

FELLOWSHIP OF BIBLE CHURCHES FIJI
POLICY HANDBOOK

by
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VISION STATEMENT

**“To Love God and
Worship Him as we
Reach Out and Disciple
People for Jesus Christ”**

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

- I We believe in one Triune God, eternally existing in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, co-equal in power and glory, and having the same attributes and perfections (Deut. 6:4; II Cor. 13:14).

- II We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the verbally inspired Word of God, wholly inerrant in the original writing, infallible and God-breathed, the final authority for faith and life (II Tim. 3:16,17; Matt. 5:18; I Peter 1:20-21; John 16:12,13).

- III We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful men (John 1:1,3,14; Luke 1:35). We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a representative, substitutionary sacrifice in providing an unlimited atonement for the sins of the whole world; and that our justification is made sure by His literal physical resurrection from the dead (Rom. 3:24,25); I Peter 2:24; Eph. 1:7; I Peter 1:3-5). We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God, where as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate (Acts 1:9,10; Heb. 9:24 Rom. 8:24; I John 2:1,2).

- IV We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but then in Adam's sin the race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God and that man is totally depraved and of himself, utterly unable to remedy his lost condition (Gen. 1:26,27; Eph. 3:1-3; Rom. 3:22,23; Rom. 5:12). We believe that salvation is the gift of God

brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins (Eph. 3:8-12; John 1:12; Eph. 1:7, I Peter 1:18,19). We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Rom. 8:1,38,39; I Cor. 1:4-8; I Peter 1:5). We believe it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion to the flesh (Rom. 13:13, 14; Gal. 5:13; Titus 3:11-15).

V We believe that the Church, which is the body and the espoused bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism made up of all born-again persons of this present age (Eph. 1:22,23; 5:25-27; I Cor. 12:12,13; II Cor. 11:2). We believe that the establishment and continuance of local churches are clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:27, 20:17, 28:32; I Tim. 3:1-3; Titus 1:5-11). We believe that Lord Jesus Christ has left two ordinances to be observed by the local church in commemoration of His person and work. The one is that of baptism (immersion) in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The other is the partaking of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 2:41, 46, 47; 16:33; I Cor. 11:23, 32). No person is qualified to have a part in either of these two ordinances unless he has been born from above.

VI We believe that God gives spiritually enabling gifts for service to all believers (Rom. 12:6-8; I Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:11-16). We believe that the apostolic age of signs and the gifts of healing and tongues ceased with the ministry of the apostles chosen personally by Christ and with the completion of the written Word of God. We believe that speaking in tongues was never the common or

necessary sign of baptism nor the filling of the Spirit. The gifts which remain are sufficient for the ministry and the perfecting of the Church today. We believe that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith, according to His will for the sick and the afflicted (James 5:14, 15).

- VII We believe that it is the obligation of the saved to witness by life and by word to the truths of Holy Scriptures and to seek to proclaim the Gospel to all mankind (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; II Cor. 5:19,20).
- VIII We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:46; John 5:28, 29; 11:25, 26; Rev. 20:5, 6, 13).
- IX We believe, according to Scripture, in the premillennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ; that this second coming will be a literal, bodily, personal appearance to the earth; that His coming for His Bride, the Church, precedes the Tribulation and constitutes the "Blessed Hope" set before us, for which we should be constantly looking (Matt. 24:27,30,44; John 14:1-3; I Thess. 1:10; 4:13-17; Rev. 19:11-19)

IRREVOCABLE CLAUSE

This Doctrinal Statement is irrevocable. Must not be changed by any future leaders of the church.

THE BIBLE CHURCH POLICY

The Bible Churches are an autonomous fellowship of believers who meet in a locality to worship God, for fellowship around the Word of God with the view of building one another in their faith, and for preaching Christ and Him crucified to the unsaved people of their community.

This paper is written to inform elders, and those aspiring to be leaders in the local fellowship of the beliefs and practices of the Bible Church. These are guidelines to help maintain the scriptural principles of the gathering of the local community of believers.

The Church is the possession of God (1 Tim. 3:15) which He purchased with the blood of His only begotten Son (Acts 20:28, Eph. 5:25; Heb. 9:12). It displays the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10) and will bear good news of the praises of God (Isa. 60:6).

