

# ***Bread of Life Church***

## ***A Statement on***

### ***Spiritual Gifts***

(revised May 2017)

#### **Purpose of this Document**

In submission to the glory and will of God, Bread of Life Church desires to experience the work of the Holy Spirit in fulness and freedom (1 Thes 5:19-22). This statement on spiritual gifts has been written in order to provide guidelines concerning the practice and principles associated with the gifts which are biblically based. This statement takes into account the document, “Doctrines and Practices of Spiritual Gifts,” (issued by the Ministerial Committee in March 1996), valuing its wisdom and enlarging our understanding of spiritual gifts.

In regards to spiritual gifts, we realize that there is no contradiction between the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of the inspired, written Word of God; the Spirit’s work is done within the character of the Scripture, perfectly complementing God’s living Word with His living work in the life of the believer. The Spirit has been sent by the Father to lead us to Christ and to give glory to Christ. The role of the Spirit is not to exalt Himself or call attention to His own work (John 15:26; 16:13,14; Eph 1:14; Rev 5:13).

We also realize that the body of Christ is beautiful in diversity and in unity. Therefore, in drafting this statement, we strive to be sufficiently broad to include points of view on which Christians differ and yet specific enough to provide the clear and definitive guidance of Scripture. Within the scope of the guidelines that are stated, we accept each other’s differences and submit to one another in love, understanding that the ultimate purpose of spiritual gifts is the building up of the body of Christ in unity.

#### **General Affirmations Concerning Spiritual Gifts**

##### ***1. The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts***

We affirm that spiritual gifts are for the glory of God not for the glory of man. Their purpose is to build up the body of Christ through service to others within the body (Eph 4:11-16; 1 Pet 4:10,11).

##### ***2. The Giving of Spiritual Gifts***

We affirm that every believer is given a spiritual gift or gifts through the sovereign choice of God through His Holy Spirit. These gifts are given only by God’s grace and cannot be acquired by effort, pursuit, or training. At the same time, we are taught to eagerly desire the greater gifts, meaning that we are to give greater esteem to

the gifts that edify the church. All believers are encouraged to develop and use their spiritual gifts which are confirmed by the body of Christ. We further affirm that God, in His sovereignty, is free to continue using miraculous sign gifts in this present generation (Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12-14; 2 Tim 1:6; Heb 2:3,4; 1 Pet 4:10,11).

### ***3. The Practice of Spiritual Gifts***

We affirm that the ministry of our spiritual gifts is intended to be in the spirit of love and unity for the edification of the church, not simply that of the individual. In that context, all the gifts should reflect order and reverence, not chaos and confusion. Greater emphasis and greater esteem should be given to those gifts that build up the body in service and building up of others (1 Cor 12-14).

## **Specific Affirmations Concerning Spiritual Gifts**

### ***1. Specific Affirmations Concerning The Gift of Tongues***

#### **Biblical Principles Concerning the Gift of Tongues**

Interpretations of the biblical texts surrounding the gift of tongues are diverse. Some believe that the gift consists of the ability to speak a heavenly language as well as the ability to speak known languages previously unknown to the speaker. Others assert that the gift consists solely of the ability to speak known languages previously unknown to the speaker. We recognize that sincere, thinking Christians can hold both of these views based on a clear reading of the Scripture. Therefore, as a diverse congregation, we allow for these differing views (Acts 2:4-12; 1 Cor 14:2). However we affirm that the display of this gift is not required in order to show the evidence of the filling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:8,31; 7:55; 8:17; 9:17; 11:24; Eph 5:18).

Although we might hold differing views on the nature of the gift of tongues, we affirm that Scripture provides specific guidelines in the practice of this gift. Specifically, the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 14 gives the church clear principles to follow to insure the edification of the church and to guard against ridicule, confusion, disunity, or personal exaltation. These include:

- The principle of purpose: the overall purpose of any and all of the spiritual gifts is to glorify God and build up the body of Christ (1 Cor 14:26). In the exercise of the gift of tongues, we must insure that attention is not drawn to individuals, to the gift itself, or to the experience, but to God alone.
- The principle of order and peace: the gathering of believers should reflect the nature of God; He is a God of peace and not confusion. From this principle, the apostle Paul instructs those who practice the gift of tongues in public meetings to do so in turn (not all at once), at most three in one meeting, and with enough self control so they can govern the commencement and cessation of their speaking (1 Cor 14:27-33).

