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Statement of Personal Faith

William (Bill) G. Emmerling, Jr., November 2014

With my background and education in 'The Restoration Movement,' I am somewhat resistant to formulating a statement of faith, because such statements have been used in the past to judge/determine if a person is a Christian, a disciple of Jesus. However, like the founders of 'The Restoration Movement,' I believe, if used rightly, a statement of faith can be helpful in stating just what it is that we believe. In fact, every movement/church requires a statement of faith, whether stated or not, about which to affirm what is believed by that local body. Ultimately, my 'statement' of faith is determined by the Scriptures as whole, not the traditions of men.

Below is a synopsis of my personal statement of faith, however, I hold the '[Baptist Faith and Message 2000](#)' to be a more detail statement which I am willing to affirm as I understand it. Following my personal synopsis is a testimony of my walk with the Lord.

My Belief (Doctrinal)

My understanding of the Gospel in a nutshell:

1. God created all that is and it was good. Scripture seems to clearly indicate that this was done in a standard one week period. If not understood this way, there are serious implications regarding scripture from beginning to end, including the very words of Jesus (example—Matt 19:4-6).
(We should accept God's word as it is, or reject it entirely and move-on if it not true.
I hold that it is true, and therefore accept it as it is written.)
(Genesis 1-2)
2. Man (plural-male & female) sinned. God clearly holds Adam accountable for the sin of both, as well as each individually. Adam was present and rejected his responsibility to lead, allowing Eve to eat and then listened to her rather than obeying God's Word.
Both doubted God's word and acted against it.
Through the sin of Adam and Eve, we have all become sinners by nature and deed.
(Genesis 3)
3. Sin is rebellion against God, worthy of infinite punishment as it is an offense against an infinite God.
4. Only an infinite sacrifice is worthy of taking receiving the wrath of God for our sin.

5. Jesus is that sacrifice. Jesus as the Son is God and as God he is Lord of the entire Universe, infinite and sufficient to accept God's wrath for sin.
6. Jesus was raised from the dead as proof of his worthiness as our sacrifice.
7. Jesus was raised from the dead as evidence for our hope of our eternal salvation and life.
8. Our baptism by immersion is a sign of our acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior. Through it we identify with His Death, Burial and RESURRECTION. I believe baptism to be a necessary and essential part of our salvation experience, however, our regeneration as believers is the work done by Christ on the cross and the Holy Spirit in our lives.
9. Following His Ascension, Jesus sent His Holy Spirit to comfort, empower and guide those who are His disciples.
10. Jesus has returned to the Father, yet is returning for His Bride the Church, when he comes to bring all things to an end and make all things right, all things new.

The good news, the gospel is that:

"... but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." (Rom 5:8-11 ESV)

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MY WALK WITH MY LORD

My journey with Jesus the Messiah started in early childhood, and has continued to grow as he has shared with me the joy of knowing and serving him. What follows is my testimony and doctrine.

Profession

My parents were of a mixed, nominal background of faith. Mom was raised Baptist, and I believe longed to have the man in her life lead her spiritually. Dad was raised Presbyterian and I understand he was told that as he was baptized as a child he no longer had to worry. My siblings and I were often dropped off on Sunday mornings at a church which was convenient or in which we were nominally involved.

It was in one of these churches, a Baptist one I believe, that I professed Jesus as my savior and accepted him as Lord of my life at the age of eight, during a Sunday School class. Yet, without consistent teaching, my growth as a believer was slow.

Baptism

In the summer of 1983, I was invited to attend youth group (at First Christian Church of Elizabethtown, KY) by a young woman I desired to date. While never getting to date the young woman, I found the consistent teaching I needed. On October 2, 1983 during the evening service, I was obedient and submitted myself to baptism in obedience to my Lord, Jesus the Messiah.

My Life That Followed

Once baptized, I became an increasingly involved disciple of my Lord. I brought my birth family to FCC which became our church home for a number of years. Two of my three siblings were also baptized there. After graduating from high school I attended Murray State University and was encouraged to be a part of Murray Christian Fellowship.

College & Seminary

At MCF, I took on an active role; though the fellowship limped along during the years I attended. The campus minister was wrestling to keep his marriage together, and I learned of sacrificial love by watching his struggle. I remember pulling up carpet with him as he shared with me the hurt he was experiencing the day his wife finalized the divorce. Yet, I learned much about our Lord and that His Lordship changes our lives; how we respond to pain and how our relationship with Him shapes our worldview. The Worldview training I gained at MCF under Dean is what drove me to Lincoln Christian Seminary where Dr. James Strauss (a mentor of Dean) taught.

