

## BAPTIST

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communicate the Gospel in ways that engage both the heart and mind. Being called by God into a pastoral ministry, my vision is to encourage believers in their journey to become fully devoted disciples who impact others through personal, local, and global ministry. I am committed to preach the Word of God with passion, to equip the saints with enthusiasm, and to shepherd the flock by example."

Ruvarac's sermons are what is best described as "Old Time Religion" — sermons about Christ that have a purpose, a mission.

"Pastors are responsible to lead the church to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20)," he said. "The Great Commission is Jesus' command to evangelize unbelievers — sharing the Gospel with them — and to disciple believers — training them to obey all that the Bible teaches. Christians are to fulfill the Great Commission in their

towns and cities, in their states and countries, and across national boundaries (Acts 1:8). What attracted me to the Hertford Baptist Church was their commitment to the Great Commission. I desire to help Hertford Baptist to be a small town church that is making a worldwide difference."

Hertford Baptist Church has an amazing history that dates back to April 6, 1854, when a group of five men and 12 women gathered together with a dream of starting a church where people will be trained and encouraged to apply Christian truths in their daily living and show that only through Christ is life worth living.

On that Thursday morning, the proposed constitution, the rules of order, the church covenant, and the declaration of faith were read and approved and the church building was dedicated. Ever since, Hertford Baptist members strive to display and declare who God is and what He's like in Hertford and to the world.

Church's baptistry is recessed in the wall in the

sanctuary behind the pulpit.

"The New testament Greek word we translate as 'baptize' literally means 'to put under water or immerse,'" Ruvarac said. "The Greek language has words that mean 'sprinkle' or 'pour' but these words are never used in the Bible with reference to baptism."

Ruvarac cited Biblical examples of baptism's use the method of immersion (example of Jesus-Mark 1:9-10; example of Philipp and Ethiopian -Acts 8:36-39). He then explained how baptism's method and meaning are bound together.

"If the meaning of baptism should be summarized with one word, the word would be identification. To be baptized is to publicly identify with the Gospel message. The Gospel message is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)," he said. "And that's what baptism pictures. When Jesus was baptized, He was picturing His death, burial, and resurrection for us. When we are baptized, we're also picturing and

identifying with His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6: 4-5)."

Ruvarac added, "The action of being immersed in the water pictures dying and being buried with Christ. The action of coming out of the water illustrates Christ's resurrection. Baptism by immersion is the only mode that fully illustrates the gospel message."

Hertford Baptist is a member of the Southern Baptist Convention. HBC members affirm the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

Below is a brief summary of some of our key beliefs:

■ The Bible is God's inspired Word and the sole authority for all matters of faith and practice.

■ God is triune, one Being eternally existing in three co-equal Persons: Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

■ Every person has worth as a creation of God, but all people are sinners by nature and practice.

■ Jesus Christ voluntarily paid for the sins of all people by dying on the cross as their substitute.

■ Forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life are available to those who place trust in Christ's death on the cross as the complete payment for sin.

■ Good works and efforts cannot earn salvation, and neither can a lack of result in the loss of salvation. Although good works are of no value in meriting acceptance with God, they are important. Good works have a testifying value and are an expression of our gratitude to God.

HBC undertakes many outreach programs in the surrounding communities in different means and at various levels.

"We work through our own ministries and alongside our partner organizations, including the Chowan Baptist Association, Open Door, Albemarle Crisis Pregnancy Center, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Presently, we are working on developing a strategic plan for greater participation by our church at the local, national, and international level," Ruvarac said.

Ruvarac said his favorite

verse of Scripture is Acts 13:36: "David had served God's purpose in his own generation."

"I desire that people could say the same thing for me as they reflect my life and ministry — 'Dario had served God's purpose in his own generation,'" he said. "This verse defines my life and gives me an inspiration and direction. I often refer back to this verse to remind me what I need to focus on. It challenges me to daily think what is God's purpose and what it means to serve God's purpose in the context of the unique opportunities, privileges and responsibilities of being part of this generation."

