

# Calvary Chapel Distinctives: A Summary



*Calvary Chapel Vallejo*

# Introduction

**Some churches emphasize the teaching of God's word, but ignore the gifts of the Holy Spirit.**

**Some churches emphasize the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but ignore or minimize the teaching of God's Word.**

**Calvary Chapel emphasizes the teaching of God's Word, and maintains an open heart to the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit.**

# **The Call To The Ministry**

**It is God who calls a man into the ministry (Heb 5:4).**

**God gives to those He has called a sense of commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Col 3:17), a commitment to God's Word (2 Tim 2:15), and a commitment to serving others (Mk 10:42-44).**

# **God's Model For The Church**

**Calvary Chapel looks to the book of Acts for its church model.**

**In Acts 2:42, we find four (4) basic functions which the early church continued in steadfastly:**

- 1. The apostle's doctrine**
- 2. Fellowship**
- 3. Breaking of bread**
- 4. Prayers**

**In Acts 6:3-4, we find that the Word of God and prayer are to be the top priorities in the ministry of the church.**

**In Acts 2:47, we find that as the church leaders focused on nurturing the body and bringing glory to Christ, God added daily to the church.**

# **Church Government**

**At Calvary Chapel, we believe that the best form of government is one modeled after the Scriptures.**

**In the O.T., Moses, under God, received God's guidance and directions and passed them on to the people. To help in judging and ruling the people, Moses was directed by God to appoint seventy (70) elders, who were anointed to serve the people (Exodus 18:13-27).**

**In the N.T., Jesus is the head of the church. Under Jesus there is a senior pastor, who seeks the Lord's guidance, and some elders to help the senior pastor in ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of the congregation.**

# Empowered By The Spirit

Jesus spoke of an experience in which torrents of living water would come gushing forth from our innermost being (John 7:37-38). This empowering of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer is separate from the indwelling of the Spirit that takes place at the time of conversion.

There is in fact a three-fold relationship between the Holy Spirit and a man.

# Empowered By The Spirit

Prior to conversion, the Holy Spirit is dwelling with (Greek: para) a person, convicting him of sin and convincing him that Jesus is the only answer.

When we come to Christ, the Holy Spirit begins to dwell in (Greek: en) us (John 14:16-17). As a believer, having the Holy Spirit in us, conforming us into the image of Christ (2 Cor 3:18), there remains yet another relationship with the Holy Spirit.

# Empowered By The Spirit

Jesus told His disciples that they would receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon (Greek: epi) you (Acts 1:8). This overflowing of the Spirit from our lives provides a dynamic power to be effective witnesses of Christ and to effectively serve Him. It is an experience that is distinct from conversion because the scriptures show that this "coming upon", "filling", or "baptism" of the Spirit can happen after conversion (John 20:22 and Acts 2:1-4; Acts 4:8; 8:12-16), or at the time of conversion (Acts 10:44-47).

# Empowered By The Spirit

At Calvary Chapel there is a relaxed and casual style. Rather than pressuring people with a lot of spiritual hype and fancy programs, there is a dependence upon the Lord.

Calvary Chapel has grown and prospered because the Lord was trusted to build His church. Jesus is the head of the church and if He doesn't build the church, we are laboring in vain (Psa 127:1).

# Building The Church God's Way

Realizing that Jesus will build His church allows the pastor to "feed the sheep". Trusting the Lord to build His church, the pastor does not have to strive to create and maintain church programs. He thus avoids the spiritual burnout that often accompanies striving with church programs. And, instead of striving through spiritual hype (excessive gift emphasis), he can concentrate on loving, feeding, and caring for the people.

At Calvary Chapel we recognize that God blesses the teaching of His Word. People don't need gimmicks or programs. They need the Word of God, which is alive, powerful, and able to minister to the spirit of people.

