

Baptist Distinctives & Church Polity: Understanding Independent Baptist Beliefs | Lecture plus Notes

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[0 : 00] Good evening. Hi everyone. Welcome tonight. Thanks for coming out.! It's a bit of a cold night, but we've got some warm fellowship and some warm food.! We should all have some notes here so we can follow along.

And those online can access them shortly too. So maybe we'll just open in prayer. Lord, we thank you for our time together tonight as we come to study these things together.

Lord, that your Holy Spirit would lead us and guide us into all truth. Lord, that you'd be glorified, that you'd be high and lifted up and you'd try and fill the temple. Lord, that we can adore you and know more about you and how you want us to live and how you want us to serve, how you want us to worship. Lord, we praise you for all these things. In Jesus' name. Amen.

So tonight we're going to look at a subject of Baptist distinctives and church polity. So the word polity, like politicians, it's about governance, government, leadership, how the church should operate and run, how it should conduct itself.

And just on last Sunday, someone asked me the question, what is an independent Baptist? It's a good question, isn't it? What is an independent Baptist versus perhaps other kinds of Baptists?

[1 : 13] And of course, in South Australia, we've got the Baptist Union of South Australia. So what makes us a little bit different as independent Baptists from Baptists in general, like in America, they've got the Southern Baptists, there's all kinds of Baptist fellowships.

So as much as there's good churches in some of those churches, the Baptist Union churches, there's areas where we would differ quite significantly. For example, perhaps the kinds of music they would have, the kind of conduct they would have.

Some churches are quite ecumenical in their associations, which we wouldn't go along with.

Women pastors, women in leadership, that might be a conflict.

There's a lot of people in their church. Modern Bible versions, charismatic kind of conduct, lack of church discipline. There's basically Christian contemporary music, all kinds of compromise in theology as well.

And there's a bit of a shift going on. And it tends to be when these kind of associations, these Baptist Union type associations, as much as there's good people, there's good pastors, there's good churches amongst them, that it tends to be a downward trend.

[2 : 33] And of course, there's also this hierarchical thing too. So the autonomy of the local church is not held as fast as we would hold it. So we'll unpack some of that as we go along.

Tonight then, church policy. You can follow along with the notes there. And again, for people online, they can download the notes and follow along as we cover things together.

Church policy, it means the governance, the government, the governing structure, the system of authority within the church, how the decisions are made, who leads, how leadership is organised and exercised.

Now, we're calling it tonight Baptist Distinctives, Baptist Church Policy. When we use the word Baptist, this term Baptist, we're not using it in a sectarian sense or like a denominational sense. When we use the word Baptist, what we really mean is New Testament truth. So New Testament position, the term Baptist distinctives are New Testament distinctives. So we're not using the word Baptist in the sense of a denominational term or a sectarian term, but Baptist in the sense that it's New Testament truth.

[3 : 42] It's a New Testament position. When we talk about Baptist distinctives, we're talking about New Testament distinctives. And one important truth about Baptists are that, as we would hold it, as we would understand it, that Baptists are not a product of the Reformation.

Baptists are before the Reformation. Faithful Bible-believing churches did not come out of Catholicism, but preceded Catholicism by hundreds of years.

Baptists predate Protestants. So in a technical way, we're not Protestants, because Baptists have always been. This model has continued ever since the early church days.

So faithful Bible believers have followed New Testament practices, such as holding to salvation by grace through faith, the essential doctrinal teachings that we would hold, the authority of Scripture, congregational government, and obeying Christ's commission, following his ordinances.

We've been doing that since the very beginning. Here's a quote here. We have never been connected to Roman Catholicism, except when we were chained to their stakes, as they gathered sticks for our burning.

[4 : 54] And you think about the early church, the remnant church, the faithful church down through history, sometimes only a remnant, only a small in number, but they were faithful, and though they were imprisoned, tortured, and slain by the thousands, they've not swerved from really New Testament faith and doctrine and adherence.

Onto the section there, introduction then, there's this term, independent, fundamentalist, Baptist church. We would call ourselves that kind of church. So just to understand what that term means, it means a local autonomous congregation of baptised believers committed to biblical principles, adherence to the Bible, generally the King James Bible, and a fundamentalist stand against theological liberalism, ecumenism, and worldly practices.