Ruvarac said he believes God's passion is that people of all generations and backgrounds enter into a life changing and growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

"Therefore, my personal vision statement is this — 'I exist to celebrate and communicate the truth about Jesus and to invite people of all ages and backgrounds into a thriving relationship with Him.'" he said.

## COMMANDMENT

Continued from A1

is united to his wife, and they become one flesh."

Notice three things in these verses.

First, marriage is a divine institution. Marriage was not man's idea. It was instituted by God. He made the first man and woman. He introduced them to each other. He gave them their pre-marital counseling and he performed the first wedding ceremony.

Recently, we have heard stories of Christian bakers, florists, and photographers who were fined and charged with discrimination because they refused to serve as vendors for homosexual marriage ceremonies.

But their refusal is not about discrimination. Rather it is an acknowledgment that marriage is more than a civil ceremony. Marriage is God's institution. The account of the first marriage in Genesis 2 is not a description of one possible way of living and expressing sexuality. The marriage of Adam and Eve is prescriptive and serves as God's design for every marriage.

Both Jesus and Paul appealed to the first marriage in their instructions on marriage, divorce, and remarriage (Mt. 19:6-6, 1 Cor 6:16). The first marriage between Adam and Eve indicates what is acceptable and forbidden. God established marriage, and therefore only God can control its character and law.

Second, marriage is the union between one man and one woman. Genesis 2 focuses on the distinct creation of man and woman and their complementarity.

Adam was incomplete alone and so God creates Eve. God determines that the most suitable companion for Adam is someone different from, yet complementary to, him. Genesis 2 highlights the need for the male/female complimentary relationship. The only marriage relationship that the Bible supports is that between one man and one woman.

Thirdly, marriage is a sacred covenant. To be sacred or holy means to be "set apart". Marriage is set apart from every other type of human bond. In Genesis 2:24, God says that the marriage bond is stronger than the parent-child relationship.

The implication is that the marriage bond is the strongest of all human relationships. Genesis 2:24 describes marriage with three phrases: "leaving", "uniting", and "becoming one flesh".

When a man and a woman marry and leave the familiar world of their families, they start something new that is indepen-

dent of their parents' lives. Marriage marks the start of a new social unit in the community. The phrase "uniting" points out that marriage is a merging of the couple in every area of life.

There should be no area withheld from complete surrender to the other person. There should be a willingness to be open with your life. In your marriage you should be transparent about what you are thinking and how you are feeling.

The phrase also implies that you should always have your spouse's best interests in mind. "Becoming one flesh" refers to sexual intercourse and the special marital companionship that deepens from the God given task to fill the earth and subdue it (Gen.1:28).

The "one flesh" concept refers to the physical union that symbolizes a total unity of a married couple. That unity is beautifully illustrated in the children God gives them. In a child, the traits of father and mother are united into one person. "Sexual union is a way to express this exclusive unity and a reason the Bible limits sexual relations to married couples" (The Moody Bible Commentary, p.44).

The marriage bond is the strongest of all family relationships. That is why a Christian marriage is meant by God to point to the relationship between Christ and His church. Paul talks about this in Ephesians 5 where he uses the metaphorical picture of the head and body union.

As Christ is the head of the church, so the husband is the head of the wife. As the church is the body of Christ, so the wife is the body of the husband. A mental image of a head connected to a body vividly shows the "one flesh" union.

Paul says in Ephesians 5:31-33: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

The love-respect dynamic in marriage creates oneness. In Christian marriage, husbands and wives can deepen their oneness through the sexual union (1 Cor 7:4), by making decisions together, raising children together, praying together, serving the Lord together, applying Scripture together (especially in the process of conflict resolution found in Matthew 18:15-20), enjoying life together, and speaking the truth in love to one another (Eph 4:15).

The key elements of marriage (leaving, uniting, and becoming one flesh)

highlight that the purpose of marriage must go beyond superficial romance. That is why the Bible also talks about a marriage relationship being a covenant.

In the book of Malachi, the prophet rebukes men who were divorcing their Jewish wives to marry pagan women (2:11). Divorce was occurring for no reason other than a desire for change. People were acting as if they could do anything without being punished and wondered why God refused to accept their offerings and bless them (2:13).

