

# PRACTICAL CONVICTIONS

The following are practical issues that we have chosen to take positions on out of our conviction that Scripture gives clear guidance to each. All theology is practical, but because these issues deal more specifically with the nature, organization, and functioning of the church, we have chosen to place them in their own section, distinct from the broad theology outlined in the Beliefs and Five Distinctions sections.

## 1. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

### Statement

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself. The former is connected with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal. Together they are simultaneously God's pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of his return and of the consummation of all things. At Anchor Church, we practice "believer's baptism," believing that baptism is appropriately administered only to those who give a thoughtful profession of faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, we believe that baptism should come after faith in Jesus, rather than before. For this reason, we will not baptize infants or small children that are unable to make a thoughtful profession of faith. We understand that some within our church family may have different convictions about the value of infant baptism. Therefore, we will not necessarily exclude from membership or

### Scripture

Matthew 28:18–20  
Romans 6:3–5  
Matthew 26:26–28  
1 Corinthians 11:23–26

## 1. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER (cont.)

leadership those who do not agree with our position on baptism and refuse to be baptized as believers, though we do expect that they have a theologically defensible reason for holding to infant baptism and that they will not promote their belief to undermine the position of “believer’s baptism” at Anchor Church or allow this non-essential issue to cause division in the church.

### Key Points

- a. Baptism is the sign of initiation into God’s family.
- b. The Lord’s Supper (Communion) is the sign of covenant remembrance for followers of Jesus Christ.
- c. While both are commanded in Scripture, neither Baptism nor the Lord’s Supper, are necessary for salvation.
- d. At Anchor Church we practice “believer’s baptism” by full submersion.

## 2. PASTOR/ELDER LED CHURCH GOVERNMENT

### Statement

The complementary nature of men and women requires that we partner together to love and lead the church. The consistent pattern throughout the New Testament is that each local body of believers is shepherded by a plurality of qualified, male pastors/elders. Pastors/elders are called to number of specific duties, including: prayer and Scripture study, caring for the people in the church, equipping the church to do ministry, giving an account to God for the church, living exemplary lives, preaching and teaching, praying for the sick, and teaching sound doctrine and refuting error at the corporate level.

### Scripture

- 1 Timothy 3:17
- Titus 1:6–9
- Acts 20:28
- 1 Peter 5:2–4
- Hebrews 13:17
- 1 Timothy 5:17
- 1 Timothy 2:10–15
- Romans 16:1, 3–4

## 2. PASTOR/ELDER LED CHURCH GOVERNMENT (cont.)

While the office of pastor/elder is reserved for men, to serve as “fathers” of the church family, the role of women as “mothers” of the church family is equally necessary and invaluable. Because men and women are complementary, it is essential that pastor/elders seek out formal and informal input from their sisters in Christ. Female leaders are also called to the task of committing themselves to prayer, Scripture, and exemplary obedience as they equip the church through leading, training, praying, and teaching within the various ministries of the church.

### Key Points

- a. Anchor Church is led and governed by a plurality of qualified male elders.
- b. Anchor Church is not a congregational-led church with member voting.  
Decisions are made by the elders with counsel.
- c. We emphasize plurality at every level of leadership.

## 3. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

### Statement

Church discipline is the process of confronting sin to achieve repentance and restoration. The bride of Christ is not nor has it ever been perfectly faithful; she has been shamefully complicit in society’s sin and has thereby harmed people, her witness, and the name of Jesus.

For this reason we commit to the practice of Church Discipline. The informal process of church discipline happens any time a believer confronts another believer about his or her sin and encourages repentance. The formal process of church discipline typically begins when the individual in sin is unwilling to repent over an extended period of time. Thus, most formal church

### Scripture

- Galatians 6:1
- James 5:19–20
- Matthew 18:15–17
- 1 Corinthians 5:1–7
- Romans 16:17
- Titus 3:10

### 3. CHURCH DISCIPLINE (cont.)

discipline is not as much about the sin as it is about the hard-hearted unwillingness to repent of sin. The process of church discipline concludes when the believer either repents or is formally removed by the elders from participating in the church. Additionally, those who intentionally stir up divisions in the church should be disciplined with greater swiftness.

The leaders of the church are not exempt from this process. For this reason, we emphasize plurality at every level of our organization. Leaders of the church are to be disciplined with an even greater swiftness and publicity, as sin in leadership severely harms the local church.

