

Senior Pastor Motion for Consideration to Cease the Practice of Systematic, Age- Segregation of all Corporate Gatherings, Ongoing Discipleship, Prayer Meetings and Bible Studies

by: Paul Thompson
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The following is a formal motion to be considered by the church body of Eastside Southern Baptist Church on April 17, 2011. I present this motion for consideration and examination to determine a right and obedient response to our Lord's instructions concerning the church.

The motion is presented after a thorough personal investigation and meetings with a Ministry Evaluation team made up of a cross section of the membership over a four month period of time. The conclusion and observations are from primary and secondary documents.

The following resources were researched and discussed; the Holy Bible, the Baptist Faith and Message (1925, 1963, and 2008), 16th Century French Confession, A Weed in the Church (Scott Brown), Divided (documentary on the state of the modern church), LifeWay Christian Resources, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

²¹ But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good; ²² abstain from every form of evil.

1 Thess. 5:21-22 (NASB)

Reason for Examination:

For many years I have had a growing unrest when I examine the generational movement away from the local church in the churches I have served. It seems as though we have more resources available to the local church than any other time in the history of the church and yet there is a notable decline in Biblical knowledge among many.

Baptists are a self-governing people who historically adjust ourselves to the plumb line of the God's Word. The sufficiency of Scripture has historically been a trademark of Baptists. Our historic and current documents give clear instruction...

1925, 1963 and 2008 Baptist Faith and Message

I. The Scriptures (emphasis mine)

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its

matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and **the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried.** All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

1743 Philadelphia Baptist Confession of Faith

I. The Scriptures (emphasis mine)

The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved.

1559 French Confession

II. The Scriptures (emphasis mine)

We believe that the Word contained in these books has proceeded from God, and receives its authority from Him alone, and not from men. And in as much as it is the rule of all truth, containing all that is necessary for the service of God and for our salvation, it is not lawful for men, nor even for angels to add to it, or to take away from it, or to change it. **Whence it follows that no authority, whether of antiquity, or custom, or numbers, or human wisdom, or judgments, or proclamations, or edicts, or decrees, or councils, or visions, or miracles, should be opposed to these Holy Scriptures, but on the contrary, all things should be examined, regulated, and reformed according to them.**

² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

³ seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence . 2 Peter 1:2-3 (NASB)

Acknowledgement:

I understand that there has been eternal, lasting fruit that has resulted from the practice of systematic age segregated teaching in the past and by the grace of God some may continue in the future. I am not bringing into question the motivation of any Sunday School teacher from the past or present. I believe that the intent of all such persons is motivated to produce lasting fruit. I am thankful to God for those who have taught the Bible to all ages and in various ministry settings in the history of Eastside Southern Baptist Church. The conclusion is not based on the failure or success of those who have taught the Bible in age specific endeavors.

What is in question is methodology. Secular methodology verses Biblical methodology. After much examination and discovery of education philosophy, historic Baptist confessions, and most importantly Scripture, I am at peace to be at odds with the majority of modern philosophy and stand with the sufficiency of Scripture.

Conclusion:

Our Lord expects His church to separate her association with the world, not to be molded by the world's standards but rather His standard and His alone. Because of the historical position of Baptists, no Baptist agency or board shall mandate any creed, statement, or resolution to an autonomous, independent church; we are charged with this important task solely.

After much research and personal interviews, I am persuaded that the practice of systematic age-segregated teaching of the Bible in what has become a modern tradition of children's ministry and youth/student ministry is not in agreement with the whole of Scripture; Old Testament and New Testament.

I am resolved that ESBC should walk with great caution in relation to the precepts of Scripture. The methodology of teaching the children of believing parents is without question the jurisdiction of the family, namely the father. It is the duty of the church to instruct, council, and provide training to parents to obey the mandates of Scripture to train up their child in the ways of the Lord. "examine everything carefully." (1 Thess. 5:21)

I am resolved that ESBC should apply all diligence to the duties of her jurisdiction; Evangelism, discipleship, church discipline, preaching, praying, and the care of orphans, widows and poor. All duties of the church are age-integrated where families; regardless of size, gather regularly for corporate worship and perform the above mentioned duties of the local church. Families, namely fathers, are to conduct family worship, discipleship, Scripture memory, and all disciplines of a follower of Christ.

Furthermore, this does not mean ESBC is opposed to evangelism of any segment of the general population. On the contrary we are mandated by Scripture to Go, and make disciples of all nations... That is a command that knows no limit of gender, age, nationality, language, geographic boundaries, social-economic status, or political affiliation.

We reject all attempts to pursue growth for the sake of growth and long to be subject to the authority of God. Above all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions we submit ourselves to obey the Word of God in all things by letting this Holy Word of God examine, regulate, and reform us. When

we discover any method that stands opposed to this God breathed Word we will boldly reject it and rather with joy cling to God.

God holds this local church responsible for her actions, and in this light I find no other option but to cease the practice of systematic age-segregated education of the children and youth of believing parents and equip families for the duty of this Biblical mandate.

I believe that the only resolution to this problem is repentance and reformation. We must boldly reject the traditions of men that stand in contradiction to the Holy Bible, confess our failures and without reserve return to God's revelation for the establishment and nurture of the family in loving obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. We believe there is a watching world looking for Truth, and so long as we employ the world's method of systematic, age-segregated teaching of the Bible and its precepts, we will continue to witness a diminishing fruit of Truth to all generations who follow us. Our fervent prayer is that God will rise up among us, a Spirit-filled, Christ-centered, family-integrated assembly of believers from the rubble of this self-filled, man-centered, family fragmenting current generation.

I further state in short, that Eastside Baptist Church repent and cease the practice of systematic age-segregation of all corporate gatherings; regardless of worship, small group (Sunday School), prayer meetings, or discipleship. We call all fathers and mothers to reclaim their God breathed jurisdiction of teaching their children the things of God. We submit ourselves to the patterns of Holy Scripture and reject secular methods opposed to this Holy Scripture that shows all ages gathering together for worship, teaching, evangelism, ministry, and prayer. We do so boldly knowing that few in our city, state, region, or nation may understand. We welcome children of all ages, at all times, in all gatherings.