- The principle of meaning and understanding: because the gift of tongues is meant for the edification of the body of Christ, the apostle Paul instructs us that its exercise should communicate clearly to the church. In this context, he instructs the church that the gift of tongues should only be exercised within the context of an assembly of believers when it is accompanied by interpretation. If no interpreter is provided, the person speaking in tongues is instructed to keep silent (1 Cor 14:6-19,28).
- The principle of freedom: Paul insures that the gift of tongues is permitted within the context of the church by instructing that the gift should not be forbidden (1 Cor 14:39,40). Within the context of the above principles, we welcome the work of the Holy Spirit through the exercise of this gift.

### Specific Practices Concerning the Gift of Tongues

The Bible provides direction concerning the public display of the gift of tongues. However, since the private practice of this gift is not explicitly addressed within the context of 1 Corinthians 14, we do not forbid it. Furthermore, in the practice of public, simultaneous prayer, if a believer chooses to use the gift of tongues, we do not forbid it. We advise simply that this practice be carried out with sensitivity, not disturbing those who are gathered.

### ***2. Specific Affirmations Concerning The Gift of Prophecy***

The gift of prophecy as exhibited in the Old and New Testaments was God speaking His very words through human instruments (2 Pet 1:19-21) unimpeded by human interpretation. The Bible is clear that prophets were among those who formed the foundation of the church (Eph 2:20).

#### Biblical Affirmations Surrounding the Gift of Prophecy:

We affirm that the written Word of God, the completed Canon we recognize as our Bible, is the inspired and sufficient guide for the believer for life and godliness (2 Tim 3:16,17). With the completion of the Old and New Testaments, we no longer have need for continuing biblical revelation. In this regard, we believe that the gift of prophecy that produces authoritative, biblical documents has ceased (Rev 22:18,19; Jude 3).

The gift of prophecy is recognized by many believers today as still existing in different forms. Some believe that the gift of prophecy exists solely through the exposition of our existing Scripture to the effect of giving specific conviction in accordance with God's plan to a particular person or peoples. Others believe that the gift of prophecy also includes the revealing of God's specific will to believers to comfort, exhort and encourage them (1 Cor 14:3, 23-26). This is similar to prophets who delivered their messages without having their words recorded as Scripture (1 Sam 10:5,6; 1 Sam 19:20; Act 21:9; 1 Cor 14:3-5). We recognize that sincere, thinking Christians can hold both of these views based on a clear reading of the Scripture. Therefore, as a diverse congregation, we allow for these differing views. In order to maintain unity in the midst

of this diversity, we affirm the need to exercise sensitivity, understanding, and respect towards one another. However, we agree that the Bible is clear on these principles:

- We affirm the principle that prophecy must adhere to the teaching of Scripture and that it must conform to the nature and working of God's will. The pastors and elders are responsible to examine the integrity of the prophecy and the one exercising the gift. (Deut 13:1-5; 1 Cor 14:29-32; 1 Thes 5:19-22).
- We affirm that the gift of prophecy is dissimilar to fortune telling in every way. It is not for the curiosity of man but for the glory of God (Lev 19:31).
- We affirm that the biblical model for prophecy is that personal prophetic revelations were commonly given in a private manner in order to guard against exalting the gifted individual (2 Sam 12; Acts 21:10-14).

### ***3. Specific Affirmations Concerning the Gifts of Word of Knowledge and Word of Wisdom***

Although the Bible makes mention of both the gifts of word of knowledge and word of wisdom (1 Cor 12:8), we acknowledge that it is silent on both the definition and application of these gifts. Interpretations differ concerning the kind of insight that is implied in the exercise of these gifts. Some see the gifts of word of knowledge and word of wisdom as a greater ability for understanding and giving of advice, especially in the application of the Bible. Others would interpret the gifts as giving understanding and discernment with an emphasis on insight into the hearts and situations of others. Since the Bible is silent in respect to the exact nature of these gifts, we allow for understandings that fall within the previous interpretations. We only advise in the practice of these gifts:

- that the practice of these gifts should be evaluated in light of Scripture.
- that the exercise of these gifts should be for the edification of the church, not for the glorification of an individual, their insight, or personal abilities.
- that in the exercise of these gifts, where the gifted person has insight into the situation or heart of another individual, the understanding should be delivered with much care and consideration if in a public setting.