# Grace Upon Grace

**Some churches are legalistic, harsh, and lacking in grace. But the Bible emphasizes that God is gracious and we are exhorted to show mercy and grace toward others. We are told that blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy (Matt 5:7). Because we have received so much mercy and forgiveness, the Lord requires us to be merciful and forgiving.**

**It's a beautiful thing to see God transform a wrecked life into a glorious vessel of honor. Remember the woman caught in adultery? When the enemies of Jesus sought to put Him at odds with Moses and the law and demanded that this woman be punished, Jesus exercised mercy and sought to restore the woman (John 8:3-11).**

# Grace Upon Grace

**There seems to be two schools of thought when it comes to ministering to people who are going through a tragic situation. One school acts like a policeman and seeks to find out who has broken the law. The other school acts like a paramedic and seeks to bring healing. There is, of course, nothing wrong with the law. It is holy, righteous, and good. But, it must be used lawfully. The law acts as a schoolmaster and is intended to lead people to repent and to come to Jesus. When people repent and come to Jesus, we must seek to restore them to health. If we are to be ministers of Jesus Christ, we must minister in grace as He did. As we minister we are bound to make mistakes, but we must be careful not to become legalistic and insist that the law be enforced. If we're going to error, let's error on the side of grace.**

# **The Priority Of The Word**

**At Calvary Chapel we believe strongly in the priority of the Word of God. We teach from Genesis to Revelation endeavoring to give the people the whole counsel of God. Occasionally there is teaching on a particular topic. But, for the most part, an expositional teaching style is used to systematically cover the entire Word of God.**

**In the expositional style the Word is taught line upon line and precept upon precept (Isa 28:13). The method consists of reading distinctly the portion of Scripture to be taught, giving the sense (meaning) of it, and causing the people to understand what was read (Neh 8:8).**

# **The Priority Of The Word**

**Systematically teaching God's Word is not flashy, but it bears much fruit. It usually takes a few years to whet and develop the people's appetite for the Word, so patience and dedication are required for this type of teaching ministry.**

# **The Centrality Of Jesus Christ**

**Jesus is to be the center of all we do. Therefore, any distraction that takes the focus off of Jesus must be removed. Individuals who are standing and swaying during worship are drawing attention to themselves.**

**Ushers must deal with these people in a loving and gentle way. If necessary, they must escort them out to the foyer and explain our policy – that we want to honor our God and not draw attention away from Jesus.**

**It is important that we be diligent in keeping Jesus as our central focus and in keeping distractions to a minimum.**

# **The Centrality Of Jesus Christ**

**In the New Testament we're told that no flesh should glory in God's presence (1 Cor 1:29).**

**And in the Old Testament we find Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, killed by God for offering "strange fire" – sacrifices that were not approved by God and not offered in the way that God wanted them offered (Lev 10).**

**Even something that seems spiritual, like exercising spiritual gifts during a church service can be a distraction. The proper place for exercising spiritual gifts is in an afterglow – a service dedicated to seeking the Lord and the fullness of His Spirit. So, we must make sure that we are glorifying God keeping Jesus as our central focus.**

# The Rapture Of The Church

The rapture refers to the time when Jesus, without warning, will come and take away His church from the earth. This is a significant event and your view of the rapture will greatly impact the success of your ministry. It is very important because Jesus promised He would come again to receive His disciples unto Himself (John 14:1-3). So if Jesus makes a promise, it is certain that He will do it. Paul also speaks of the rapture and says that he is revealing a mystery (something not revealed before by God). Paul tells the Corinthians that we shall not all sleep, but we all shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, mortal must put on immortality (1 Cor 15:51-53).