The Church is the body of Christ. He is the Head, and the Church is subject to Him (Rom. 7:4; Eph. 5:23-24). There is one body of Christ, but it has two aspects, one universal and the other local. By the universal aspect of the church, we mean that the one body of Christ is made up of born-again believers of every generation, every kindred, and every country. By the local aspect, we mean a group of born-again believers meeting in a particular locality.

The local Church is not a lifeless organization, but a group of born-again people who share the life of Christ and are led by the Holy Spirit. The Church is described in several other ways in the Bible.

1. God's Building

1 Cor. 3:9 *"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building."*

The word 'Building' is not a house, but a group of born-again followers of Christ who make-up the habitation of God.

2. The Temple of God

1 Cor. 3:16 *"Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"*

The word 'Temple' is again not a building, but a group of born-again followers of Christ among whom dwells our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The Habitation of God

Eph. 2:22 *"in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."*

This term expresses the fact that God now lives among His people. He is both with them and in them.

4. The Flock

John 10:16 *"I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice, and they will become one flock with one shepherd."*

"The Jewish nation was a fold and the church is the flock. The Lord Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and the Church is the flock of His pasture" (John 10:9).

5. The Bride of Christ

Eph. 5:25-27 *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."*

2 Cor. 11:2 *"For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin."*

This figure of the Church highlights the idea of love. Paul said, husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her. God the Father loves the Church, God the Son loved the Church and, for this reason, we the Church should have a deep love for the Lord.

Other metaphors for the Church are 'field' (1 Cor. 3:9); 'new man' (Eph. 2:22); 'household of God' (1 Tim. 3:15); 'the pillar and support of the truth' (1 Tim. 3:15).

I. THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE BIBLE CHURCH

Christ is the head of the Church. The Bible is the written authority of the Church. The Holy Spirit is Christ's representative, and the elders are godly men who carry out Christ's mandate to the Church as under-shepherds.

A. Jesus Christ is the head of the church.

Eph. 5:23 "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body."

Col. 1:18 "He is also head of the body, the church, and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything."

The Lord Jesus, as the head of His body the church now controls His body on earth. As the head of the church, He is the authority, He leads, guides and controls through the Holy Spirit, while men follow and obey Him. No man should usurp this authority.

B. The Bible is the authority of the church.

2 Tim. 3:16 "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."

Hebrews 4:12 *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*

The Lord Jesus Christ is the living word, and the Bible is the written word. Since the Lord Jesus is not visibly present in the world, His word is the sole authority of the local church.

The Holy Spirit is the representative of Christ in the church.

John 14:16, 26 *“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ²⁶ “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”*

As Christ’s representative, the Holy Spirit performs several ministries:

1. He guides believers into all the truth (John 16:13).
2. He gives power to the preachers (1 Thess. 1:5).
3. He leads the church in their worship (Eph. 2:18).
4. He calls and makes elders for the church (Acts 20:28).
5. He bestows gifts for the growth of the church (Acts 20:28).
6. He guides the church in its ministry both positively (Acts 13:2) and negatively (Acts 16:6, 7).
7. He inspires believer’s prayers (Rom. 8:26, 27).

The elders are human leaders who are called by the Holy Spirit to guard, to lead and shepherd the local body of Christ (Acts 20:28). The Lord Jesus Christ has given each local church these gifted men. The fact of this is given in Ephesians 4:11, and the purpose why He gave these gifted men are given in **Eph. 4:12**, and His goal for this gift to the church are given in **Eph. 4:13-16**.

Although the Bible Church is Baptist in tradition, it does not have congregational rule. The oversight of the church is done by the elders. Men only are chosen to be leaders, and only those men who meet the scriptural qualifications given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 are given this responsibility.

Since the elders of the local church are called by the Holy Spirit, the church must accept their leadership and respect them.