This term, independent, it means really our emphasis of freedom from denominational hierarchies. We're not under some kind of denominational hierarchy where we're reporting to headquarters or as some would have, archbishops and cardinals and the Pope and such, or that kind of hierarchy. It's foreign to the New Testament. And rather, we allow each church to govern itself under the headship of Christ. Now, just to help us along, I've got the Bible references here.

I'll refer to them just in passing, just so we'll keep them in mind because they're not in your notes as such. But to follow along here, the headship of Christ, as it reads in Colossians 1.8, who is the head of the church?

[6 : 33] He, Christ, is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the preeminence. So when people ask, well, who's the head of the church?

It's not me as the pastor, it's Christ. It's not the Pope in Rome. It's not some superintendent of the denomination in HQ.

It's Christ as the head of the church, the head of the body. And we're under his headship. The next term, fundamentalist. Of course, in modern days, the term fundamentalist, people use it in a disparaging way.

We think of fundamentalists and other religions that have got really bad things going on. But fundamentalists, as we would use the term, it refers to our militant commitment.

So we're holding steady and fast to contending for the faith, to core biblical doctrines, like biblical inerrancy, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the atonement, the bodily resurrection, and the literal return of Christ.

[7 : 37] So we're fundamentalists in that we believe the fundamentals, the fundamentals of the faith. And then we're Baptist in that we align with that historical tradition. It's not that we're emphasising Baptist as some kind of denominational name, but more that we are in accord with that, which is historical Bible-based Christianity that emphasises believers' baptism by immersion, congregational governance, and the priesthood of all believers.

These are things we'll talk about. And so independent fundamentalist Baptist churches, they're characterised by the rejection of modern theological trends, charismatic practices, Calvinist doctrines, maintaining a non-ecumenical separationist stance from worldliness and compromised religious movements.

So you've got this scripture here, 2 Corinthians 6, is the separationist stand that we take. Based on this scripture, be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers? For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?

What communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with the idols? For ye are the temple of the living God, as God has said, So God instructs us there, come out from among them, be ye separate.

That's a good thing. There's a good biblical separation. It's not a separation that is an extreme reaction to things, but it's a biblical thing.

[9 : 21] When things are biblically out of whack, we don't want to be associated with that. That is compromising. Now some would mock a church like ours.

I know I've had one man who I was talking to about our church, and he said, Oh, you're one of those. Come out from among them and be ye separate. Kind of snarling and smirking at me, thinking that's something that's a bad thing.

But there is a sense where we do come out from among that which is not of God, that which is not in accord with the Bible. And coming out from those things that are really out of accord with Scripture is a good thing.

It's a biblical thing. It's a rightful thing. And so our kind of churches, God helping us, we prioritise preaching, expository preaching, traditional worship, fervent evangelism, and upholding biblical truth in a world of compromise.

So what is a Baptist? We can look at this acrostic here. This helps us understand really the key things that we stand for as Bible-believing Baptists.

[10 : 30] And so you use this acrostic, B-A-P-T-I-S-T-S. And so we'll go through each one of these things shortly, one by one, and unpack what they mean.

These Baptist distinctives are foundational principles. They're derived from Scripture and often summarised in this acrostic. So the first one is biblical authority, so sola scriptura.

In other words, the Scripture alone. And for us, the Bible, and specifically would uphold the King James Bible as the Word of God, as the soul-inspired, inerrant, and sufficient authority for all matters of faith and practice.

So 2 Timothy 3.16, all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, in other words, complete, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

And another one, Psalm 12, talks about the preservation of God's Word. The words of the Lord are pure words as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever.

[11 : 41] So our church, as well as largely independent Baptist churches, although there are, there's independent Baptist churches and there's independent Baptist churches, there's quite a scope and quite a continuum of them.

Some are not so faithful in some things, but speaking for our church, we would uphold the King James Bible as the preserved Word of God in English based on the Textus Receptus, the received text.

So the faithful text, and also it's superior to modern translations because the faithful translation rather than those that would rely on the critical text, so the other ones. And really all doctrine, practice and decisions are judged against scripture, not tradition or human opinion.

So biblical authority, it's very strong. Rejecting extra biblical sources like creeds, confessions or charismatic revelations. You go to some churches and it's what the latest revelation is that the preacher might have had some visitation or some feeling that he has and different bandwagons and fads.

