



EASTERN HILLS

BIBLE CHURCH

EHBC Theological Convictions

Those serving on staff and lay leadership at Eastern Hills are expected to agree and support the following theological positions. This list is not exhaustive but rather one that is helpful given prevailing cultural conversations. We are always open to a conversation regarding differences through the lens of the scriptures.

The Gospel

God Created. It is important to begin a biblical theology of creation with God's original intent in his creative work. In Genesis 1, we see God forming and filling the creation, and at the end of his work, he pronounces that this ordered creation is "very good." This very good creation is the place that God has always intended to dwell with his people. Contrary to some views of the created order, the creation itself is intrinsically good and should be regarded as such. While Christians may disagree about some of the details and timing of the creation week, all can agree that the biblical account of the creation week in Genesis 1 clearly teaches that God made all things and orders all things. As a result of this, he is sovereign over his creation. That is to say, he is in charge of his good creation.

God Commanded. Adam and Eve were free to do anything they wanted, except eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17). If God had not given Adam and Eve the choice, they would have essentially been robots, simply doing what they were programmed to do. God created Adam and Eve to be "free" beings, able to make decisions, able to choose between good and evil. In order for Adam and Eve to truly be free, they had to have a choice.

Humanity Rebelled. Adam and Eve chose to disobey God bringing corruption into their lives and into the world (Genesis 3:6-7). That sin opened Adam's and Eve's eyes to evil. For the first time, they knew what it was to be evil, to feel shame, and to want to hide from God. The results—evil, sin, suffering, sickness, and death—have plagued the world ever since. Adam and Eve's decision results in every person being born with a sin nature, a tendency to sin.

God Responded. The Old Testament Law was given to Israel during the time of Moses (Deuteronomy 5:1). The Law can be thought of as a measuring stick, and sin is anything that falls short of "perfect" according to that standard. The righteous requirement of the Law is so

stringent that no human being could possibly follow it perfectly, in letter or in spirit. Despite our “goodness” or “badness” relative to each other, we are all in the same spiritual boat—we have sinned, and the punishment for sin is death, i.e. separation from God, the source of life (Romans 3:23). In order for us to go to heaven, God’s dwelling place and the realm of life and light, sin must be somehow removed or paid for. The Law established the fact that cleansing from sin can only happen through the bloody sacrifice of an innocent life (Hebrews 9:22).

Jesus’ death on the cross was the sin offering to fulfill the Law’s righteous requirement (Romans 8:3–4; Hebrews 10:5–10). Under the Law, animal sacrifices were offered year after year as a reminder of sin and a symbol of the coming sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 10:3–4). When Christ offered Himself at Calvary, that symbol became a reality for all who would believe (Hebrews 10:11–18). The work of atonement is finished now, and that’s good news. Jesus’ resurrection on the third day (Romans 4:25) is evidence that Jesus conquered sin and death (sin’s penalty). We do not (and cannot) earn our salvation; the work of redemption and justification is complete, having been finished on the cross (John 19:30). Jesus is the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2).

Humanity Responds. The Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). Paul and Silas responded, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). God has already done all of the work. All we must do is receive, in faith, the salvation God offers (Ephesians 2:8-9). Fully trust in Jesus alone as the payment for our sins. Believe in Him, and we will not perish (John 3:16). God is offering us salvation as a gift. All we have to do is accept it. Jesus is the way of salvation (John 14:6).

According to Scripture, being a Christian disciple involves personal growth characterized by the some of the following:

1. Putting Jesus first in all things (Mark 8:34-38). The disciple of Christ needs to be set apart from the world. Our focus should be on our Lord and pleasing Him in every area of our lives. We must put off self-centeredness and put on Christ-centeredness.
2. Following Jesus’ teachings (John 8:31-32). We must be obedient children and doers of the Word. Obedience is the supreme test of faith in God (1 Samuel 28:18), and Jesus is the perfect example of obedience as He lived a life on earth of complete obedience to the Father even to the point of death (Philippians 2:6-8).
3. Fruitfulness (John 15:5-8). Our job is not producing fruit. Our job is to abide in Christ, and if we do, the Holy Spirit will produce the fruit, and this fruit is the result of our obedience. As we become more obedient to the Lord and learn to walk in His ways, our lives will change. The biggest change will take place in our hearts, and the overflow of this will be new conduct (thoughts, words and actions) representative of

that change. The change we seek is done from the inside out, through the power of the Holy Spirit. It isn't something we can conjure up on our own.