1 Tim. 5:17-18 *"The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The labourer is worthy of his wages."*

1 Tim. 5:1 *"Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers."*

1 Tim. 5:19 *"Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses."*

Heb. 13:7-8 *"Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you, and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."*

The men who desire to be one of the leaders of the church will put the Lord Jesus Christ and His church first in their lives and will not allow anything to take that place in their lives. This commitment to his Lord and the local church will be recognized by the elders and the church. For practical purposes, the elders will pray for some time, and if everyone is in agreement, the brother will be invited to be part of the leadership. If he agrees then they will present him to the church for their approval and acceptance. They should from among themselves appoint the office bearer, chairman, secretary, and treasurer. The chairman should alternate, but the secretary and treasurer should be permanent. All three men must understand

that this is not just a position, but a ministry and that they are one among equals chosen to do the job. The secretary's responsibility is to keep the records of elders meetings, keep church records and report to the church. What he reports would be those things designated to him by the elders. The treasurer will keep a record of the finance, give a report to the elders and report to the church.

Any man who joins the local Bible church from another denomination must remain in the fellowship of that Bible church for at least **five years** and graduate with a **Diploma in Biblical studies from CTEF** before being considered as an elder of the fellowship.

II. THE MINISTRIES OF THE BIBLE CHURCH

We believe the ministry is for everyone i.e. every born-again believer because we are part of one body. The Bible states it clearly:

1 Cor. 12:12-14 *"For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many."*

Rom. 12:3-8 *"For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with*

liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."

Since each member of the local church is given a gift or ability by the Holy Spirit, it then becomes the responsibility of the believer to exercise that gift (Rom. 12:6). This is what is meant by the ministry for all. Not everyone is given the same gift, but the Holy Spirit gives different gifts to each member to exercise it to build the body of Christ - the local church (Eph. 4:12).

The two main ministries of the Bible church which is stated in our vision statement are:

1. To love God and worship Him
2. To reach out and disciple people

Any other ministries such as *Sunday Schools, Vacation Bible School, Ladies Meetings, Young Peoples Fellowship, Cell Groups, Gospel Outreach, Retreat Camps, Christian Helps, Bible Studies, and Theological Training* must fit within the vision statement and carried out with that motive.

The ministry's performance, its extent, and its oversight is the responsibility of the local church through their elders.

III. ROLE OF WOMEN

The Bible Church believes that God created man and woman equal as to nature, but different in their function. The man is the head of the woman.

1 Cor. 11:3 *"But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ."*

Eph. 5:23 *"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body."*

Man and woman are equal as far as their standing before God in Christ. When both are in Christ, they are treated exactly the same by God. But in the church and at home the woman should be in subjection to man.

1 Cor. 11:3 *“But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.”*

Eph. 5:22-23 *“Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.”*

These areas of subjection are clearly indicated in the following Scriptures:

1 Cor. 14:34-35 – *she must remain silent in the church.*

1 Tim. 2:13 – *She is not permitted to teach in the church where men are present.*

1 Cor. 14:35 – *She should not ask questions publically where men are present.*

1 Tim. 2:11 – *She should learn in silence.*

1 Tim. 2:12 – *She must not usurp authority over men.*

The Bible Church believes that God has given gifts to the women and they should be encouraged to find the gifts they have and exercise these gifts to bring children to Christ and help other women to build their faith.

Titus 2:2-3 *“Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved too much wine, teaching what is good.”*

IV. THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

The Scripture gives only two ordinances of the Christian church: (1) Baptism, and the (2) Lord's Supper.

1. Baptism

The Bible church does not practice adult or infant baptism, but only believer's baptism. It believes that Christ commanded the church first to make disciples and then baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

***Matt. 28:19-20** "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

***Acts 8:12** "But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike."*

***Acts 2:41** "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls."*

Those born-again believers who seek baptism are questioned about their commitment to Christ and taught the meaning and implication of obeying the Lord in the waters of baptism. Then, on an appointed day, the believer is publically immersed in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. On the following Sunday worship service, he or she is received into the fellowship of the local church and served the Holy Communion.