# The Rapture Of The Church

**So, at the time of the rapture we will receive our new heavenly bodies. Paul also taught the Thessalonians about the rapture. They were looking for the coming of the Lord, but they were confused about what became of the believers who died before Jesus came. So Paul told the Thessalonians that at the rapture the dead in Christ would rise first, then those who are alive at the Lord's coming will rise to meet Him in the air; so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thess 4:13-18).**

# **The Rapture Of The Church**

**Some people don't believe in the rapture because they don't find the word "rapture" in our English Bible. But, in 1 Thess 4:17 we find the words "caught up", which have been translated into English from the Greek word "harpazo". And, in the Latin Vulgate translation, the word "harpazo" is translated into the Latin word "raptuse", from which we get our English word "rapture".**

**The rapture is separate and distinct from the second coming of the Lord. At the rapture Jesus will come and take His church from the earth, while at the second coming Jesus will come with His church to establish His kingdom upon the earth (Rev 1:7; Col 3:4; Eph 14:4-5; Jude 14).**

# **The Rapture Of The Church**

**So before His second coming, Jesus will come for His church (the rapture). The rapture can happen at any time, but before the second coming can occur, certain events must transpire. In Matt 24 Jesus gave His disciples the signs of His second coming. Prior to the second coming there are many prophecies that must be fulfilled, the Antichrist must be revealed, and the Great Tribulation period must occur.**

**There are those who insist that the church will go through the Great Tribulation. But the Great Tribulation is the time when God is pouring out His wrath upon the earth. And Rom 5:9 and 1 Thess 5:9 clearly tell us that the church has not been appointed unto wrath.**

# The Rapture Of The Church

**God is righteous, He will not judge the righteous with the wicked (Gen 18:23-33; Rom 1:18). When we look at the structure of the book of Revelation, we find that it is divided into three sections (Rev 1:19) - the things that John has seen (Rev 1): Jesus glorified; the things that are (Rev 2-3): the seven (7) churches; and the things which shall be hereafter (Rev 4-22): the rapture, the taking of the scroll, the Great Tribulation, the second coming, the Millenium, the new heavens and earth. Looking at this structure and the events of Rev 5:7-10, it is clear that the church is in heaven, singing a song of redemption to Jesus, before the Great Tribulation which begins in Rev 6.**

# The Rapture Of The Church

**Some are confused about the rapture because they interchange certain Biblical terms thinking that they are equivalent. For instance, some equate the "last trump" of the rapture with the seventh (7th) trump in the Great Tribulation. These are not the same. The "last trump" is sounded by Jesus for the rapture (1 Thess 4:16), while the seventh trump in the Great Tribulation is sounded by an angel (Rev 8:13; 10:7).**

# The Rapture Of The Church

**Another misunderstanding occurs over the words "saints" and "elect". These words are not used exclusively to refer to the church. These words can refer to the church, but they can also refer to Israel (see Matt 24:29-31; Isa 11:12; Dan 7:21; and Rev 13:7). If we make the church Israel, by spiritualizing the scriptures, we short-circuit the promises that God has made to Israel and make God a liar. If God does not keep His promises to Israel, how can He be trusted to keep His promises to the church?**

# The Rapture Of The Church

**It seems that in every generation Jesus has desired that His people should watch and be ready. After discussing the Tribulation, Jesus told His disciples to watch and to pray always that they might be counted worthy to escape all the things that shall come to pass (Luke 21:36). When we are expecting the rapture and thinking that we are the last generation, it has several benefits: it gives us since of urgency in doing the Lord's work; it gives us the proper perspective of material things; and it encourages us to maintain a purity in our lives. Hence it is important to proclaim the teaching of the rapture and to keep the people watching for Jesus and hoping that soon a better day will be here.**

# Having Begun In The Spirit

History shows that often movements of God which were alive in the Spirit become dead in rituals; birthed in the Spirit they died as they attempted to be perfected in the flesh. In the book of Judges, we see a cycle of infidelity as Israel would seek God in times of want and forsake Him in times of plenty. The church, like Israel, has a history of turning to God and following the Spirit at first, but then they turn from God and turn to the flesh (see the book of Judges). When we examine the history of the Lutheran and Methodist churches, we find that they began in the Spirit, but today they are laced with modernism.