God Restores. The current heavens and earth have long been subject to God's curse because of mankind's sin. All creation "has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth" (Romans 8:22) as it awaits the fulfillment of God's plan and "the children of God to be revealed" (verse 19). Heaven and earth will pass away (Mark 13:31), and they will be replaced by the new heavens and the new earth.

At that time, the Lord, seated on His throne, says, "I am making everything new!" (Revelation 21:5). In the new creation, sin will be totally eradicated, and "there shall be no more curse" (Revelation 22:3, NKJV). Things will be completely new, and the old order of things, with the accompanying sorrow and tragedy, will be gone. The new earth will be free from sin, evil, sickness, suffering, and death. It will be similar to our current earth, but without the curse of sin. It will be earth as God originally intended it to be. It will be Eden restored.

Why does this matter? Gospel doctrine creates a gospel culture. The doctrine of grace creates a culture of grace, as Jesus himself touches us through his truths. Without the doctrines, the culture alone is fragile. Without the culture, the doctrines alone appear pointless. But the New Testament binds doctrine and culture together. For example:

The doctrine of regeneration creates a culture of humility (Eph. 2:1-9).

The doctrine of justification creates a culture of inclusion (Gal. 2:11-16).

The doctrine of reconciliation creates a culture of peace (Eph. 2:14-16).

The doctrine of sanctification creates a culture of life (Rom. 6:20-23).

The doctrine of glorification creates a culture of hope (Rom. 5:2).

The doctrine of God creates a culture of honesty (1 John 1:5-10).

If we want this culture to thrive, we can't take doctrinal short cuts. If we want this doctrine to be credible, we can't downplay the culture. But churches where the doctrine and the culture converge as one bear living witness to the power of Jesus.

Marriage

Every mention of marriage in the Bible refers to the union of a male and a female. The first mention of marriage, Genesis 2:24, describes it as a man leaving his parents and being united to his wife. In passages that contain instructions regarding marriage, such as 1 Corinthians 7:2-16 and Ephesians 5:23-33, the Bible clearly identifies marriage as being between a man and a woman. Biblically speaking, marriage is the lifetime union of a man and a woman, primarily for the purpose of building a family and providing a stable environment for that family.

Sin is described in the Bible as transgression of the law of God (1 John 3:4) and rebellion against God (Deuteronomy 9:7; Joshua 1:18). Same-sex marriage is a rebellion against God's plan for marriage. As Christians, we do not condone or ignore sin. Rather, we share the love of God and act as ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18). We point to the forgiveness of sins that is available to all, including homosexuals, through Jesus Christ. We speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) and contend for truth with "gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

Gender

We live in a confused and fallen world, and that confusion extends everywhere, so that even the most basic questions, like "what gender am I?" become difficult for some people to answer. Some people claim they were born as the wrong gender, or at least in the wrong body. A man may believe he is actually a female, but his soul is "stuck" in a male body. Such claims receive support from others who advocate a "gender-neutral" society. But those who view gender distinctions as nothing more than arbitrary labels or a "box" to be broken out of are actively rejecting God's design in creation.

The Bible says that God created "male and female" and He pronounced His creation "very good" (Genesis 1:27, 31). God's plan was perfect, but, as with everything in mankind's sphere, perfection was corrupted by sin. Sin negatively impacted the entirety of creation, hurting not only humanity's relationship with God, but with one another and the rest of the created order. Our world is fallen, and the effects of sin permeate everything. Diseases, birth defects, natural disasters, sinful acts, and the negative results of others' sin and our own sin can all be traced back to the fall. Sometimes these negative effects come in the form of naturally occurring anomalies; other times they are more directly traced to specific sin. Could an anomaly sometimes occur in gender, physically or mentally? We acknowledge that a person can be born with a combination of male and female organs—although one's true, biological sex can be determined through medical tests.

Some may battle heterosexual temptation, greed, pride, anger, or any number of sins. Someone else may battle gender confusion. Regardless of the battle with sin and the devil's lies, the question we must answer is, "Is Christ and His redemptive work sufficient for our battles?" Jesus definitely claims to be sufficient for any and all of our battles, and He desires to sanctify us through His Word of truth (John 17:17).

If a person feels he or she has been born as the wrong gender, the answer is not gender-reassignment surgery, hormone therapy, cross-dressing, etc. Those are simply worldly ways of acquiescing to Satan's lies. "Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6). And God does not make mistakes. The one who feels he or she

was born in the wrong body needs, first and foremost, to experience the transformative power of Christ. When we “participate in the divine nature,” we escape “the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Peter 1:4).