2. The Lord's Supper (Holy Communion)

The Lord's Supper is celebrated each Sunday prior to the preaching of the word. The Bible Church believes that the table is the Lord's, and it is He who invites the believers to remember Him. Therefore, all the born-again believers, even if they do not belong to the local church, are invited to participate in the celebration. However, all those who have come to know Christ as their Saviour through the ministry of the local Bible Church are encouraged first to obey the Lord's command to be baptized and then take part in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. In the case of a young person or a wife who becomes a Christian, but is not allowed to be baptized by their parent or husband, he or she should be given the opportunity to participate in the Lord's Supper.

Matt. 26:26-30 *"While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; 28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. 29 "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."*

1 Cor. 11:23-26 *"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same way, He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."*

The Bible Church worship God and celebrate the Lord's Supper on Sunday because our Sunday is the Jewish

first day of the week. The New Testament church met on the first day of the week, not on the Jewish Sabbath, which is our Saturday, to break bread and hear God's word.

Acts 20:7 "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight."

However, we are aware that the Pauline instruction is "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup" (1 Cor. 11:26); therefore, we do not insist that this celebration is a ritual that must be performed every week, but since the New Testament church met each week on the first day to remember the Lord and proclaim His death so we have made this our practice.

Those who partake the Lord's Supper should remember that it is possible to make this ordinance into a weekly ritual. Therefore, everyone participating in this celebration must examine their motives and their hearts, lest they do it in an unworthy manner **1 Cor. 11:28** "But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup."

The emblems to be used in the celebration of the Lord's Supper are bread and wine. The bread should be one loaf, one roti or any other bread as long as it depicts the unity of the body of Christ and is large enough for everyone in the church to have a piece. The Bible states that Jesus used the wine to represent His blood so we should use the wine. The wine we use here is fermented. This is because it is easy to store. The pure grape juice is normally not available, and if it does, it needs refrigeration which is not available in many churches.

It was our Lord's wish that those who accept Him as their Saviour and Lord should remember His sacrificial death on the cross, so in order to help us to carry out

His wishes, He instituted the Supper. Therefore, no believer should miss this memorial feast on Sunday.

V. FINANCE

The Bible Church does not appeal or request its members to regularly give tithes or request to contribute funds for the church. Nor does it have fundraising drives such as center-votes or walk-a-thon. Why are these not practiced?

Because this is not the teaching of the New Testament. The Bible gives the following guidelines for a financial contribution to the Lord's work:

- a. **Matt. 10:8** *"Freely you have received, freely give."*
- b. **2 Cor. 12:14** *"I will not be a burden to you for I do not seek what is yours but you."*
- c. **2 Cor. 8:3-5** *"For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, ⁴ begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, ⁵ and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and us by the will of God."*

These scriptures and others tell us that Christian giving is a heart response to God's love and grace. He Himself became a man (John 1:1, 14) so that He could provide salvation to us and yet remain righteous, 'how will He not also with Him freely give us all things' **Rom. 8:32** *"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?"*

When believers learn that God has forgiven them and given them His peace (John 14:22); eternal life (John 10:28) and brought them into His family (John 1:12); they respond to His love; yield themselves to Him;

learn what is His will for them and seek to please Him. He wants them first and not their money.

Some people teach that they do godly service by giving money to the church. Others teach that if they give money to God, He will help them to become rich. This reasoning is not found in the word of God. His blessing is without price (Ps. 50:9-15) and the Lord Jesus does not promise to make us rich, but instead, wants us to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23).

Some churches insist that a believer should give 10% of their income to the church, and some even keep a record of who gave and who did not. The Bible church believes tithing is good and God-honoring, but they do not insist that believers give 10% of their salary to the church, but encourage the believers to bring their offering to the Lord.

Tithing was compulsory in the Old Testament for the Jews (Mal. 3:8-10), but it is not so in the New Testament. From where does the local church get money to pay for its expenses? We learn from the New Testament that the believers in the local assembly are responsible for meeting its own financial needs. We cannot find any evidence of the local church receiving money for its operation from unsaved persons. Christian giving is an act of worship and therefore, it is limited to those who belong to Jesus. There is also no scriptural proofs that a local church was financially subsidized or supported by any other church or Christian organization. Every local church should be self-supportive.

Bringing your offering to God is very important, therefore, we give the following biblical facts and practices of New Testament on this issue.

A. ***The Bible teaches that the believer belongs to God and he is His manager.*** He manages God's

money, etc., for Him. Whatever is his possession he must use it for God's glory.

