

Ten Distinctives

This paper is a brief outline of ten distinctives of Elmira Baptist Church. This is not a complete doctrinal statement, but rather an overview of our position on doctrines that sometimes vary among Christians. We look to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Author and Finisher of our faith and endeavor that “in all things He might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). Christ is the focus of all our ministries, and these distinctives reflect our concern to “walk even as He walked” (I Jn. 2:6).

1. We consider ourselves to be fundamentalists—although we prefer to use the word biblicists. We adhere to the fundamentals of the Christian faith and believe that the Bible is God’s message to man.

(1) The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures (II Tim. 3:16)

(2) The supernatural virgin birth of Jesus Christ; and His divinity (Isa. 7:14, Lk. 1:35, Col. 2:9)

(3) The blood atonement of Jesus Christ for all sinners (Jn. 1:7, I Pet. 2:24)

(4) The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave (Matt. 28:6)

(5) The visible bodily return of Jesus Christ from heaven (Jn. 14:3, Ac. 1:10-11)

2. We are an independent local church, in that we are not bound in any fashion to any other authority than the Word of God. We believe that in this New Testament age, God works primarily through local churches. All Christians are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ at salvation and are to exercise their spiritual gifts within a local church. The local church is to be governed by the congregation, with deacons as helpers and the pastor(s), given by God as the ruling undershepherd of Christ.

3. We believe that God instituted marriage as a relationship between one man and one woman for a lifetime. Every Christian’s marriage is a picture to the world of the relationship between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:32). Therefore, in our marriages we seek the grace of God to enable husbands to love their wives unconditionally and for wives to submit to their husbands joyfully.

4. We are "Baptist", in that we follow the tradition of our Baptist forefathers who adhered to certain Biblical distinctives that set them apart from apostasy:

Born again membership

Authority of the Scriptures

Priesthood of believers

Two Offices (elder/pastor & deacon) of the local church

Separation of church and state

Two Ordinances (Baptism and Lord's Supper)

Security of the believer

5. We are evangelistic, and believe that fulfilling the Great Commission of Matt. 18:19-20 is a primary goal. We believe that the best way to reach the lost is through the personal witness of each believer. We also endeavor to reach lost souls through preaching the Gospel, door-to-door calling, evangelistic ministries and the support of missionaries throughout the world.

6. We believe "foreknowledge" and "election" are not inconsistent with free agency, but are founded upon it. The elect were chosen to eternal life, because God foresaw that in intended exercise of their freedom, they would repent and embrace the Gospel (Eph. 1:4; I Pet. 1:2). This view of the subject affords no ground for presumption on the one hand, or for despair on the other.

7. We are a separated church and seek to please our Lord individually and corporately by our separation from worldly fashions, activities, and anything that would not honor Christ (II Cor. 6:14-7:1; I Jn. 2:15).

We are especially careful to maintain conservative music in every area of our church program. We do not fellowship with other churches or groups that we believe are falling away from the faith or do not adhere to the clear teachings of Scripture.

8. We are an old-fashioned, conservative church that seeks to honor our great Christian heritage. At the same time, we are not a slave to things old fashioned in order to maintain a position with other churches and pastors. We are not opposed to new things that honor Christ and conform to the truths that become sound doctrine.

9. We believe the Bible is God's Word and is our sole authority for faith and practice. We believe that God's Word is inspired and infallible in the original autographs, and those originals are preserved in the surviving manuscripts from which the King James Version is translated.

We believe that there are several sound reasons for affirming the superiority of the King James Version, and that its rich, concise, descriptive language is readily comprehended by almost any sincere saint who will put forth a little effort. The KJV is the only translation used in the ministries of our church and we have found no reason to be dissatisfied with it, and every reason to use it with enthusiasm.

10. We believe that these distinctives must be applied in love or it profits us nothing (I Cor. 13:1-2). We pray that the Lord would make us to "increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men..."

(I Thess. 3:12)