

## **ANSWERING CALVARY CHAPEL**

This is a Scriptural response to the book Calvary Chapel Distinctives by Chuck Smith, the founder of the movement. It is available in PDF form online. When a neighbor who is a member of Calvary Chapel Rio Grande shared this book, he requested a response to it, and that is what prompted the following material. The apostle Paul, by the Holy Spirit, taught, *“Test all things; hold fast what is good”* (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:21), so it is right to scrutinize all religious material in the light of God’s word.

### **PREFACE (P.5-6)**

1. “God created a wide variety of churches” (p. 6, ¶1). How many churches did He create?

### **INTRODUCTION: THE CALL TO THE MINISTRY (P.7-12)**

2. “No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God’ – Hebrews 5:4” (p.7, Subtitle). Who is under consideration in this Scripture?
3. “The Bible tells us to make our calling and election sure” (p.7, ¶2). Which call is spoken of in the context (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:10)?
4. “The ministry to the called is not an option—it’s a necessity” (p.7, ¶2). Do ministers need a calling to preach? Which preachers in the New Testament received callings to do so?
5. “When I first felt called to the ministry, I went to school to prepare” (p.8, ¶2). Is this the correct course for would-be ministers?

## **CHAPTER ONE: GOD'S MODEL FOR THE CHURCH (P.13-19)**

6. What is your impression of this chapter?

## **CHAPTER TWO: CHURCH GOVERNMENT (P.21-30)**

7. "The New Testament doesn't give a clear, definitive statement of God's preference for church government" (p.21, ¶1). Is this true?
8. "The New Testament teaches the establishing of bishops, episkopos, and the appointing of elder, presbyteros. These two forms of government, by their very nature, seem to clash" (p.22, ¶4). Is it accurate that bishoprics and elderships are contrasting systems of church leadership?
9. "The pastor... recognized by the congregation as God's anointed instrument to lead the church. ...Complementing this is the role of the assisting pastors" (p.27, ¶3). Should one pastor lead? What are assisting pastors?
10. "Everyone should be a deacon" (p.27, ¶6). Does this make sense?
11. "Those churches that follow the rule of the eldership" are "looking for a hireling" (p.29, ¶3). Should elders rule? Is a preacher under elders a mere "hireling?"

## **CHAPTER THREE: EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT (P.31-36)**

12. "Paul asked the Ephesians if they received the Holy Spirit when they believed" (p.31, ¶1). Why did Paul ask that (Acts 19:1-5)?

13. "Here we see an experience of the Holy Spirit that was separate and distinct from conversion" (p.31, ¶2). How did they receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15-16)?
14. "Paul was converted on the road to Damascus" (p.32, ¶1). Is this accurate?
15. "I will pray to the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter... even the Spirit of truth... (John 14:16-17)" (p.32, ¶3). Whom was Jesus speaking to when He said this?
16. "Calvary Chapel also believes that the moment a person receives the witness of the Holy Spirit, Jesus takes away his sin. When anyone invites Jesus to come into his heart, to take over the rule and control of his life, we believe that the Holy Spirit then comes into that person's life" (p.32, ¶5). According to Scripture, when does Jesus take away sin?
17. "In Acts 1:8 we see this promise, 'But you shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you'" (p.33, ¶3). Whom was Jesus speaking to in this context?
18. "Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (John 20:22). I believe that when Jesus breathed on them and said this, they received the Holy Spirit" (p.34, ¶2). Is this conclusion accurate? When did they receive the Spirit?
19. Regarding the incident in which Jesus breathed on them, Smith claims, "At that moment the disciples were born again by the Spirit of God" (p.34, ¶2). Is this conclusion valid? How does rebirth occur?

20. “This experience is usually separate from salvation, but it can be concurrent with salvation, as was the case in the house of Cornelius” (p.36, ¶2). Was the baptism of the Holy Spirit experienced by Cornelius’s household simultaneous with their salvation?

#### **CHAPTER FOUR: BUILDING THE CHURCH GOD’S WAY (P.37-44)**

21. “A distinctive characteristic of Calvary Chapel is a relaxed casual style” (p.37, ¶1). Should church be relaxed and casual?
22. “The pastor doesn’t try to motivate people carnally” (p.37, ¶1). Is this a worthy objective? Is this claim accurate concerning Calvary Chapel?
23. Concerning how the “pastor” preaches, Smith says, “Nor is [he] apt to shout at the congregation” (p.37, ¶1). Should preachers incorporate shouting into their presentation?
24. “If I have complete confidence that it’s His church—He’s going to build it—then all I have to do is be faithful” (p.37, ¶1). Do Christians have any responsibility in the building of the church?
25. “The Lord would speak to my heart” (p.40, ¶1). How can it be verified whether God spoke to Chuck Smith?