B. *The Bible teaches that the believer should give to the Lord's work.*

1. When should he give? He should he give on Sunday, the day of worship?

1 Cor. 16:2 "On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper so that no collections be made when I come."

For this reason, the offering in the Bible Churches is collected immediately after the communion service on Sunday.

2. How much should he give? He should give as God has prospered him (1 Cor. 16:2).
3. As much as Christ gave, He is our example (1 Cor. 8:9).
4. We should give out of our poverty and not out of our surplus (Mark 12:44).

The believer should give liberally. The Old Testament tithe (one tenth) was the minimum given by a Jew. He brought tithes and offerings. No believer who is saved by grace and living under grace should be content to give what was the minimum requirement of the law.

C. *How should a believer give to the Lord?*

1. He should first give himself to the Lord.
2 Cor. 8:5 "and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God."

2. He should give because he loves the Lord or else it will be of no value to God.

1 Cor. 13:3 *"And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."*

3. He should give without anyone knowing what he has given.

Matt. 6:1-4 *"Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father, who is in heaven. ² So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you."*

For this reason, the Bible church provides a bag, not a plate to collect the offering.

4. He should give cheerfully, not grudgingly.

2 Cor. 9:7 *"Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."*

The church in the Book of Acts is an example of this kind of giving to the Lord.

Acts 2:44-45 *"And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need."*

Acts 4:31-37 *"And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was*

shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness. ³² And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. ³³ And with great power, the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. ³⁴ For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales ³⁵ and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had to need. ³⁶ Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), ³⁷ and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet."

D. What is the rewards for bringing an offering to the Lord?

1. When we give our money as an offering to the Lord, God will give spiritual treasures for us to use for His glory.

Luke 16:11 *"Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?"*

2. God will grant an abundance of the fruit of the Spirit.

Phil. 4:17 *"Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit that increases to your account."*

3. God will have treasures in heaven for us.

Matt. 6:19-21 *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where*

thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

4. God will accept our offering as a smell of sweet perfume, a sacrifice acceptable well-pleasing to God.

Phil. 4:18 *"But I have received everything in full and had an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God."*

E. How does the Bible Church handle its finance?

1. Everything done in regard to God's money and property should be done in a businesslike manner that is above reproach, i.e., no one should be able to question that practice.

2 Cor. 8:21 *"for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of men."*

2. Two men (one must be an elder) should collect the offering, enter the amount collected in a book and both men sign the book. It should be deposited on Monday by the appointed elder.

F. How should the money be spent?

The New Testament reveals three areas in which the Lord's money should be spent.

1. It should be given to the widow.

Acts 6:1-6 *"Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. ² So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. ³ "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of*

this task. ⁴ "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵ The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. ⁶ And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them."

- a. The qualification of the widow who qualifies for help is given in 1 Timothy 5:3-16.
 - i. She should have no relative who can support her and is totally relying on the Lord for her needs.
 - ii. **1 Tim. 5:5, 16** *"Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day. ¹⁶ If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed. If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed."*
 - b. She has to be over sixty years of age.
 - c. She has to be known for her:
 - i. Good works
 - ii. The good upbringing of her children.
 - iii. Hospitable
 - iv. Loving
2. It should be given to poor believers.

Gal. 2:10 *“They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.”*

Rom. 12:13 *“Contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.”*

God expects those who are prosperous believers to help the poor and needy in the church.

Deut. 14:29 *“The Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance among you, and the alien, the orphan and the widow who are in your town, shall come and eat and be satisfied, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.”*

The elders are to seek those who are destitute and help them.

3. It should be given to those who devote their full-time to the work of the Lord.
 - a. It is scriptural principle that those who preach the gospel or teach the Word are entitled to the support of the local church.

Gal. 6:6 *“The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.”*

1 Cor. 9:4-14 *“Do we not have a right to eat and drink? ⁵ Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? ⁶ Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? ⁷ Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? ⁸ I am not speaking these things according to*

human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? ⁹ For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? ¹⁰ Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. ¹¹ If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? ¹² If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. ¹³ Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? ¹⁴ So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel."

