holding a particular doctrinal position?*" Certainly, the implications and consequences of various doctrinal positions play out in various ways. Some doctrinal positions, we would argue, are the difference between heaven and hell. For instance the Apostle John in Second John 10 & 11, speaking of the doctrine of Christ says, "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds." The Apostle Paul in Galatians 1:8 said "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than we have preached to you, let him be accursed." Other doctrinal positions, however, have much less of a practical effect on the individual believer or on the Body of Christ in general.

The above thoughts come into play primarily as the Elders of the Bible Church of Owasso answer questions such as: What other church or churches would we be involved with in a common activity? What outside material such as books and DVDs would we use in our church's activities? Which missionaries would we support? Who would we let fill our pulpit? What seminars or other activities would we recommend as a church? If someone was moving would we recommend they attend a certain church? As you can see, the list could go on and on! As we have tried to get a handle on this issue, we have opted to divide doctrinal issues into three levels. They are as follows.

Level 1 – These are the most critical issues of doctrine in God's Word. These issues are the difference between heaven and hell and teach the essentials of Christian orthodoxy, and are represented in our "Articles of Faith." Those that vary with us on these issues would be generally considered "off limits" for mutual cooperation, as they fail to uphold doctrinal "nonnegotiables," and include heresies and cult groups. Of special note would be those church leaders (whether present or historical) whose overall doctrine and practice are in line with orthodox Christianity and profitable for the church, and yet in one area have veered of course and teach a compromised position in a level 1 area. While seemingly not apostate themselves (and not in the category of apostate false teachers referred to by 2 Peter 2 and Jude), their particular teaching in one area must be rejected

as leading people astray. In these type of cases, great wisdom, discernment, and clear communication is needed. While we may choose to “cooperate” in some way with these individuals by use of their other excellent teaching and materials, this will need to be attended by clear communication of the area in which they have veered off course and their positions that cause us grave concern. We must teach those in our charge to be discerning like the Bereans, and make sure that anything taught by anybody measures up to the Word of God.

Level 2 – These doctrinal issues do not rise to seriousness of Level 1. They would be things such as exactly how God works in bringing men to salvation, the way in which church leadership is to be organized, or how the gifts of the Spirit are operative today, etc. Those that hold differing positions in these areas would not affect our view of them as brothers in Christ, nor suggest that they are not seeking to uphold and do the work of the Gospel. Yet, they would probably never be comfortable in or want to join the Bible Church of Owasso, because we would clearly teach a differing view on an important doctrine. However, we certainly could and would cooperate with these individuals in various ways in Gospel or other Christian endeavors.

Level 3 – These are more minor areas (only in the implications and end result of holding a certain position) of doctrine in the Bible. Even though The Bible Church of Owasso would teach a certain position and advocate certain practices on these doctrines, they are not teachings so critical as to cause a person not to be able to fellowship in our body. We would simply encourage them to not be divisive as they serve the Lord at The Bible Church of Owasso.