# Having Begun In The Spirit

We must learn from this history and make sure that we rely on the Spirit, and not in our own power and wisdom. We must heed the exhortation of Paul the apostle, who chided them "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye made perfect in the flesh?" (Gal 3:3). Moses learned to rely on the Spirit and not try to do God's work in the energies of his own flesh. This he learned during his forty (40) years in the wilderness. There in the wilderness he was stripped of his self-worth and confidence. When he worked in the energies of his own flesh he could not successfully bury one Egyptian. Yet, when he was directed by the Spirit, Israel succeeded in burying the entire Egyptian army.

# The Supremacy Of Love

Without love, all the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit, and all the doctrinal orthodoxy and understanding of the Scriptures is meaningless and worthless. In fact, Jesus commanded that we love one another as He loved us (John 13:34). He also said that those who have His commandments and keep them are the ones that love Him.

As Christians we need to be examples of love, reflecting the love of Jesus in our attitudes and actions (1 Tim 4:12).

# The Supremacy Of Love

We need to be a people who are compassionate. And if we are going to be compassionate, we must embrace the words of Ezekiel, who said "I sat where they sat," (Eze 3:15).

Putting ourselves in another's life situation, in an attempt to understand them, is the key to developing compassion. And when we exercise compassion, we'll find it producing amazing changes in the lives of others. We all need to be compassionate and show a genuine interest in people. But it is especially vital that pastor's seek to understand the people in their congregation. They must develop compassion because you cannot really minister to someone for whom you have no compassion.

# Striking The Balance

At Calvary Chapel we seek to maintain unity and not divide God's people over non-essential issues. We try to strike a balance in controversial issues by recognizing the spiritual validity of both sides of a debate. In the essential doctrines of the faith we stand firm. In non-essential areas, we accept that people will have differing views. But, in all things we seek to maintain a spirit of unity and love.

In those argumentative issues where there is not clear, definitive teaching in the Scriptures, we present the different sides to ensure the people are getting a well-balanced spiritual diet.

# Striking The Balance

One example of striking a balance is in the area of exercising the gifts of the Spirit. We believe in the gifts of the Spirit and that they can be expressed today. But we do not believe in the excesses that often accompany their use. We believe in the gift of tongues and we look to 1 Cor 14 for our Biblical example of the exercise of this gift. We do not emphasize tongues as the primary manifestation of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but we look for love as the fruit of the Spirit (1 Cor 13:1).

# Striking The Balance

Another example of maintaining a balance is Calvary Chapel's approach to Calvinism. We are neither Calvinists nor are we Arminian. For instance, we do not believe that you lose your salvation because you told a lie or lost your temper. We believe in the security of the believer but we also believe that the believer must persevere - continue to abide in Christ (John 8:31). We disagree with the Calvinistic view of salvation that states that God has chosen some to be saved and others to be lost. We believe that Jesus died for everybody and that God has given us the ability to receive or to reject Jesus as our Lord and Savior. The reason God has given us the capacity to make choices is so that the love we express toward Him might be meaningful and real.

# Ventures Of Faith

Jonathan, the son of king Saul, is a good example of one who ventured out in faith. When Israel was battling against the invading Philistines, Jonathan remembered the awesome power of God. He was convinced that God could bring victory in battle as easily with one (1) as with one hundred thousand (100,000). So, armed with his faith in God he arose, woke up his armor bearer and said “Let’s go over and see if God wants to deliver the Philistines into the hands of Israel today.” Now to assure that God was in this venture of faith, Jonathan set up a safeguard. When the Philistine sentries were spotted, he would call out to them. If they responded by saying that they would come down to Jonathan, then God was not in this venture. But, if they responded by telling Jonathan to come up to them, then God was with him in this venture of faith. As it turned out, God was with Jonathan and the victory was won.

# Ventures Of Faith

It is so important to discover the will of God and to jump into it, trusting that God will guide you and provide for you in your venture of faith. Each generation must experience God for themselves. Each generation must step out in faith and give God an opportunity to work. Indeed, the Lord is looking for those whose hearts are in harmony with His, that He might show Himself strong in their behalf (2 CHR 16:9).