- b. The church at Philippi was commended for supporting Paul.

Phil. 4:10-19 *"But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now, at last, you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction. ¹⁵ You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first*

preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; ¹⁶ for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. ¹⁸ But I have received everything in full and had an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

- c. Note, that although Paul never told people of his own needs, he did not hesitate to make known the needs of other believers. Read 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9.
- d. Also, note that there is a difference between information and solicitation. People need the information or else how could they know where God wants them to give, but asking for money (soliciting) is unscriptural.

G. The elders should keep an honest account of the offering received and spent.

- 1. Account books should be kept.
- 2. All offering collected and spent must be recorded in the book.
- 3. A regular report of income and expenditure be discussed in the elders meeting and approved. A report should be given to the whole church, at least once every three months is ideal.
- 4. The report should be made available to every member of the local fellowship who wants to see it.

**VI. WORSHIP SERVICE
SUNDAY SERVICES**

A. The Preparation

1. All care should be taken to ensure that the building is adequately prepared for the time of worship. Special attention should be given to cleanliness, ventilation, and seating.
2. Proper preparation should be made for the congregation's worship service.
 - a. Hymns chosen to be sung should be known to the whole church.
 - b. Hymn books should be in a good condition or if using an overhead projector, ensure that it is working.
 - c. The church foyer should be tidy for a welcoming first impression counts in mind.
 - d. Everything should be done to provide a helpful atmosphere for worship.
 - e. Once the people start to gather, there should be no distracting moving about in the building.
 - f. The communion table should be ready well before the people begin to come. The people doing the preparation should start preparation at least one hour before worship time. We must not do anything to distract the people from the solemnity of the service.

B. The Order of Service

1. The Secretary will welcome people and read the newsletter and give report.
2. The worship leader will lead the people to prayer, Bible reading, and hymn singing. This is not the time for preaching. If the Bible is read, it must be done without comment. Duration of this should be between 25-30 minutes.
3. **Communion service.** Since we partake of the supper before the preaching, the elder conducting

the service should only read the appropriate portion of the word of God without any comments.

4. Those who are asked to give thanks at the table should be brief and limited to the particular purpose of prayer.
5. The secretary should prepare a list of those leaders serving the table and inform them on Saturday so that they can prepare themselves for this holy service.
6. Prior to serving the bread and wine, the elder serving the table should invite all born-again visitors to share the communion with us.

C. The Preaching of Word

The preacher must prepare himself through prayer and Bible study. The preaching should be expository. The preacher must feed young believers with the milk of the word (1 Pet. 2:2) and mature believers with the strong meat of the word (Heb. 5:14). This requires that the preacher should carefully prepare his sermon, spend a lot of time in prayer before he comes to preach on Sunday.

God has given gifted men to the local church. Some are teachers and preachers; others are administrators, encouragers and pastors. Each man has his own gift of which he must serve the church. Those who do not have the gift of preaching and teaching should not be performing that duty. Every man has been given a gift or gifts. They should find out what gift they have been given, get training on that and use it for God.

D. Church Discipline

The Bible Church through its sound and systematic teaching of the Word of God has a built-in prevention against sin in the local Church. However, every local church will be called upon to take disciplinary action. Whenever sin comes into affecting the peace of the church or its testimony in the community, actions must be taken. The Bible said judgment must first begin in the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17).

There are two purposes for discipline in the church.

1. To expose and remove the sin.
 - a. If a believer commits the sin, he must confess his or her sin to God and if done in public then be confessed publically in the church and forsaken.
 - b. If the sin is committed by a professing Christian, who is actually unsaved, then he must be expelled from the church (1 John 2:19).
2. To restore the sinning brother or sister to the Lord and the local church. Restoration of the believer must always be the reason for discipline in the church.

There are several degrees of discipline described in the New Testament.

1. Our Lord mentions this discipline in **Matthew 18:15-18** – *“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.”*¹⁶ *“But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so That BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.”*¹⁷ *“If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”*¹⁸ *“Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”*
2. Another form of discipline is a warning.

1 Thess. 5:14 *“We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.”*

This is used in the case of a brother or sister who does not submit to the elders.