In the midst of this, while working at a summer camp in 1988, I learned that even as a committed Christian, I was still a sinner in need of a savior. I became physically involved with a young woman to whom I was engaged. This lasted into my first year at seminary. It was during this first year at seminary God convicted me of my sin and I ended the relationship. This was among the most humbling experiences in my life, and continually reminds me that only by the grace and mercy of God, I'm not a more prolific sinner than I am, that I desperately need his mercy and redemption. However, he is continually making me into the image of His Son Jesus because of and through His Love, His Mercy and His Grace.

At LCS I studied about Theology and Philosophy under Dr. Strauss. I learned some Greek and some Hebrew. I learned about Christian counseling. It was in this counseling course I met someone who would become the most influential person in my life, Sharri Marti, the woman the Lord would make my wife.

Family Life

Once married, the journey was more pleasurable with a companion, my best friend and sister in Christ. We had two daughters. We ministered as house-parents at Cookson Hills for nine-months. We journeyed to Idaho, like Abraham and Sarah to Canaan, as I sought a teaching position as I believed God wanted to use me as a teacher.

It was while teaching that Sharri became pregnant and gave birth to a male child, Josiah Habakkuk, our first son in October 1997. In the months to follow, she developed paranoia and psychosis, something which deeply challenged our faith, especially as we little appreciated the struggles others had with depression and the like. Sharri was diagnosed with Post-Partum Psychosis. (As a side note, it was during this time that my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer.)

Ultimately, I ended up sending Sharri and the children home with her mom to Missouri, while I finished my teaching contract. These events changed the course of our journey with our Lord in a very profound and permanent way. The months turned to years, and the symptoms would subside and return, cycling. In time the diagnosis turned to bi-polar.

It has been 17 years. God has taught us both much, but the most significant thing I have been taught is how to love sacrificially, setting aside my own desires for the well being of others. It took almost 8 years before our marriage began to recover (perhaps a sign of my stubbornness). Yet God has proven Himself to be faithful and true, though not always on our time table or liking. Marriage is no longer about ourselves individually; it has become about loving the other person for God's Glory.

In the midst of this, God has taught me how to lead as a husband and father (and ultimately also as an elder in the church in which we attended). After my mother struggled with Breast Cancer and died in 2006, my father asked me to 'officiate' her funeral, as he appreciated the eulogy I gave for my grandmother. This was the beginning of a 'new' phase of the journey that Jesus had for me.

My Calling

In the midst of these struggles the Lord led us to Grace Place, a Southern Baptist Church outside of Lamar, Missouri. Grace Place became home for us as it was family integrated, focusing our relationship with our Lord, and with one another than the standard programs found in most churches. The Elders/Pastors were laymen. The people were committed to the Lord, His Word and each in ways we had not seen in other churches.

Since seminary I wrestled with God's calling on my life, supply preaching for a time before leaving the seminary, though never seriously considering the 'full-time' paid ministry, as I had come to see that all are called to minister before the Lord, and that the Elders were called to pastor the Lord's people. Over time I came to recognize my calling as an Elder/Pastor of the church in a lay capacity. In 2008, I submitted to this calling and the process of Grace Place to be trained and examined to be an Elder of the