But no, we want to stick to the tried and true Word of God. So our sermons, our policies, our conduct, it's what does the Bible say? That should dictate it.

[12 : 59] Not some external authority too, but the scripture. So it's biblical authority. The A in Baptist is the autonomy and independence of the local church.

Every church is as a local church self-governing, answerable only to Christ as its head, not to some Pope or some HQ, some superintendent.

I know there's different kinds of models of churches, but the biblical model really is for a local New Testament church and as Paul addresses the Ephesian elders here in Acts 20, 28, take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made your overseers to feed the church of God which hath purchased with his own blood.

So he's talking to local elders, overseers, bishops, feed the church as shepherds, feed the church, the local church. So over the page there, our stand is that there's no denominational hierarchy, convention or synod, some have got these different terms that exercise control.

We're not ruled by fellowships, boards, headquarters or associations. There's no overarching organisational structure that dictates policy or doctrine. But individual churches make their own stand, decisions on membership, discipline, finances, mission.

[14 : 27] It's made locally by the local body, the local church body, the local congregation. So we've got that autonomy, it preserves doctrinal unity and it resists ecumenical pressures.

And the church calls its own pastor, manages finances, determines its own mission and there's no external interference. So this principle of the autonomy, in other words, self-governing, the independence of the local church.

The P in Baptist stands for priesthood of all believers. And we've covered that in a recent lesson that every believer has direct access to God through Christ without human mediators.

There's no going to a confessional. We go straight to God through our mediator, the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. And this idea of the priesthood of all believers as we read in recent lessons too, that we are as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, offering up spiritual sacrifices.

It says, you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. These are the principles here that there's no hierarchical hierarchy, there's no priests or bishops or in that sense of different layers or levels, that we're all even, all as believers, we're all even, equal.

[15 : 49] Believers are encouraged to study the Bible, to pray, to serve God personally, whilst there is that pastoral leadership role. But members can develop personal relationships with God through the Bible, study, through prayer and guided by the pastoral council, so the priesthood of all believers.

We've all got that access, each one of us individually, to go straight to our Lord in prayer and got our own stand before him. It's not like the some clergy class as we talked about in that lesson. Next one, the T, first T, is two ordinances. So Baptists recognise only two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Believers' baptism, importantly, because down through church history there's been churches that have erred on this, that they've had paedobaptism, in other words, baptism of infants, so-called, like christening, like the sprinkling of infants, babies being christened or, as they would think of it, baptised, but that's not biblical baptism.

So biblical baptism, we know, is believer's baptism. As you see, evidenced in Acts 8 when Philip spoke to the eunuch and they came to certain water and the eunuch said, See, here is water.

[17 : 07] What doth hinder me to be baptised? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

And he commanded the chariot to stand still. They went both down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptised him. So they went down both into the water. So they actually went into the water, down into the water.

It wasn't some sprinkling. And he was an adult who had expressed his testimony. He was a believer. So believer's baptism. And it's our practice to exercise baptism as a public testimony. And members commit to holy living and accountability. And there's that truth of the baptism. All right? So we reject infant baptism and sprinkling.

And I like this quote, Baptism is not essential to salvation. Rather, salvation is essential to baptism. You know, some people, they make light of baptism. They think, Oh, I'll get baptised.

[18 : 11] Well, and then they think they're saved because they got baptised. But no, you've got to get saved and then you get baptised. So the baptism is a witness of your salvation.

So some get it round the wrong way which is really quite an error because then they're trusting in the baptism. You can get baptised and the only thing that's going to happen to you is you're going to get wet.

You know, it's just H₂O. The baptism doesn't save you. It's Christ, that confession of Christ as your saviour saves you. We're buried with him by baptism.

It's got that picture of we're buried as the candidate goes down into the water. They're buried, they're submerged, they're immersed. And baptism, literally the word baptised means to dip or immerse.

So baptised, we're buried with him in the water as it were and we're raised to newness of life. It's that picture of it in baptism. And of course the Lord's Supper then as well is the other ordinance that we exercise as a church as we give thanks, as we take the bread and the cup in remembrance of

our Lord.

[19 : 18] And again, the truth about this ordinance is it's not like the Catholic Mass that's got some sacramental value or some special change that happens to the bread and the cup.