3. Another group of people is to be avoided. These are people who are leading an undisciplined life and doing no work at all.

2 Thess. 3:11, 14, 15 *“For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. ¹⁴ If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. ¹⁵ Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

Rom. 16:17 *“Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.”*

There are two kinds of Christians mentioned in these scriptures:

- a. Those who refuse to do the work given to them by the elders.
 - b. Those who cause division in the Church, attracting people to follow them.
4. The heretic who teaches false doctrine should be warned twice (Titus 3:10), and asked to leave the church and ask the congregation told not to follow them.
 5. Paul asked the Corinthian elders to excommunicate a person who was a fornicator
1 Cor. 5:11 *“But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-not even to eat with such a one.”*

N.B: All discipline must be conducted in the fear of Lord and in the love for those who have fallen in sin. They must be treated as a sick person and must be gently restored to

full health in Christ. It will require three things from the elders:

1. Much prayer of the fallen believer and the church
2. A display of genuine love for the fallen believer.
3. Two brothers are to spend several weeks of Bible study and prayer with the fallen believer.

VII. MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

A. Marriage

Believers should be encouraged to marry only believers. The marriage relationship is also a partnership. Paul clearly states that believers should not marry unbelievers.

2 Cor. 6:12-18 *"You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections. ¹³ Now in a like exchange -I speak as to children-open wide to us also. ¹⁴ Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has a light with darkness? ¹⁵ Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM, AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. ¹⁷ "Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord. "AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN, And I will welcome you. ¹⁸ "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty."*

The phrase do not be bound with unbelievers primarily relates to false teaching causing trouble in the church. However, it may relate to another union such as marriage or business. When giving permission for widows to marry again, the Apostle Paul emphatically says, she is free to marry whom she wishes, only in the Lord, only the Christian (1 Cor. 7:39).

A regular class should be conducted for the young people of the church to educate them about this and other truths.

What should the local church do in the case a young man or a young girl who falls in love with a non-Christian and gets married in the Registry Office? What should be the attitude of the church?

The first thing to be determined is whether the believer has sinned against God. If the church feels the believer has sinned then the person has to be treated as the unruly believer (2 Thess. 3:12), and administer discipline accordingly. However, the believer must not be treated as an unclean person, not fit to be part of the local church. He or she would need all the love of the church, especially that which the elders can give them.

The attitude, "We don't want anything to do with them" is not the spirit of Christ, but that of the enemy of the Lord. The mother and the father of the fallen Christian must not fall into this trap of the enemy. Love them both because your love will attract the unbeliever to the Lord.

It would be good to restore the believer to fellowship as soon as possible and encourage the Christian to witness to the unbelieving partner.

Furthermore, this thing will not happen if proper teaching on love and marriage be given to the young people of the local church. One mature married elder and his wife should take this as their ministry.

B. Divorce

The Lord is very clear on this issue.

Mark 10:9 *"What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."*

Matt. 19:1-6 *"When Jesus had finished these words, He departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan; ² and large crowds followed Him, and He*

healed them there. ³ Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" ⁴ And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, ⁵ and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH '? ⁶ "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

When the Pharisees questioned the Lord as to why Moses allowed divorce, He said, because of the hardness of their heart. The Greek word for hardness means stubbornness or obstinacy. The Lord said Moses gave that consent because of the stubbornness of the Jews. But the Lord Jesus said, "Whoever divorces his wife except for immorality and marries another woman commits adultery." The Bible says in **Eph. 5:3** – "*But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.*"

In the light of this truth, a believer should divorce the other marriage partner only if the other party begins to live with someone else. If the two get separated for any other reason then the elders should pray for their reconciliation and do whatever they can to bring them together. God had brought them together so the church should try and keep them to be together.

What should the church do if some Christian wants to marry a Christian who is divorced? The Bible has nothing to say about this. But here we may apply the principle Paul lays down for the unmarried and the widow. He said, "I say to the unmarried and widow remain even as I, but if they do not have self-control, let them marry for it is better to marry than to burn with passion" (1 Cor. 9:8-9). I don't think we can apply Matthew 19:9 in this situation. However, the elders should look into each case with compassion and wisely do what is best for the spiritual well-being of those concerned.