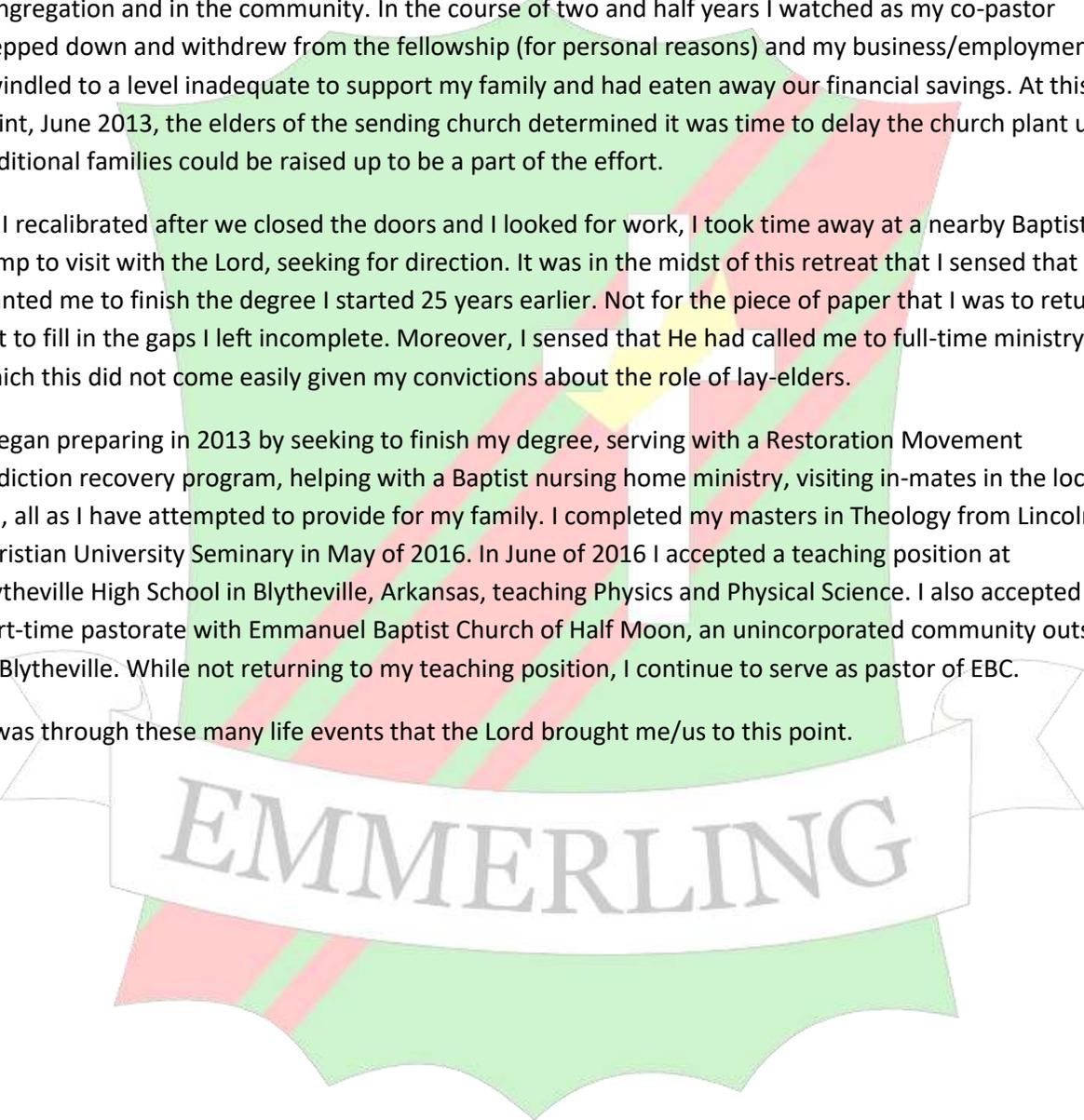
Lord's People at Grace Place. On April 05, 2009, I was ordained as an Elder/Pastor. For the following two years I was one of six lay pastors helping to care for the needs of the people, teaching and preaching the Word.

In 2011, the Lord led us to take part in an effort of our church to plant a new church in Pittsburg, KS called 'Grace Place Pittsburg.' I was one of two 'tent-making' elders sent to lead, teach and preach. For two years, the Lord had us living out our faith, ministering to those around us, at home, at work, in the congregation and in the community. In the course of two and half years I watched as my co-pastor stepped down and withdrew from the fellowship (for personal reasons) and my business/employment dwindled to a level inadequate to support my family and had eaten away our financial savings. At this point, June 2013, the elders of the sending church determined it was time to delay the church plant until additional families could be raised up to be a part of the effort.

As I recalibrated after we closed the doors and I looked for work, I took time away at a nearby Baptist camp to visit with the Lord, seeking for direction. It was in the midst of this retreat that I sensed that He wanted me to finish the degree I started 25 years earlier. Not for the piece of paper that I was to return but to fill in the gaps I left incomplete. Moreover, I sensed that He had called me to full-time ministry, which this did not come easily given my convictions about the role of lay-elders.

I began preparing in 2013 by seeking to finish my degree, serving with a Restoration Movement addiction recovery program, helping with a Baptist nursing home ministry, visiting in-mates in the local jail, all as I have attempted to provide for my family. I completed my masters in Theology from Lincoln Christian University Seminary in May of 2016. In June of 2016 I accepted a teaching position at Blytheville High School in Blytheville, Arkansas, teaching Physics and Physical Science. I also accepted a part-time pastorate with Emmanuel Baptist Church of Half Moon, an unincorporated community outside of Blytheville. While not returning to my teaching position, I continue to serve as pastor of EBC.

It was through these many life events that the Lord brought me/us to this point.



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