#### **CHAPTER FIVE: GRACE UPON GRACE (P.45-54)**

26. "But Jesus was interested in ministering to the woman, helping her, putting her life back together, not condemning her" (p.51, ¶2). Was Jesus' treatment of the adulteress an extraordinary act of grace?
27. "There is a place for the Law" (p.51, ¶4). What is the correct use of the Law under the present covenant?
28. "It's easy to fall into legalism. Beware of this temptation and taking the hard stand" (p.53, ¶1). The word "legalism" does not appear in Scripture; what is meant by this term?
29. "I have found that it's important not to be divisive so that people don't become polarized on issues, because the moment they are polarized, division results" (p.53, ¶2). Should Christians be this averse to conflict?
30. "Do you really want to lose fifty percent of your congregation?" (p.54, ¶2). How high a priority should numerical retention be to the church?
31. "You know the beautiful thing about being called Calvary Chapel? People don't really know where you stand" (p.54, ¶3). Is ambiguity a desirable trait for the church?

#### **CHAPTER SIX: THE PRIORITY OF THE WORD (P.55-59)**

32. "How is it possible for a person to claim to have declared 'the whole counsel of God'? The only way a person could make that claim would be if he taught through the whole Word of God with them, from Genesis to Revelation" (p.55, ¶2). What was Paul referring to when he spoke of "*the whole counsel of God*?"

33. "The teaching ministry of Calvary Chapel is expositional in style. It doesn't mean that on occasion a pastor won't address a particular topic or give topical messages" (p.56, ¶3). Is textual preaching better than topical preaching?

#### **CHAPTER SEVEN: THE CENTRALITY OF JESUS CHRIST (P.61-68)**

34. "We dissuade any practice or behavior that would distract people" (p.61, ¶1). Cite Scriptures upholding this position.
35. "The church had also developed factories to manufacture various types of souvenirs" (p.64, ¶1). Is this a legitimate function of the church?
36. "The gift of tongues is valid in the New Testament, and that there is a proper place for tongues" (p.65, ¶6). Is the gift of tongues ongoing or has it ceased?
37. "We want to keep Jesus Christ as the central focus" (p.68, ¶2). Defend this from Scripture.

#### **CHAPTER EIGHT: THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH (P.69-93)**

38. "The second coming of Jesus will be to establish God's kingdom upon the earth" (p.73, ¶2). Will Christ actually reign here on earth? What is the nature of His kingdom?
39. "There are some prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled before Jesus comes again. The antichrist must be revealed, and the earth must go through a time of great tribulation and judgment" (p.74, ¶1). When will the antichrist be revealed? Who is the antichrist? Does Scripture foretell an earthly tribulation before Christ's coming?

40. "Look at the book of Revelation" (p.77, ¶5). What is the subject of the Revelation?

**CHAPTER NINE: HAVING BEGUN IN THE SPIRIT (P.95-106)**

41. What is your impression of this chapter?

**CHAPTER TEN: THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE (P.107-112)**

42. What is your impression of this chapter?

**CHAPTER ELEVEN: STRIKING THE BALANCE (P.113-120)**

43. "An important characteristic of Calvary Chapel fellowships is the desire not to divide God's people over non-essential issues" (p.113, ¶1). How is an issue determined to be essential or not?
44. "...Our approach to the debatable issue concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit... The minute we start taking hard-line positions on any of the non-foundational controversial issues, we alienate part of the people" (p.113, ¶2). Is the exercise of spiritual gifts a foundational issue?
45. "Another example of maintaining a balance on debatable issues is our approach to Calvinism... We don't believe that you can lose your salvation because you lost your temper or told a lie and, as a result, need to go forward next Sunday night to repent and get re-saved" (p.115, ¶2). Does a single sin cause a Christian to lose salvation?

## CHAPTER TWELVE: VENTURES OF FAITH (P.121-135)

46. "The key is to discover what God wants to do. I've found the best way is by just stepping out. Try it and see. Maybe God will work. Maybe God wants to work. Let's give Him a chance" (p.131, ¶6). Is "try it and see" the correct approach to understanding the Lord's will?