But no, it's a symbol, it's a picture, it's a testimony. It's not got some special action from it. It's essentially a remembrance of our Lord.

Two ordinances. There you go. Next one, the I in Baptist is individual soul liberty. So this is the concept that every believer has got a freedom of conscience.

The concept of freedom of conscience, this soul liberty, that every believer is free to be led by the Lord and accountable individually. And we see that, for example, in a couple of verses here, this principle of individual soul liberty, that every one of us is accountable to God individually.

So Romans 14, 5, one man esteemeth one day above another, another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. And then the principle that every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

[20 : 36] Colossians 2, 16 says similarly, let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink or in respect of a holy day or of the new moon or of the Sabbath days. This principle of judging people about what they might determine with their eating or drinking, there's things there that basically it's saying there that we've got a freedom of conscience about things like that.

and Acts 17, 11 tells us the principle that the Bereans there, they were more noble, they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. So they made up their own mind based on the scripture, based on their ideally correctly understanding and interpreting the scripture for themselves. And that's the same for all of us here today too, that we've all got to make our own mind up on things and of course there's peripheral issues that we will differ with each other about but we'll all answer to God for the way that we make our mind up on things.

And of course in times past there was some real heaviness that was exerted when religion was part of the government, there's ways where there were some extreme things that were done in the name of Christ to coerce people and persecute people and punish people for their beliefs.

And there's this principle really that the state should not interfere in matters of personal faith or enforce religious conformity. You know in some in the dark ages, in Calvin's day, in the religious acts of the inquisition and such that there was really heavy things that were done to make people conform.

[22 : 20] But no, the Bible tells us that we've got individual soul liberty. And really salvation cannot be coerced, you can't force someone to believe. We must come to that faith ourselves to study the scriptures for ourselves.

So there's a liberty there but this liberty, it does not excuse sin or false doctrine. We're all accountable to biblical truth. So there's some things that are non-negotiables but there are those peripheral things.

There's some matters that well we can come to our own mind and we may not necessarily see eye to eye on some things. And of course we take this truth in the sense that we're evangelising based on encouraging people to engage with the word of God, to come to faith, to engage with the scripture personally.

Next one there is that we believe in a saved church membership. So a saved baptised church membership. In other words, we believe as a church that membership is restricted to those who are saved and baptised by immersion.

You can see the scriptures there in Acts 2 where it tells how they gladly received his word. Peter was preaching, they received the gospel, they were baptised and the same day they were added unto them about 3,000 souls and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayer.

[23 : 39] So the people were added to the church, they heard the gospel, they trusted Christ, they were baptised, they were added to the church. That principle of the saved membership.

Now you get some churches where, oh, I want to be a member and they just sign their name on a roll but there's no questioning of whether do you actually believe Christ as your saviour, have you been born again and, you know, have you followed Christ in baptism.

So there's that sense where membership is meant to be for those who are definitely saved people who are walking with Christ, have been baptised as a witness of their faith and then they want to

commit to holy living and church accountability.

You see, for example, in 1 Corinthians 5 there's that truth of church discipline. There's a situation in 1 Corinthians 5 where a man took his father's wife and there was a judgement there upon him, the shameful thing, and there's a need to enact rightful church discipline where there's something that's wrong, something that's shameful or immoral that people are called to account and the church has that purity of right conduct and such a person is warned and urged to repent and get right with God about a sin issue like that, that the church should maintain its purity and likewise in Matthew 18 there's a process there where there's a fault that there's an issue going on that the church purity should be guarded and people need to be called to account and so that's the truth about this membership that involves this active participation that we've got an agreement and accountability that we're answerable to each other, a saved baptised church membership.