#### Key Points

- a. The Bible does not allow the church to tolerate willful, unrepentant sin.
- b. There are informal and formal dimensions to the discipline process.
- c. God gives church leadership authority to carry out public discipline if necessary.

## 4. DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

#### Statement

Divorce is always a tragedy, but is sometimes permitted because of adultery, abandonment, or abuse. Jesus affirms marriage as a divinely ordained institution, grounded in the structure of creation, and commands regarding the sacred nature of its union, “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:6). Yet Jesus and the New Testament also recognize circumstances in which divorce may be permissible. While divorce is always a result of sin (whether from one spouse or another), it is not always sinful.

#### Scripture

- Malachi 2:15–16
- Matthew 5:32
- Matthew 19:8–9
- 1 Corinthians 7:10–16

## 4. DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE (cont.)

Biblically, divorce is permitted, but not required, on the grounds of sexual immorality (porneia) or abandonment. We believe physical, sexual, and other types of abuse may be considered a form of abandonment. Stopping abuse may require separation and may lead to divorce. Marriage reconciliation can be the fruit of the Holy Spirit's work, but it may not always be wise, possible, or biblically commanded.

Does the Bible allow for remarriage following a divorce? Paul answers this question in 1 Corinthians 7:10–11, saying that in cases of unbiblical divorce the individual should either remain unmarried or pursue reconciliation. If the divorce was biblical, remarriage is permissible. Every situation is unique. Therefore, we would recommend that those who are concerned about their situation meet with a pastor to receive personal care and biblical direction.

Finally, our convictions about divorce and remarriage lead us to a few important applications as a church. In order to preserve healthy marriages, we will require pre-marital counseling as a prerequisite to being married by an Anchor Church pastor, we will offer to meet with and help equip couples for healthy marriages and will recommend professional counselors to help strengthen marriages that we feel need more focused help. We will initiate church discipline on individuals or couples who are pursuing an unbiblical divorce.

### Key Points

- a. The Biblical reasons for divorce include: adultery, abandonment, or abuse.
- b. Anchor Church requires pre-marital counseling in order to be married by an Anchor pastor. Anchor Church will offer to meet with and help equip couples for healthy marriages and will recommend professional counselors to help strengthen marriages that we feel need more focused and professional help.
- c. Anchor Church will not conduct remarriages for those who were unbiblically divorced.
- d. Anchor Church will not allow individuals to hold key leadership positions in the church if they initiated an unbiblical divorce.

# 5. ABUSE

## Statement

The Church has long embraced a theology of suffering, recognizing that trials can produce growth, character, and deeper faith. However, Scripture also speaks clearly about oppression and abuse, and it is critical that the Church develop a theology of oppression alongside its theology of suffering.

Without this, churches risk offering harmful counsel that encourages victims to silently endure violence under the banner of "suffering for Christ." God does not ignore oppression—He hates violence (Psalm 11:5), and He acts to rescue the oppressed (Genesis 16; Exodus 1–2). As God's people, we are called to reflect His justice and compassion.

Abuse is a form of oppression and a violation of the image of God in another person. It is intentional, though not always recognized by the abuser, and is never accidental. Abuse is about the misuse of power to control or harm someone for selfish gain. It can take many forms: physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, economic, spiritual, or psychological. It often escalates over time, creating a destructive pattern.

Domestic abuse is widespread, affecting 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men<sup>1</sup>, and it exists within churches as much as it does outside them. It is not an anger issue or merely a marriage problem—it is a sin problem, most commonly perpetrated by men against those they are meant to protect: women and children.

## Scripture

Genesis 16, 31  
Exodus 1–2  
Psalms 11:5  
Malachi 2:15–16  
Matthew 5:32  
Matthew 19:8–9  
1 Corinthians 7:10–16

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey" (2010).

## 5. ABUSE (cont.)

Anchor Church recognizes that domestic abuse damages and often destroys relationships. It is incompatible with Christian love, which seeks the flourishing of the other, not control or fear. Abuse may constitute grounds for divorce when it represents covenantal betrayal or abandonment.

Therefore, Anchor Church commits to:

- Listening to and supporting victims.
- Encouraging safety and the pursuit of professional and legal help.
- Referring both victims and abusers to trained counselors.
- Not recommending marriage counseling until safety and readiness are confirmed.
- Reporting suspected abuse of children, the elderly, or disabled to authorities.
- Calling abusers to repentance, requiring visible fruit before reconciliation.
- Disciplining unrepentant abusers, including church removal if necessary.
- Partnering with local domestic violence agencies and learning from them.
- Teaching the equal value and dignity of men and women as image-bearers of God.