Origin of life

Jeremiah 1:5 tells us that God knows us before He forms us in the womb. Psalm 139:13-16 speaks of God’s active role in our creation and formation in the womb. Exodus 21:22-25 prescribes the same penalty—death—for someone who causes the death of a baby in the womb as for someone who commits murder. This clearly indicates that God considers a baby in the womb to be just as much of a human being as a full-grown adult. For the Christian, abortion is not a matter of a woman’s right to choose. It is a matter of the life or death of a human being made in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6).

What does the Bible say about abortion? Simply put, abortion is murder. It is the killing of a human being who is created in the image of God. For those who have had an abortion, remember that the sin of abortion is no less forgivable than any other sin. Through faith in Christ, all sins can be forgiven (John 3:16; Romans 8:1; Colossians 1:14). A woman who has had an abortion, a man who has encouraged an abortion—or even a doctor who has performed one—can all be forgiven by faith in Jesus Christ.

Baptism

There is much confusion about baptism in the various Christian denominations. However, this is not a result of the Bible presenting a confusing message on baptism. The Bible is abundantly clear of what baptism is, who it is for, and what it accomplishes. In the Bible, only believers who had placed their faith in Christ were baptized - as a public testimony of their faith and identification with Him (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4). Water baptism by immersion is a step of obedience after faith in Christ. It is a proclamation of faith in Christ, a statement of submission to Him, and an identification with His death, burial, and resurrection.

An infant cannot place his or her faith in Christ. An infant cannot make a conscious decision to obey Christ. An infant cannot understand what water baptism symbolizes. The Bible does not record any infants being baptized. How does pouring or sprinkling illustrate the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Baptism does not save a person. It does not matter if you were baptized by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling - if you have not first trusted in Christ for salvation, baptism (no matter the method) is meaningless and useless. Water baptism by immersion is a step of obedience to be done after salvation as a public profession of faith in Christ and identification with Him.

Infant baptism does not fit the Biblical definition of baptism or the Biblical method of baptism. If Christian parents wish to dedicate their child to Christ, then a baby dedication service is entirely appropriate. However, even if infants are dedicated to the Lord, when they grow up they will still have to make a personal decision to believe in Jesus Christ in order to be saved.

Tithing

Jesus upholds the tithe in Matthew 23:23 (cf. Luke 11:42). He condemns the Pharisees for their tedious commitment to one part of God's law, the tithe, while neglecting "the weightier matters of justice, mercy, and faithfulness." Then he states, "These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others." The Greek word translated "ought" (*dei*) in the ESV is strong and indicates a necessity. We could translate as follows: "You must do these things, and you must not neglect those things."

All of Matthew 23 is devoted to the wrong practices and teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. The chapter begins by clarifying that Jesus is teaching "the crowds and his disciples." Those who don't believe tithing is for today argue that Jesus is only addressing scribes and Pharisees still under the old covenant. Yet this misses the context. These words are for Jesus's followers. Elsewhere he doesn't shy away from setting aside those parts of the law that no longer apply to his disciples (cf. Mark 7:19). But in teaching his disciples, Jesus upholds the tithe.

Under the Mosaic law, there appear to be three tithes (cf. Deut. 12:17–19, 14:28–29). If this is true, the Israelites were actually required to give 23.3 percent of their income, not 10 percent. Many Old Testament scholars don't see these as three separate tithes, but as three uses of one. The basic tithe, supporting the work of ministry, remains, even while ceremonial aspects fall away. Yet the tithe is a minimum; Christians are always to give to the poor and support other works that extend God's kingdom (cf. 2 Cor. 8–9). The basic tithe is to be given to the church, to support its work and mission, as seen in Malachi 3.

Serving

Peter addresses the importance of serving God in 1 Peter 4:10-11. He makes it clear that we have received our gifts from God for two purposes— to serve others and to bring praise to God. Serving isn't about us receiving attention or glory; it is for Him to receive glory. Paul makes the point in Romans 12:1-2, that for those who have been saved by the blood of Jesus, it only makes sense to honor Him. Giving ourselves to God is our spiritual act of worship (the Greek word for "spiritual" can also be translated "reasonable"). It's only reasonable that we would serve the God who has provided the greatest service of all: salvation from sin and self and eternal life with Him in heaven.

