

Church of Maumelle's Teachings on Christian Living

Moral and ethical issues at the forefront of Christian concern today were not being considered at the time the articles of religion were compiled. To address issues that divide Christians today, the following statements are shared.

Items to address may be added to this document as need arises. This summary is compiled as of Monday, February 26, 2024.

Christians and Organized Religion

Individualism and inner knowing are valued highly American culture. Institutions have disappointed many, as sex abuse scandals and financial mismanagement have been evident in a variety of charitable organizations, including churches and denominations. It is difficult for people to trust institutions.

Yet the Bible states clearly that Christians are not to be isolated. Roughly 80% of the New Testament uses a plural form of "you" when using pronouns, implying that the teachings are intended to be studied by a group and directives were often shared with a group. Believers are encouraged to meet together and see the church as a resource for growth. (Hebrews 10:24-25, Ephesians 4:11-13, 1 Corinthians 12:12, 1 Corinthians 3:15-17.) Jesus' prayer prior to Judas' betrayal was that the believers would be united together (John 17).

The Holy Spirit uses communities of believers (churches) for God's glory even in the midst of human frailty and sin. Christians do not attend worship because they believe their leaders are sinless, but because God commands it, and because God has done good through the church even in the face of grave sin. Hospitals, schools, orphanages, food pantries, scholarships, shelters... many such organizations were originally founded by churches, or individuals who were spurred on by their church upbringing and church friends. Foremost is the sharing of the gospel. There are many organizations that do good, but the church alone is specially designed to share the gospel and expound upon scripture.

Efforts to fight temptation and the effects of sin in the Christian community are the responsibility of every Christian. Christ can fully redeem any person, and yet, no Christian is above temptation. Background checks for people who work with children or vulnerable people and safeguards to help Christians avoid temptations to sin are a regular part of ministry.

Determining What is Sin

...whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things, whatever increases the authority of your body over mind, that thing for you is sin...
- Susannah Wesley

The Bible is our rule for Christian practice. For a Christian who is not yet familiar with scripture, or for a Christian dealing with a moral issue that does not appear to be directly referenced in scripture, the quotation above provides good guidance.

In this ever-changing world, all Christians need to search the scriptures and use the aid of wise teachers to determine how to live. All entertainment, hobbies, and habits should be considered by a believer in light of its effect on the believer's devotion to God and the teachings of scripture.

How to Read Scripture and Interpret Scripture

Church of Maumelle reads scripture as a whole and interprets Bible verses in context of the whole, rather than prioritizing one verse over the many. The life and work of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, and thus the Old Testament must be read and studied through the lens of Jesus Christ. None of the 66 books of the Bible is unnecessary, though some are more difficult to interpret without the assistance of others.

Marriage

According to scripture, the first marriage was the commitment of one male and one female to each other. Marriage between a man and a woman reflects Christ's sacrificial love for the Church. God's will is for marriage to be permanent. Yet, some have divorce thrust upon them against their will. Others divorce in the face of infidelity, or for legal or physical protection. Anyone who confesses their sins and trusts Christ for salvation can be forgiven of sin. (Genesis 2:21-24; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 7:36-50, 16:18; John 7:53-8:11; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 7:10-16; Ephesians 5:25-33)

Women in Ordained Ministry

Christians debate about women's roles in the church. Some cite isolated scriptures that appear to bar women from ministry, or poorly translated texts that seem to say women should be forbidden from speaking at all in any worship setting. Yet there are also many examples of women in spiritual leadership roles in scripture. These examples, and more intensive examination of scriptures that at first appear to discourage the participation of women in ministry, serve to affirm many roles for women in the church.

The Old Testament references several strong female leaders. **Miriam** was a prophet (Exodus 15:20). Prophet and judge **Deborah** lead the army of Israel into successful combat (Judges 4 to 5). The prophet **Huldah**, authenticated the scroll of the Law found in the temple and helped spark religious reform in the days of Josiah (2 Kings 22:14-20; 2 Chronicles 34:22-28).

The New Testament also shows that women filled important ministry roles in the Early Church. **Tabitha** offered an effective benevolence ministry (Acts 9:36). **Philip's four unmarried daughters** were prophets whose word foretold the fate of Paul (Acts 21:8,9).

Euodia and **Syntyche**, **Phoebe**, **Priscilla**, **Mary**, **Tryphenia**, **Tryphosa**, and **Persia** are examples of women who filled leadership roles in the church. Paul used many ministry verbs and titles to describe the women on this list whom he referenced. (Philippians 4:2,3, Romans 16:1-2, 1 Corinthians 16:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 5:17)

Junia was identified by Paul as an apostle (Romans 16:7). Beginning in the thirteenth century, a number of scholars and translators masculinized her name to Junias, apparently unwilling to admit that there was a female apostle.

Throughout Christian history, women have served as spiritual advisors, pastors, and teachers. We believe these practices, reflected in scripture, represent God's will for and hope for women and his church. Women, along with men, are eligible to preach, teach, and pastor.