VIII. THE INFANT (BABY'S) PRESENTATION

We have changed the term dedication to the presentation because once someone or something is dedicated to the Lord then it belongs to Him. Since parents do not view this service as such, it would be better to call this either presentation or a thanksgiving service.

The facts that must be made clear to the parents are:

1. This is not when a baby becomes a believer.
2. This is not a baptism service.
3. It is not dedicating the baby for Christian service.

It is simply a service where they publically offer thanksgiving to God for the gift of their baby and presenting the baby to the church for their prayers and spiritual care.

The service should be conducted during the worship service on Sunday morning and just before the communion service. Presentation of the child if so wished by the parents may be conducted at home.

Both the parents and the church should be reminded of their prayerful spiritual care of the child.

IX. HOMOSEXUAL (GAY) ISSUES

The practice of homosexuality is condemned in the New Testament. The female homosexuals are called lesbians. Both male and female homosexuals like to be called gay. The English word 'gay' means sportive, lively and merry. What God calls an abomination (hateful Lev. 18:22) they are calling merry. But the Bible condemns both male and female homosexual acts.

Rom. 1:23-27 “and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonoured among them. ²⁵ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. ²⁶ For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, ²⁷ and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.”

1 Cor. 6:9 “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals.”

Some people are born with this physical defect. The reason for this can only be the results of the original sin. Paul makes this very clear in **Rom. 5:12** “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned” and in **Rom. 1:25-26** he wrote, “For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever, Amen. ²⁶ For this reason, God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural.” Men are born with other physical and mental defects, which are also the result of Adam’s sin. Therefore, the Bible does not condemn the homosexuals for being born with that physical defect, but it condemns its practice whether in private or public.

In view of these Bible truths on homosexuality, the Bible Church has taken the following stand:

1. The practice of both male and female homosexuality is sin in the sight of God, which He hates.
2. In view of the above, the Bible Church condemns the practice of homosexuality by both male and female.
3. The Church premises shall not be used to perform same sex marriage; neither should its marriage officers perform such a marriage ceremony.
4. The members of the Bible Church should not encourage or attend such a marriage.
5. Those men and women who are born with such physical defects, but are not engaged in the performance of such acts, should be treated as any other sinner who needs salvation.
6. The elders would take the following actions **if a member** in the church is found practicing homosexuality.
 - a. The person must be brought before the elders and told that he or she is living in sin.
 - b. He or she should be told that they must repent from that sin and forsake it.
 - c. If they refuse the advice then he or she must be asked to remove himself or herself from the fellowship, but continue to pray that God would have His own way with that life.
 - d. The church should be informed of this decision.
7. The elders would take the following actions **if one of the elders** is accused of practicing homosexuality.
 - a. Any accusation against the elder would only be accepted if it is verified by two witnesses.
 - b. If it is verified then he must be removed from all his responsibilities from the church.

- c. He must be advised to forsake the practice and seek council.
- d. The church must be informed of the elders' decision and asked to pray for the brother.
- e. If the accusation cannot be verified by two witnesses or his own confession then the brother must be exonerated from the charge.

X. CHURCHES RELATIONSHIP TO FORMER MEMBERS LIVING OVERSEAS

1. The relationship must be encouraged by.
 - a. Praying for them. They must be encouraged to give us their prayer needs.
 - b. Reporting to them through a weekly newsletter.
2. All communication of needs.
 - a. First, the need should be sent to the office.
 - b. The office will share the need to local churches.
 - c. If the local churches cannot meet the need, then the secretary of the Fellowship will inform our overseas brothers of the need.
3. The overseas brothers are no longer members of our fellowship, nor can they be recognized as an elder even though they were elders before they left the country. They are now members of a local church in the country of their residence.
4. We cannot demand financial or other help from them.
5. They cannot give oversight to any local church in Fiji. Their role, if any, can be that of giving advice and prayer. They must understand if their advice is

not heeded it is because the local elders are led by the Lord to take another direction on that issue.

They are still our brothers and sisters in the Lord, and there must be mutual love and care, but they cannot be involved in the governing of a local church.

The local elder can and should listen to their advice, but not allow them to usurp authority over them.

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