The next one, the next one in the acronym Baptist, the next T is two officers so as Baptists we believe there's two officers, two biblical officers and they are pastor and deacon and so pastor you could also use the like term or the same office is also called elder or bishop, pastor and then you've got deacon, two different things so it's talked about for example this is not the whole quote there but in 1 Timothy 3 it tells how this is a true saying if a man desire the office of a bishop so the office it's like a position the office of a bishop he desireth the good work the bishop there must be blameless and there's a whole other load of requirements there for if a man know not how to rule his own house how shall he take care of the church of God likewise then it goes on about deacons the deacons must be grave in other words solemn, serious for they have used the office again this term this status or this position of the office of a deacon if they've used the office of a deacon well they purchase to themselves a good degree now of course there's different views about some of these things about church leadership and I've had some conversations with someone of late that had the idea of there's multiple elders we're not against having multiple elders but there is a principle here where you can see somewhat interpret for example 1 Timothy 3 it's interesting to note that it's singular a bishop and then it's plural deacons so you could extrapolate from this you could perhaps understand this to mean yeah there's one elder who's the one who rules his own his singular his own house well and then you've got the deacons plural that there's a multiplicity of deacons [27 : 28] I'm not saying that necessarily multiple elders is wrong I'm just saying that you can see the principle here that you could understand and even when there's multiple elders there's really that really logical concept that really someone should be the ultimate one who's I suppose got that authority that takes the charge in a sense that takes care takes care of the church of God so just back to the notes as a church we would understand a single pastor called by God and affirmed by the congregation leads as the primary preacher and overseer a servant leader called to preach shepherd and lead deacons serve practical needs so they can be more of a helper in benevolence like caring for situations of people the finances under the pastor's leadership so as an example of that you've got in act six the requirements they're looking out among you seven men of honest report full of the holy ghost and wisdom whom we may appoint over this business so there was a situation where there was some widows who had been neglected they were being overlooked in the hustle and bustle and they wanted to make sure that people were getting cared about cared for there and so that deacons were appointed as these kind of servants there

Paul talks about ordaining elders and that they should set things in order so there's an appointment of elders appointment of deacons and it's interesting when you look at the scriptures this is a bit of an argument for a single pastor or the main pastor the senior pastor if you like in that in revelation the lord evaluated the seven churches in asia minor and he addressed the one messenger in each church so the angel at the church of laodicea the angel at the church of ephesus basically he held one messenger accountable in other words one senior pastor you could understand it that there was one person that was addressed that had that accountability that was held accountable and then in many new testament passages as well it mentions one pastor at a given location as if they're in charge so timothy at ephesus james at jerusalem epaphras at colossi epaphroditus at philippi titus at crete and you could understand really it's makes sense that churches led by one pastor have a greater cohesion multi-leader models can lead to conflict and fragmented leadership now all that said i'm very happy to have some extra elders in our church and there's times past where we have had extra elders serving others that worked as an assistant and associate pastor so i'm not against that but this is just to counter those that have got the view and you know some have said this to me oh we should have multiple elders well i can see pros and cons with that and i can

see scripture that actually says well there's one elder in these locations so it's not a hard and fast thing i just want to make the point we're not against multiple elders but having one pastor the bible is not against that either it's just helpful to have that in understanding back to the acronym baptist the last one the last word is separation separation so separation of church and state and this truth that the church and the government are distinct we've got separate roles so our lord was talking about the the truth of giving here and he and he talks about coins and and and he used the example of a coin that had caesar's face on it and he says render therefore unto caesar the things which are caesar's and unto god the things that are god's so there's a distinction between what's of the government and what's of god whereas in time past you think back through history there were some that where they had like a religious state and when the the queen or the king changed from catholic to protestant you know there was all kinds of persecution and destruction and where the government was tied in with the church and you've even got that still i guess in the uk where the king is the head of the church of england whereas really the bible doesn't have that kind of mishmash of church and state so the church would be free from government control you see that in communist countries of course where christianity is illegal or they try to establish a state religion like in north korea they virtually worship the dictator over there so there's this sense where really the bible truth is there's not this mixture of church and state they're separate believers ought to obey civil authorities where the laws don't contradict the scripture for example romans 13 1 tells us how that every soul be subject unto the higher powers for there is no power but of god but the powers that be are ordained of god and it talks about how worldly government is kind of like a servant it's meant to be ministering helping and there's the truth that we as bible believers we should obey the law basically but then there's the other truth acts five where peter says we ought to obey god rather than men so if there's any conflict with what the law says we go with what the word of god says what god says whether it's a contradiction or a conflict there's this truth of this separation and it's also a separation that's moral and doctrinal so we separate from error worldliness and false religion and there's this truth of separation and personal holiness so we understand that our daily living should reflect the holiness of our god for example 2 corinthians 6 14 as we read before that that there's not this communion of light with darkness we should have righteousness and 1 peter 1 16 be holy for i am holy there's that personal separation as well we ought to be a separated people that we should be distinct and godly and then there's ecclesiastical separation so in the sense of separating from other churches so a bible believing church cannot cooperate with any groups churches or organizations that deny the fundamentals of the faith so this is you know sometimes very clear in in some well in most places there's ministers fraternal where all kinds of different birds of different feathers get together from all kinds of churches and you could be amongst you know catholic seventh day adventists all kinds of pastors might get together as a church we can't join in there because it's obviously a compromise we can't cooperate with groups or churches that deny the fundamentals of the faith so that's the end of that section moving on to this concept of baptist church polity in other words governance the governance of the church and independent baptist churches have a congregational polity like a congregational kind of governance with a single pastor leadership and emphasizing biblical authority and local autonomy so what does that look like it's where the congregation has got this say so this governance to make key decisions under pastoral leadership for example you see in act 6 when they chose these seven men these deacons to go and assist that they brought it to the church and the church came to a mind on it and it's likewise in in the situation of of the discipline issue of 1 corinthians 5 there's this truth where every believer every member of the church can have a say and they can vote on major issues for example such as calling a pastor approving budgets disciplining members or accepting new members and the pastor provides spiritual guidance but the congregation has a voice so that could be where we can have discussions about matters guided by scripture and we can come to those mind on things another truth there is the single pastor leadership as we've really already covered where the pastor is the primary teacher preacher overseer as a servant leader but not a dictator so it doesn't mean that that i'm overlording it's it's wrong for the pastor to be an overlording dictator it's really to be a shepherd to be a support to you to guide you and lead you and and counsel you faithfully and help you to support you and then you've got the role of deacons there as well that deacons are the servants assisting the pastor with practical needs spiritually mature but they don't share pastoral authority so they support the pastor and the smooth operation of the church and then again this issue of church discipline the church corrects unrepentant sin to restore believers to maintain the purity of the church again the principle of Matthew 18 of a process there and also of the 1 Corinthians 5 issue