### ***4. Specific Affirmations Concerning the Gift of Apostleship***

The twelve disciples of Jesus (excluding Judas but including Matthias) are designated as apostles of Jesus (Acts 1:24-26) and have a unique role both in the founding of the church and in eschatology (Rev 21:14). Beyond the twelve disciples of Christ (Matt 10:1-4), the Bible affirms that many were given to the church as apostles in the first century including James (Gal 1:19; 2:9), Paul (Rom 1:1), Barnabas (Acts 14:14) and others (1 Cor 15:7). The hallmarks of first century apostles were that they were eyewitnesses to the resurrected Christ (1 Cor 15:6-9), received a personal commission from Jesus (Acts 1:2), and had their commissioning affirmed by accompanying signs and wonders (2 Cor 12:12, Heb 2:3,4). These apostles were given to the church to testify of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 1:22), to build up and establish churches (Acts 13-27;

Eph 2:20; 4:11,12), to interpret important early doctrinal issues (Acts 15), and to author holy Scripture (John 16:13; 2 Pet 1:20,21; 3:15).

There is a range of convictions among believers concerning the continuing existence of the gift of apostleship. Some maintain that the gift of apostleship has ceased in the church because the foundation of the church has been completed (1 Cor 15:8; Eph 2:20). Others maintain that the gift of apostleship is still in existence (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). We accept both interpretations since biblical evidence is not specific in respect to the continuing existence of this gift. However, since Christ is now ascended, the Canon of Scripture completed, and the foundation of the church laid, we recognize that the authority, role and title of the first century apostles were unique.

If the gift of apostleship continues today, we affirm that some of the characteristics found in the first century apostles would be mirrored in present day recipients of the gift: a special commission from the church for a certain work, insight into the planting of churches, a passion for missions, and an aptitude for initiating pioneering works for the Kingdom of God.

### ***5. Specific Affirmations Concerning The Gift of Healing***

The Bible affirms that sickness, disease and ultimately death are results of the Fall (Gen 2:16,17; Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 11:29,30; Jam 5:14,15). God in both Old and New Testaments displays Himself not only as a God who has the ability to heal, but a God who desires to heal as an extension of His love and mercy (Ex 15:26; Ps 103:2,3; Matt 4:23, 9:35). During the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the early church, healing often accompanied the proclamation of the Gospel in order to validate the divine origin and power of those who preached (Acts 4:29,30; Heb 2:4).

#### **Biblical Considerations Concerning Sickness and Disease**

We recognize that sickness and disease have entered the world ultimately through the Fall of Mankind and that they will continue in the world until Christ returns and accomplishes the fullness of redemption (Rom 8:19-23). The source of healing is God's power through Jesus' redemptive work (Isa 53:5). Since the complete redemption of our bodies is not fulfilled on this earth, complete healing of our bodies is not fulfilled. God allows sickness and disease for different purposes in the life of the believer. As such, it is His sovereign prerogative when, how and whether or not to exercise healing. When God chooses to allow these afflictions, it can be for various reasons, including:

- to discipline believers or even leaders because of personal sin present in their lives (1 Cor 11:27-32; Num 12:10; 2 Sam 24).
- to test a believer's faith in light of trials and tribulation (Job 1,2; Mk 9:14-29).
- a direct result of physical causes associated with the principle of sowing and reaping (Gal 6:7).
- to keep us dependent on the sufficiency of God's grace and power (2 Cor 12:7-10).
- to display His glory and compassion in healing an affliction (Jn 9:1-3).

- for reasons that we may not fully understand in the outworking of God's sovereign purposes (Is 55:8,9; Rom 8:28).
- to have a greater longing and appreciation for heaven (Rev 21:1-4, Rom 8:18-25).