Every member of every church should be serving in some way, and every servant of the Lord should remember that it's more than just serving others; it's loving them: "Serve one another humbly in love" (Galatians 5:13). Serving the church can take on many forms: babysitting for a young couple to give them a night out, preparing a meal for a family struck by illness, visiting an elderly, housebound widow, or just picking up a phone and saying, "I was thinking about you today." As we go about serving God and others, let us do so with a spirit of humility and brotherly love (Philippians 2:1–4).

Evangelism

We are told that love of other believers is the evidence of our being a member of God's family (1 John 3:10). Love is defined and elaborated on in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. These verses show us that love is not an emotion; it is action. We must be doing something and involved in the process. Furthermore, we are told to think more highly of others than of ourselves and to look out for their interests (Philippians 2:3-4). The next verse in Philippians (verse 5) really sums up what we are to do when it comes to everything in life: "our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." What a perfect example He is to us for everything we are to do in our Christian walk.

We are to share our faith and tell nonbelievers about the wonderful changes Jesus Christ has made in our lives (Matthew 28:18-20). No matter what our maturity level in the Christian life, we have something to offer. Too often, we believe the lie from Satan that we don't really know enough or haven't been a Christian long enough to make a difference. Not true! Some of the most enthusiastic representatives of the Christian life are new believers who have just discovered the awesome love of God. They may not know a lot of Bible verses or the "accepted" way of saying things, but they have experienced the love of the living God, and that is exactly what we are to share.

Community

The model for church community is found in the book of Acts when believers met together in homes to eat, fellowship, and take communion (Acts 2:41–42, 46). They would read the apostles' letters, discuss them, pray, and challenge each other to keep the faith (Acts 20:7–8). It is within church community that the "one anothers" of Scripture take place. When the Bible tells Christians to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), pray for one another (James 5:16), accept one another (Romans 15:7), and forgive one another (Colossians 3:13), it implies that we are in close relationship with other Christians.

Clearly, in a church of several hundred, the pastor cannot visit every sick person or take a meal to every new mother. And regardless of how friendly or outgoing a member may be, he or she cannot personally know an entire crowd seen only for an hour on Sunday morning. So the pastor and staff rely on the church community to care for members.

In many ways, the first-century church functioned this way. They all studied the same Scriptures (Acts 17:11), read the same letters from the apostles (Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27), and adhered to the same standards for public worship (1 Corinthians 11–14). They met in homes throughout the week (Acts 2:46) and established close, personal relationships with each other (Romans 12:10; 1 Peter 2:17). When the church community strives for the same unity (Ephesians 4:3; Psalm 133:1), they are fulfilling the expectations Jesus has for His church (Matthew 16:18).

Private disciplines

Spiritual disciplines can be described as those behaviors that augment our spiritual growth and enable us to grow to spiritual maturity. This process of spiritual growth and development begins to take place the moment a person encounters the risen Christ and comes to Him for salvation. This is what Paul had in mind when he spoke of taking off the "old self" and putting on the new, "which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Colossians 3:9-10).

The foremost of the disciplines is that involving the Word of God and constitutes the reading, study, memorization, and meditation of Scripture. The second discipline is that of prayer. Our prayers are a spiritual communion with God through means of thanksgiving, adoration, supplication, petition, and confession. Prayer changes us. Prayer changes lives. Prayer changes history. Our knowing God really makes us want to conform to Jesus and His will for our lives

Taken together, the spiritual disciplines of prayer and the Word will provide us with a rewarding program which will lead to godly living, praise, submission, service and celebration of our salvation and the God who provided it. Through these disciplines, we are enabled to obey God's command to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:12-13).

Outreach

Ministry to the "least of these" must be part of every church's outreach (Matthew 25:37-40). Regardless of the form outreach takes, all churches are called to verbally share the gospel, to

reach out beyond their congregation, and to serve those in need. The method may vary, but the message is unchanging: Jesus Christ died for sinners, He rose again, and He lives today.

Whether it be widows who need help with home maintenance and repair, single mothers who need childcare help, the unemployed, the homeless, etc. one of the functions of the church is to identify and meet the needs of the community it serves. Those in leadership are placed in their position to prepare God's people for works of service (Ephesians 4:12-13).

Eldership

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 describe the qualifications and duties of elders/overseers. The scriptures do not open the door for women to serve as elders. In fact, the consistent use of male pronouns and terminology argues strongly for the office of elder/overseer being restricted to men only. As with other issues in this debate, the question of women serving as elders is not a matter of chauvinism. In no sense is this a matter of men being superior to women. Rather, God restricts the office of elder to men only because that is how He has structured the church to function. Godly men are to serve as leadership, with women serving in the crucially important supporting roles.