The prophet gives them an answer in verse 14: "You ask, 'Why?' It is because the Lord is the witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant."

The marriage relationship is a covenant relationship (Pro.2:17; Eze.16:8, 59-62, Hos.2:16-20). The word "covenant" means agreement or promise and comes with the implication of a lifelong commitment.

Marriage is a permanent covenant in which one man and one woman commit spiritually, emotionally, and sexually to each other.

The Seventh Commandment is a commandment to cherish and honor marriage. The Seventh Commandment also forbids adultery. When you understand what marriage is, then the horror of adultery becomes plain.

Adultery defies God. Every time a person commits adultery, he or she openly goes against what God says. When Joseph was in Egypt he worked for Potiphar, the captain of the palace guard.

Potiphar's wife repeatedly tried to seduce Joseph, who resisted the temptation to adultery by saying that it would be a sin against God. Genesis 39:9: "How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"

When King David repented from the adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, he said: "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight." (Psalm 51:4).

Both David and Joseph understood that adultery fundamentally defies God. Secondly, adultery denies love. Stuart Briscoe writes, "People in our modern generation will tell us

that they engage in affairs because they love each other. An ongoing relationship presumably contains some kind of love, but love comes in many shapes and forms. New Testament Greek has three words to describe love. Eros means "erotic love".

Phileo describes the love of companionship. Agape indicates the love of commitment, love that says, 'I'm primarily concerned with your well-being.' Now people can surely get into an adulterous relationship where they share marvelous eros.

Others may get into one where the companionship is better than what they get at home. But these people do not love each other as they should before God, for one simple reason.

If two people love each other with agape love, a total commitment to each other's well-being envelops and enriches them. Adultery cannot show you're primarily concerned for others—it denies love as it really is." (Briscoe, The Ten Commandments, p.56).

Thirdly, adultery destroys families. God has made a commitment to the family. Moses tells us in Deuteronomy 5:29 that when God gave the Ten Commandments, he said this: "Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!" (Deu.5:29).

Adulterous behavior hurts many lives beyond your own. "For the spouse who is abandoned for another, there is: destruction of trust, a feeling of violation and having been used, a feeling of failure and inadequacy, rage, and humiliation. For the children there is: a sense of shame, the loss of harmony in the home, and tension that is debilitating as parents fight, the threatened loss of security because two incomes may become one, the loss of respect for the offending spouse, the undermining of previous moral guidance, and the trauma of separation if sexual misconduct leads to a divorce." (<http://www.unionchurch.com/teaching-resources/sermon-archives/pursuing-pure-relationships/>)

Proverbs 6:32-33 says: "A man who commits adultery has no sense; whoever does so destroys himself. Blows and disgrace are

with adultery. The religious leaders dragged before Him a woman caught in adultery. They said to Jesus, "Moses says she should be stoned. What do you say?"

Jesus answered, "Whoever is without sin, throw the first stone." Then He began to write in the dirt, and one by one they walked out, leaving a woman alone. The Lord Jesus turned to her and said, "Has no one condemned you? 'No one, sir,'" she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Notice the attitude of Jesus toward this woman. First, the attitude of Jesus was characterized by mercy. He said, "Neither do I condemn you." He, as the one without sin, could have thrown the first stone, but he chose not to. Instead, he offers her a new start.

Second, the attitude of Jesus Christ was also characterized by a challenge. He said, "Go and leave your life of sin." Jesus gives the same offer of mercy matched with a call for repentance to all who are guilty of adultery. One of the most notorious adulterers in the Bible was King David. The Bible recounts how under the challenging rebuke of the Prophet Nathan, David confessed and repented of his sin.

Listen to these words of David carefully: "When I refused to confess my sin, I was weak and miserable, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, 'I will confess my rebellion to the Lord.' And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone" (Psalm 32:3-5 NLT).

All my guilt is gone! Do you realize that those words could be your words? If you are involved in an adulterous relationship, end it now.

The Seventh Commandment is the Creator's law which guards the chastity of marriage, the sanctity of the family, and the preservation of society. Purity matters! Choose purity today. Amen.

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