

Is Oakwood an 'Evangelical Church'?

Oakwood Christian Church Position Paper

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Oakwood Christian Church considers itself an Evangelical church. By that, we mean we align ourselves with other Bible-believing Christians or "evangelicals." An evangelical is generally considered to be a person who believes the Bible to be the true Word of God and the foundation for Christianity.

Several attempts have been made to list the fundamental or essential beliefs of evangelicalism. Though the lists may differ slightly, evangelicals are largely in agreement, and the nine truths listed below, though sometimes worded differently or in a different order, are uniformly agreed to be necessary doctrines of a "Bible-believing" church because of the clarity of Scripture on these issues and the intertwined nature of each doctrine with the others. For example, if you believe the first doctrine - that the Bible is the inspired and inerrant Word of God - then consistency will demand that you accept the other eight as true because of what the Bible claims.

Some will attempt to claim we are not an evangelical church because we do not agree with other evangelicals on every doctrine. But within evangelicalism there are many factions and denominations, each of which have their strong opinions and beliefs about matters that lie outside of these nine essential doctrines. The nine truths, however, are common denominators among us all; the only necessary qualification for rightly deserving the term "evangelical" is adherence to these nine doctrines.

The question often asked, then, is whether evangelicals (or any of the factions among us) consider themselves the "true Christians." Though we disagree strongly with other evangelicals on matters that lie outside these nine doctrines, and we consider some of those matters of grave importance, we view other evangelical churches as existing within the larger umbrella of "Christianity." Because evangelicals agree that the Bible is God's Word and our final source of authority, it is our hope that as we grow in our knowledge and understanding of God's Word, we will grow closer to the unity Christ intended for his Body of believers. However, if a church rejects one or more of the nine essential teachings, it is doubtful that they will be able to hold to the rest because of the intertwined nature of the teachings. Such a group would not therefore be considered evangelical, and we would question whether such a group could genuinely consider themselves "Christian."

The nine essential teachings of an evangelical church are as follows:

- The infallibility of Scripture. We believe the Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit and written by the hand of men. The claims found in Scripture are absolutely true; therefore, to reject any portion of that truth is tantamount to rejecting the whole truth.
- The historical creation of man. Man did not accidentally evolve, but was created specifically by God and made in his image.
- The sinful nature of humanity. While evolution teaches that man is constantly improving, the Bible teaches that humanity is denigrating. Men and women were created

by God in perfection and given the opportunity to choose good or evil. Since the fall of man, in which Adam and Eve chose to turn from God, every human being has been born with a predisposition to sin. Man chooses to disobey God, and is thus separated from him.

- The absolute deity of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the unique Son of God, and one of three essential parts of the Trinity. As God, Jesus is perfect and without sin.
- The virgin birth of Jesus Christ. The prophet Isaiah prophesied Jesus' miraculous birth 600 years before it occurred, and the angel Gabriel announced his arrival to Mary. Evangelicals accept that if God created the earth, he will have no problem impregnating a virgin with the Savior of the world.
- The substitutionary death of Jesus Christ. Jesus' death on the cross was able to atone for the sins of the world because he is God. He was sinless on earth and took the punishment of guilty sinners upon himself so that repentant believers might be forgiven.
- The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus' resurrection was both a result of his deity and a proof of his deity. Only God could raise himself from the dead. Jesus' resurrection from the dead proves that he can keep his promise of a resurrection of all the dead when he returns.
- The return of Jesus Christ. Upon his return, Jesus will bring with him the souls of believers who have died. Those believers who return with him will then receive a renewed and resurrected body. The believers who are alive on earth when he returns will ascend into heaven with Christ and their fellow believers.
- The resurrection and assignment of all people to heaven or hell. This is commonly called "Judgment Day." The evangelical church accepts literally the Bible's warning of a place of eternal punishment or "hell" for the unrepentant who reject the offer of salvation given by Jesus Christ. On the other hand, heaven is the eternal reward for those who accept the atoning, substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on their behalf. Thus, the hope of every evangelical Christian is that upon death, he or she will be with God and his or her loved ones in heaven.