this sense of discipline and like in Galatians it talks about the object of discipline is ideally to restore people so when someone's in sin or they've gone off on some false teaching that our object as a church body is to lovingly discipline them to guide them to be ideally restorative to help them to get back into fellowship to lovingly correct and nurture them and bring them back to correct them lovingly back into truth thank God it's a rare thing discipline but it's important that we take those stands when situations arise and we bring people back to fellowship and back to living true to the Lord and then this truth of church membership as we talked about before as well that there's a sense where membership is something important it's special we're showing our commitment that we belong that we're part of the family and giving that kind of commitment to actively participate and we talked about there also our stand for the King James it's just a one of the practical positions we hold that we do believe there is a Bible that we can trust that is faithful and sure and then over the page salvation is by grace through faith this is a really important doctrine of course too as we consider the truth of salvation it's one of the fundamentals there's some churches where they don't preach the gospel they don't explain that salvation is by grace through faith or they get mixed up on some things of course you know the Calvinist slant where they miss some of this stuff and but we got the assurance that we've got an eternal secure salvation as well that we're in his hand no man can pluck us out of Christ's hand out of the father's hand as a church we emphasize a soteriology in other words a theology about salvation that God's got a universal love God so loved the world scriptures like that that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life so this soteriology is the idea that God loves the world and he's given his only son he's given this genuine offer of salvation to all and it comes from his grace and he invites a free response from every individual it highlights God's grace and invites every person to respond in faith so as much as we know of course God is sovereign but man is responsible this human responsibility so there's the both sides of the coin of course the many scriptures it talks about whosoever shall who so shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved whosoever will let him come that free will of man and as it says in Joshua choose you this day him you will serve