The Church must respond to abuse as God does: with justice, compassion, and a fierce commitment to protect those who are vulnerable. Abuse is not merely a tragedy—it is a theological issue that demands a biblical, pastoral, and practical response.

### Key Points

- a. Abuse is oppression and a violation of God's image—it is intentional, harmful, and incompatible with Christian love.
- b. God hates violence and acts to rescue the oppressed; the Church must reflect His justice and compassion.
- c. Domestic abuse is a sin problem, not a marriage or anger issue, and exists within churches as much as outside them.
- d. Victims must be protected, supported, and heard—safety and healing come before reconciliation or restoration.
- e. The Church must train leaders, partner with professionals, and boldly confront abuse with truth, care, and accountability.

# 6. THE BODY, SEX, AND GENDER IDENTITY

## Statement

The body is sacred—including its sexed nature—and a fundamental aspect of our identity. Our bodies are sacred. We are not just persons who have bodies; we are bodies. Body and soul share an integral union, mutually integral to our personhood: we are embodied souls, and ensouled bodies.

The body's sexed nature, as male or female, is not only significant but bound up with our creation in the image of God. Jesus reaffirms the diversity of the sexes as ethically significant and grounded in the structure of creation. Jesus also recognizes the exception of those "born eunuchs" (which is analogous, if not equivalent, to intersex conditions) while simultaneously affirming the male/female binary as normative for creation. Christ's incarnation and resurrection affirm the body's foundational significance. Followers of Jesus ought to identify in accordance with our bodily sex, not present ourselves in ways that will intentionally introduce confusion as to our identity as male or female, and not seek to alter our body's sex through hormone therapy or sex-reassignment surgery.

We recognize some of our members are born with an intersex condition (a biological reality) and others experience gender dysphoria (a psychological reality): both of these are real and can be painful. If this is you, you are loved by God, created with dignity, value, and worth, and an invaluable part of God's world and church. We want to walk with you, love you, and serve Jesus together, as a church family where there are no "second-class citizens," only image-bearers who are members of Christ's body.

## Scripture

Genesis 1:27

Matthew 19:4, 11–12a

Deuteronomy 22:5

1 Corinthians 5:12–13a

## 6. THE BODY, SEX, AND GENDER IDENTITY (cont.)

While our conviction is that gender should be understood within (rather than in addition to) one's biological sex, there is great flexibility in how one expresses their gender, so long as one is not deliberately seeking to identify or present themselves in opposition to their bodily sex. King David was a "real" man when he wrote poetry and played the harp; Deborah was a "real" woman when she led Israel into war. Jesus wept over Jerusalem like a mother hen (Matt. 23:31); the woman of Proverbs 31 buys property, runs a business, has a strong back, and provides for her family.

We are called to love those outside of the church and cannot expect those who have rejected Jesus as Creator and Redeemer to live in line with the Creator's order and purpose. God calls us as to hold one another to God's truth in our church body, pressing each other towards holiness in the way of Christ, and trust him to deal with those outside.<sup>2</sup>

### Key Points

- a. The body—and its sexed nature—is sacred and central to our identity.
- b. Jesus affirms the male/female binary while recognizing human complexity.
- c. Followers of Jesus should live in alignment with their God-given sex.
- d. The church must lead with love, especially toward those who are hurting.

## 7. CHRIST AND CULTURE

### Statement

We are called to love our neighbors and our neighborhoods with conviction and civility. From the beginning, humanity has been called to be culture makers: to subdue and have dominion over the rest of creation. When sin entered the

### Scripture

- Genesis 1:28
- Genesis 11:4
- Jeremiah 29:4–7
- Acts 16:20–21

<sup>2</sup> Can I call someone by their preferred pronoun when it differs from their biological sex?" We believe this is up to the conscience of the individual. For a "yes" perspective, see, "What Pronouns Should Christians Use for Transgender People?" by Greg Coles (available at [www.centerforfaith.com](http://www.centerforfaith.com)). For a "no," see, "He, She, Ze, Zir: Navigating Pronouns" by Andrew T. Walker (available at [www.erlc.com](http://www.erlc.com)).

## 7. CHRIST AND CULTURE (cont.)

creation, the society-building project did not end; it simply changed directions. Instead of building a world meant to glorify the Father, sinful humans sought to glorify themselves. All societies have elements of good, as fallen humans are still in God's image, but nonetheless are fundamentally rebellious from the heart.