Eternal Life (Heaven & Hell)

The Bible tells us that there is not only life after death, but eternal life so glorious that "no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, came to the earth to give us this gift of eternal life. "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the ultimate proof of life after death. Christ was only the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again. Physical death came through one man, Adam, to whom we are all related. But all who have been adopted into God's family through faith in Jesus Christ will be given new life (1 Corinthians 15:20-22). Just as God raised up Jesus' body, so will our bodies be resurrected upon Jesus' return (1 Corinthians 6:14).

Although we will all be eventually resurrected, not everyone will go to heaven. A choice must be made by each person in this life, and this choice will determine one's eternal destination. The Bible says that it is appointed for us to die only once, and after that will come judgment (Hebrews 9:27). Those who have been made righteous by faith in Christ will go into eternal life in heaven, but those who reject Christ as Savior will be sent to eternal punishment in hell (Matthew 25:46). Hell, like heaven, is not simply a state of existence, but a literal place. It is a place where the unrighteous will experience never-ending, eternal wrath from God. Hell is

described as a bottomless pit (Luke 8:31; Revelation 9:1) and a lake of fire, burning with sulfur, where the inhabitants will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Revelation 20:10). In hell, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, indicating intense grief and anger (Matthew 13:42).

God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but desires them to turn from their wicked ways so that they can live (Ezekiel 33:11). But He will not force us into submission; if we choose to reject Him, He accepts our decision to live eternally apart from Him. Life on earth is a test, a preparation for what is to come. For believers, life after death is eternal life in heaven with God. For unbelievers, life after death is eternity in the lake of fire. How can we receive eternal life after death and avoid an eternity in the lake of fire? There is only one way—through faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die...” (John 11:25-26).

The free gift of eternal life is available to all. “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him” (John 3:36). We will not be given the opportunity to accept God’s gift of salvation after death. Our eternal destination is determined in our earthly lifetimes by our reception or rejection of Jesus Christ. “I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). If we trust the death of Jesus Christ as the full payment for our sin against God, we are guaranteed not only a meaningful life on earth, but also eternal life after death, in the glorious presence of Christ.

Regarding Universalism

Universalism is the belief that everyone will be saved. There are many people today who hold to universal salvation and believe that all people eventually end up in heaven. Perhaps it is the thought of men and women living a life of eternal torment in hell that causes some to reject the teaching of Scripture on this issue. For some it is an over-emphasis on the love and compassion of God—and the neglect of the righteousness and justice of God—that leads them to believe God will have mercy on every living soul. But the Scriptures do teach that some people will spend eternity in hell.

First of all, the Bible is clear that unredeemed men will dwell forever in hell. Jesus’ own words confirm that the time spent in heaven for the redeemed will last as long as that of the unredeemed in hell. Matthew 25:46 says, “Then they [the unsaved] will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” According to this verse, the punishment of the unsaved is just as eternal as the life of the righteous. Some believe that those in hell will eventually cease to exist, but the Lord Himself confirms that it will last forever. Matthew 25:41 and Mark 9:44 describe hell as “eternal fire” and “unquenchable fire.”

How does one avoid this unquenchable fire? Many people believe that all roads—all religions and beliefs—lead to heaven, or they consider that God is so full of love and mercy that He will allow all people into heaven. God is certainly full of love and mercy; it was these qualities that led Him to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to die on the cross for us. Jesus Christ is the exclusive door that leads to an eternity in heaven. Acts 4:12 says, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” “There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). In John 14:6, Jesus says, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” If we choose to reject God’s Son, we do not meet the requirements for salvation (John 3:16, 18, 36).

With verses such as these, it becomes clear that universalism and universal salvation are unbiblical beliefs. Universalism directly contradicts what Scripture teaches. While many people accuse Christians of being intolerant and “exclusive,” it is important to remember that these are the words of Christ Himself. Christians did not develop these ideas on their own; Christians are simply stating what the Lord has already said. People choose to reject the message because they do not want to face up to their sin and admit that they need the Lord to save them. To say that those who reject God’s provision of salvation through His Son will be saved is to belittle the holiness and justice of God and negate the need of Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf.

If you have any questions about the core theology and practices of Eastern Hills Bible Church, please reach out to one of our pastors.

I have read and agreed to the Eastern Hills Bible Church Theological Convictions Document.

Employee Signature: _____

Date:_____

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