God gives us a genuine choice and 2 Peter 3 that God is not willing that any should perish God's got the desire for all to be saved and so it's having that understanding of that soteriology that doctrine of salvation next section is that we're non-ecumenical and separationist so we don't cooperate or compromise on biblical truth whether it's liberal churches ecumenical movements or false religions you know there's such a wishy-washiness now isn't there where there's a lack of separation ecumenism is a really dangerous thing where anything goes and you just kind of compromise you turn a blind eye to all the doctrine that's wrong and then you've got the next section there that we are non-charismatic as well but we understand that the sign gifts so tongues prophecy healing that that finished with the apostolic era as 1 corinthians 13 says that whether there be tongues they shall cease and history tells us they did cease so we would understand that the charismatic pentecostal movement is astray from the bible and that worship needs to be orderly biblical and not all of this emotional hoo-ha and this focus on miracles so-called another area that independent baptists stand strong on is our music program as well so we want to stand for music that's reverent that's doctrinally sound and distinct from worldly styles you see scriptures like these two here in ephesians 5 colossians 3 that we're speaking to ourselves in psalms hymns and spiritual songs singing and making melody in our heart to the lord that the word of christ dwells in us richly in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs so we want those songs that are honoring to our lord they're biblical they're full of doctrine and truth not as in some quarters where it's all very fleshly superficial and really hollow and some of it's quite more centered on the sensualism and the entertainment factor whereas we know that we should let all things be done decently and in order so our music needs to be reverent and holy christ uplifting and true to the scriptures another truth about the independent baptist churches is we hold to a literal interpretation of scripture practical obedience we emphasize salvation holiness and christ's return next one worship and ministry practices we believe in preaching the word as it says there to samothy 4 2 that the preaching the word of god is central the hymns the worship is orderly the ordinances are true the lord's supper and baptism and of course evangelism as well that we preach in the gospel mark 16 15 we've got an emphasis on soul winning personal evangelism and we support missionaries as well we know there's lots of of our sister churches our like-minded churches that we support missionaries from all across the nation going all over the world uh to take the gospel and so we want to support those kind of missionaries that are from like-minded churches

that have got the same kind of convictions but not through like denominational boards more about individual autonomous churches like ours that are sending out people to the mission field that will support those missionary activities next one you've got christian living there as well and i'm flipping through some of this it's some of it's uh kind of similar to what we've already covered as it tells us there that we want to honor holiness amongst ourselves

[44 : 24] that we call to that manner of conversation that manner of conduct members living godly then we've got the next one their modesty that our behavior reflects biblical standards so women adorning themselves in modest apparel that sense of godly appearance and for men and women too that we uh take take note of that and then that we uphold families as well biblical roles for husbands wives and children and then financial stewardship as well it says every man according as he purposeth in his heart so let him give not grudgingly or of necessity for god love with a cheerful giver so we believe in that giving freely um that we've got a debtorship to the whole world a trusteeship in the gospel a binding stewardship and therefore we want to honor and serve our lord with our time talents our treasures everything's been entrusted for our use to use for the glory of god and helping others and so there's this principle biblical principles there that we should contribute of our means cheerfully regularly systematically proportionately and liberally as as a church we conduct lots of services as listed there and different outreaches different ministries we support christian education homeschooling next section there contemporary issues and applications we think about the standards that we want to set as a church that we want godly standards we want to have biblical standards so such as about dress about entertainment alcohol tobacco gambling that all of the social activities of our lives would reflect biblical holiness so the scriptures there we could look to romans 12 that we should be living sacrifices not conformed to this world but transformed by the renewing of our mind that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of god so that sense where the will of god is what matters what's acceptable unto god and then that we should avoid the world love not the world neither the things that are in the world think of the world and its ways the worldliness in some churches there's a lot of worldliness people don't seem to care about about living godly and worldliness damages the testimony of the church when we're living worldly and we all ought to take note of that how can i live to honor and please my lord to do the will of god rather than to follow the ways of the world and again that scripture that we talked about to touch not the unclean thing then think as a church we honor the family gender roles that men lead spiritually in the home and the church and women serve in complementary roles so 172 is a scripture that is neglected really in a lot of churches where it says but i suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man but to be in silence of course there's opportunities for women to serve but not in a teaching leading role and but some churches miss that altogether so it's another reason why for example like i said before that we couldn't really line up with the baptist union churches where there's women pastors and and another thing about baptist churches like ours as we want to see churches planted that the kingdom of god can be extended that we can see other churches planted like our church last section there common misconceptions some people think that independent baptist churches are anti-missionary because they don't have some denominational board but no you can see we have lots of missionaries that we do support we support independent baptist missionaries some people would claim that a church like ours is cult-like