Jesus' reign is absolute and universal; every single part of creation is accountable to Jesus as Lord. Jesus, in both his miracles and his teaching, pushed back the effects of the curse on individuals, societal structures, and the natural world. Now, by his Spirit, he continues his comprehensive and redemptive work on earth; participation in the Way of Jesus cannot be contained to the private realm but implicates every arena of public life as well. Though all things will not be renewed until the final and triumphant return of Jesus, in the meantime, love requires that we seek the flourishing of our neighbors, societies, and cultures.

Rather than secluding ourselves from the world, love takes the first step as we move towards our neighbors with sobriety. We engage our world with both conviction and civility, soft hearts and steel spines because pluralism, systemic idolatry, and brokenness are our present realities. Though ultimate failure is the norm until Christ's second coming, the Spirit sometimes blesses our obedient efforts.

### Key Points

- a. Humans are culture makers.
- b. Systems and structures, past and present, have been shaped by the corrupt hearts of sinful humans.
- c. Followers of Jesus work to influence society with convicted civility.

## 8. THE POOR & OVERLOOKED

### Statement

God's people are called to love the last, the least, and the lost. God's prioritization of the poor and overlooked is a theme on display throughout the biblical story. In the Exodus, God's foundational act of salvation, he saves an enslaved people from the sins of their oppressors. In the Law, he repeatedly calls his people to pay significant attention—both personally and politically—to what theologians have called the "Quartet of the Vulnerable": widows, orphans, sojourners, and the poor. In the Prophets, he gives warning and rebuke to those who have oppressed the vulnerable or turned a blind eye to the plight of those in need. In the Wisdom literature, he gives insight regarding the complicated nature of both wealth and poverty. In the Epistles, he repeatedly calls his Church to care for the last, the least, and the lost.

In his infinite wisdom the triune God decided that Jesus would take on flesh into a community that was a religious and ethnic minority, into citizenship in a low-influence city, and conceived by unplanned pregnancy into a powerless, sojourning, low-income family. For this reason, among others, Jesus equates kindness to the poor and overlooked with kindness to him.

In the Gospels, to be in proximity to Jesus was to be in proximity to the poor and powerless. In his public ministry, he heals the sick, cares for the poor, feeds the hungry, and ministers to the suffering. Jesus regularly shares meals and spends time with those considered outcasts. Rather than clamor for fame or influence with those in the seats of power, the Savior is content in the company of fisherman and tax collectors, servants and widows. Jesus does not overlook the people whom society overlooks. There are no God-forsaken people or places.

### Scripture

[Matthew 25:40](#)  
[Leviticus 23:22](#)  
[Proverbs 14:31](#)  
[Galatians 2:10](#)  
[Zechariah 7:9–10](#)  
[Luke 14:13](#)

## 8. THE POOR & OVERLOOKED (cont.)

Jesus' coming kingdom will bring about the ultimate restoration of creation from every dimension of sin's curse: spiritual and psychological, bodily and ecological, economic and socio- political. As the Church, we are called to embody Christ's kingdom today: through concrete acts of compassion, tangible ministries of mercy, and prophetic witnesses of justice. These serve as a sign and foretaste of the kingdom that, upon King Jesus' return, he will bring in fullness.

### Key Points

- a. God prioritizes the vulnerable throughout the entire biblical story.
- b. Jesus personally identifies with the poor and overlooked.
- c. Proximity to Jesus means proximity to the marginalized.
- d. The church is called to be a present sign of the coming kingdom.

# 9. RACISM

## Statement

Racism is the sin of partiality manifest in hearts and societies on the basis of skin color or ethnicity.

God created one human race made in his image that contains a plurality of ethnicities designed to reflect the unity, equality, and distinctiveness within the Trinity. When humanity rebelled against God, the earliest consequences were division between God and humanity and humanity between one another.

Humanity, as a fruit of their ethnocentrism and egocentrism (including many Christians in history), assigned different “races” different degrees of humanity and dignity. Because God hates racial division and ethnic hostility, we grieve them and desire to help undo their harmful effects wherever they exist.

## Scripture

Daniel 9:4–5  
Ephesians 2:14–16  
Romans 10:12  
Galatians 2:11–13

## Key Points

- a. There is one human race.
- b. Sinful humans divided humanity into various races and assigned them different degrees of dignity.
- c. Kingdom of God is and will be multi-ethnic; ethnic harmony was God’s idea first.
- d. Social evil will not end until Jesus returns; we strive anyway to be foretaste of the New Creation.