### Biblical Considerations Concerning the Practice of Healing

While the Bible affirms that there are various reasons for sickness and disease in the life of the believer, it also encourages us to seek healing (Jam 5:14; 2 Chron 16:12). The following guidelines are given in order to seek healing within the context of the church:

- Believers are to ask the pastors and elders of the church to pray for their healing (Jam 5:14). If sin is the cause for their sickness or disease, confession of those sins will be urged in order for healing to take place (Jam 5:15,16).
- Believers are also urged to seek appropriate medical care (1 Tim 5:23).
- Prayer lifted up on behalf of those afflicted needs to be offered up believing in God's power to heal (Mk 9:14-29).
- Biblical guidelines recommend that a believer approach the pastors or elders for healing (Jam 5:14). Outside speakers who are invited to exercise the gift of healing shall first consult the pastors and elders.
- Since we see a consistent pattern of Jesus' healing as an extension of His power and compassion and not as a methodology to draw crowds, we affirm that the practice of the gift should focus on the needs of an individual and not as a forum of public curiosity (Mk 1:43,44;8:22-26).
- All believers are encouraged to intercede for one another's burdens, including each other's physical ailments. Therefore we encourage an active practice of prayer for those who are experiencing sickness or disease (Gal 6:2; Jam 5:16-18).

### ***6. Specific Affirmations Concerning Being "Slain By/In the Spirit"***

The practice of being "slain by the Spirit" or "slain in the Spirit" occurs either during the laying on of hands, the waving of hands, or prayer and results in participants either falling to the ground or experiencing the inability to stand. None claim that this practice is the outworking of a spiritual gift, but rather the result of the Spirit's power working in the life of a believer.

### Biblical Considerations

The Bible is clear that the human soul, spirit and body can respond to and be affected by an encounter with God. However, the terms "slain in the Spirit" and "slain by the Spirit" are not used in Scripture. When a person's body is influenced by the presence of God, those experiences are varied and not limited to falling down. Furthermore, most of these experiences are described as encounters with the glory of God or of Jesus in

contrast to a filling or effect of the Spirit. Also, the biblical narrative mentions instances where a person can be thrown to the ground by Satanic influences.

Some passages to consider:

Numbers 24:4: The prophet hears God's words, sees a vision of the Almighty, falls prostrate and has his eyes opened.

Ezekiel 1:28-2:1: Ezekiel falls down in the presence of God and is raised by the Spirit.

Daniel 10:9-10 Daniel sees a vision of God, resulting in him falling into a deep sleep then standing up and trembling.

Matthew 17:1-12: The disciples fall face down before Jesus as the Father confirms His identity at the mount of transfiguration.

Mark 9:18 A boy who is demonically influenced is thrown to the ground.

Acts 9:3,4; 22:6,7; 26:14: Saul falls to the ground as he meets the risen Lord.

Revelation 1:17: John sees one like the Son of Man and falls at His feet.

#### Affirmations and Conclusions

- We affirm that our highest pursuit is God, His Kingdom and His presence.
- We affirm that encountering God has effects on the worshipper- on their minds, wills, souls and occasionally their bodies as well.
- We affirm that the Bible neither promotes nor prohibits the occurrence of believers falling down after an encounter with God. Falling down is not the only nor the normative reaction to encountering God. Therefore, a speaker shall not instruct that a person must fall as a reaction to God's presence. However, we do recognize that a person may fall as a result of an encounter with God and we will not judge those who display this reaction.
- We affirm that a public display of falling down does not necessarily indicate that a person is being filled with or influenced by the Holy Spirit.
- We affirm that Bread of Life Church does not use the term "slain by/in the Spirit" to describe an encounter with God which results in a person either falling down or finding themselves too weak to remain standing. These terms are popular but neither accurate nor biblical. Our pastors and elders assume responsibility to correct any teachings that encourage the pursuit or practice of being "slain by/in the Spirit" and to stop any practice that seems to be unhealthy or excessive.
- We affirm the necessity to exercise care in our public practices, knowing that Satan can produce spiritual counterfeits in this area. People have proven to be easily influenced by the power of suggestion in order to fall or produce some other evidence of God's presence in their lives.

## Conclusion

In issuing this statement as the spiritual leaders of Bread of Life Church, it is our intent to affirm the centrality of the spiritual gifts for building up the body of Christ in God's love (1 Cor. 12:7, 13:1-10, 14:1a). All believers are encouraged to desire eagerly

the spiritual gifts God has provided to them (1 Cor. 12:11, 31; 14:1a), to excel in those gifts that build up the church (1 Cor 14:12), and to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18b). The desire of our church is to adhere to Paul's instructions to the Thessalonians: "Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil"(1 Thes 5:19-22).