but of course we god helping us we endeavor to be biblical that we're protestant evangelical and historic not cultic so we and the pastor is accountable so if i start to get off on some false doctrine then the congregation can call me to account so it's certainly not cult-like some would um criticize our churches as anti-cooperation now there might be some churches that are a bit isolationist in a in a extreme way but for churches like ours there's lots of like-minded churches just like ours and of course we get together with other independent baptist churches around adelaide as a church we get together and as ministers we get together to talk to each other and fellowship and encourage one another so we're all for that fellowship with like-minded churches but not with unscriptural alliances and then some would criticize in our kind of church as being anti-denominational we're just rejecting those unbiblical denominations where obviously there's doctrinal errors but we do respect others from other churches we're not necessarily attacking other churches just because they might have something different from us but there's just a limit to that cooperation that connection and just lastly there the the the vision the vision for the independent baptist kind of churches what are we committed to to biblical fidelity so keeping faithful to the scriptures to doctrinal purity the separated

living we uphold the word of god the king james especially as the faithful word that we practice congregational governance and we reject compromise with theological liberalism we reject ecumenism and charismatic practices and we stand against worldly trends and what's our mission is to preach the gospel as to disciple believers to plant churches and to be a really a beacon of truth in a compromising world we see jude 1 it reads there that we should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints so we want to be contending that rightful kind of contention which is contending for the truth and as a church we want to be marked by a love for christ and the lost that it's the love of the lord that drives us isn't it the love of christ constrains us that really what we do is motivated by a love for our lord and to reach the lost to glorify our lord and proclaim the gospel to to our world and discipling believers until he comes so we think about all of these things there's a bit of a chart there just at the bottom that these distinctives that we have they're not onerous things or or mean things but it's biblically founded so we want to honor our lord to fulfill the great commission to prepare for his returning and that ideally we'll have that spiritual vitality amongst us that fervor for the gospel so you see there the different features of different kinds of churches and so church governance our model is congregational so the congregation every member has got a voice there's that uh truth of that it's not a denominational governance or it's not um a hierarchical kind of structure there's a local congregation the view of scripture we believe that we have got an inerrant word of god we've got the bible we can stand firm on it there's no deviation on the bible the view of salvation is by grace through faith it's that that we have got the simple gospel the view of the gifts that we would understand that the sign gifts have ceased so tongues prophecy and miraculous healing we still believe that god does heal but we're not believing the sign gifts you know the miraculous gifts that are more the the foundational gifts of the early church that the church has now been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets and the tongues is no longer required or relevant the church has got autonomy as well so we're not beholden to some other church or some other pope or or headquarters or hierarchy that every church is self-governing that we've got a separation as far as we try to be biblical we try to be strong to keep true to not compromise with ecumenism our music is traditional it's biblical it's bible centered it's strongly time-honored hymns of the faith that's not to say we can't have some modern songs but but it's not going to be out of kilter with the scriptures they're going to be strong strongly biblical not just some superficial or entertainment based kind of music and then evangelism we're very much gospel center that's a high priority we stand for the gospel for soul winning reaching out to our world reaching out to other nations as well with missions so hopefully that gives you a good picture tonight of what is an independent baptist church hopefully i've given you a good kind of summary of as i see it some of the main things we stand for and we can take note of that there's always room for improvement we we're not saying that we're the perfect church we're not saying that our model or our way of doing everything is necessarily perfect and we can't improve on it and certainly as a local church we've always got areas that we could do better so i'm not by any means blowing our own trumpet and saying we've got the perfect church model but god helping us as we led by the scriptures as ideally we we see the word of god reveals things to us as to teachings and truth and our practices that will be firmly biblical that's what matters let's just pray shall we well we thank you tonight for everyone that's here lord for the truth of your church that you're building your church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it we see down through history the faithful believers that met together in simple gatherings under some pastoral leading lord through the bible authority that they held to lord the practice of baptism and the lord's supper the commitment to evangelism and faithfulness lord we thank you for that kind of heritage that kind of legacy that we're still part of that lord that we're walking in the tread of those that have gone to the stake that have taken persecution and suffering as they've held steady for your truth they've contended earnestly for the faith lord we're still in that number of your people lord we thank you for the truth that we can be such a faithful church lord help us we know we don't want to get prideful about it but that you'll help us and lead us spiritually scripturally lord to follow your word and to adhere to it faithfully to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints we thank you for it lord for the soul-saving gospel that we can declare it to our world and lord bless each one help us lord to be stronger firmer more faithful in these truths that we can serve you wisely until you come again lord as we'll be prepared for your coming in jesus name we pray amen