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**Biblical Basis**

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God is the Creator of human life. This life has infinite value since all people are created in God's own image (Genesis 1:26,27; Psalm 8:4, 5). God marvelously forms each person in the womb with skill and care (Psalm 139:13-15). Examples from Scripture indicate that God defines one's purpose even before conception (Genesis 25:22-23; Isaiah 49:5; Jeremiah 1:5; Galatians 1:15). We believe that individual human life begins at conception. Taking the life of another, whether before or after birth, for a perceived advantage or vengeance, is murder.

God forbids murder (Genesis 9:5-6; Exodus 20:13; 1 John 3:11-15). Mosaic Law contains a specific ruling for one who causes injury to a pregnant woman or her child (Ex. 21:22-25). This law shows that the consequences for injury or murder apply to those who cause injury or death to the pre-born. God will punish all murderers who refuse his grace (Genesis 4:8-12; Romans 1:28-32). He will forgive any murderer who seeks His mercy and grace (1 John 1:9; 1 Tim. 1:8-16).

God forbids killing the innocent (Exodus 23:7). Furthermore, we have a responsibility to defend the defenseless (Proverbs 31:8-9).

**Scientific Perspective**

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Human life is a continuum. Only living cells can reproduce. When the sperm joins the egg at conception, the chromosomes of the ovum and chromosomes of the sperm join to form a completely new genetic package. Nothing more can be added to alter the genetic makeup of this new person. Although it is dependent upon the woman's body for nurture and protection for a time, it is from conception a separate entity, programmed for development into a mature adult.

Abortion is the willful destruction of a pre-born child. Abortions have been shown to contribute to significant physical, emotional and relational problems for the biological parents, especially for the mother.

**Societal Considerations**

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The abortion issue is one symptom of the moral condition of our society. Individualism, materialism and a self-centered approach to life have contributed to the development of the abortion situation. The above traits are evidence of the refusal to acknowledge the supremacy of Holy God. The result is that human life is devalued.

Immoral behavior, lack of respect for others and oneself, and lack of commitment to lifelong marriage (one woman and one man) result in the breakdown of traditional family units. The very young (as well as the aged and disabled) are the most vulnerable casualties of the devaluing of human life.

Abortions are acts of violence against women and their pre-born children.

Destruction of pre-born infants has greatly altered the population pyramid. There are now fewer children and young people who will be able to enter the work force, to serve as volunteers, to fulfill government mandates, and to care for the aging population.

There has been a significant decline in the adoption of infants since the legalization of abortions. Parents hopeful of adopting children face longer and longer waiting periods because there is a decline in the number of children available for adoption.

Abortions are common occurrences in organized prostitution where unwanted pregnancies are a business liability.

In some cases, financial pressures override other values in apparently stable family units and contribute to the decision to abort an unplanned pregnancy.

“Pro-choice” spokespersons insist that abortion should be allowed in cases of conception as a result of rape, or if it is deemed that continuing the pregnancy will adversely affect the health of the mother, or in cases of genetic disorders. According to medical practitioners pregnancy due to rape is a rare occurrence. Records kept by abortionists themselves reveal that the vast majority of abortions are carried out for reasons of convenience.

## **Individual and Corporate Responsibility**

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### **We must:**

1. Value and affirm each child as an individual created by and in the image of God.
2. Encourage our churches to uphold God’s demand for personal purity. We need to train both sexes to practice Christian principles regarding their sexuality. Abstinence before marriage and fidelity within marriage are taught in Scripture.
3. Exercise “choice” before conception, not as a justification for abortion. We reject any form of birth control that interrupts even the first hours of life.
4. Encourage expectant parents to accept personal responsibility to protect and nurture the life entrusted to them, regardless of the circumstances of conception.
5. Assist biological parents in fulfilling their responsibility for the health, care and well-being of their children both before and after birth. If the biological parents are unable and/or unwilling to provide that care, adoption should be considered and encouraged.
6. Encourage our churches to support reputable pro-life organizations. We encourage our churches and members to work with local pregnancy crisis centers that are giving practical and loving help to women making the choice for life over abortion.
7. Recognize that abortion has been legalized but respond to it in ways that are Scripturally and morally correct. Violence should not be used, either against the unborn child or against those who would take its life. Violence or destruction of property is never a godly response.
8. Reach out with redemptive compassion to those who have been affected by abortion (biological parents, extended family and close friends), sharing the forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ.
9. Offer support and encouragement to those in the medical profession who face disciplinary action as a result of refusing to participate in providing abortions based on their ethical and religious objections.

We should vote, when possible, for people who uphold a godly standard regarding abortion and the family.

We should express to our elected representatives our opposition to abortion. Pray that our governments would begin to protect the unborn and that they would stand against the human rights abuses of countries that force women to abort babies.

## Fellowship Conclusions

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We believe that God is the Creator and Sustainer of life and that we are created in His image. We affirm the inherent worth of each individual, pre-born or born. This worth is not determined by age, ability, sex or race. Each individual life begins at conception. Any form of birth control that interrupts even the first hours of life is murder. We oppose abortion and strive to protect and cherish each life.

### Addendum to Abortion

#### 1. Abortion and Declining Population (altering the population pyramid)

While many countries struggle with high birth rates, Canada has the opposite problem. The declining birth rate ought to be a concern for all of us. Will there be sufficient young people in the coming decades to provide the social support needed to assist the elderly?

Page 5, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's Brief to Parliamentary Committee, (Bill C-43) February 2, 1990 EFC, Box 8800 Station B, Willowdale, ON, Canada M2K 2R6 Abortion for Reasons of Convenience.

#### 2. Abortion as it affects adoptions

The National Council for Adoption (FCFA) conservatively estimates that there are at least one million infertile and fertile couples who are waiting to adopt children.<sup>1</sup> For every 1 adoptable infant available, there are at least 40 couples hoping to adopt.<sup>2</sup>

1. National Committee for Adoption, Adoption Factbook, Washington D.C., June 1989, p. 157

2. NCFA, Adoption Factbook, p. 64

Contributing to this phenomenon:

Approximately 1.5 million abortions take place in the United States every year. About one-quarter of these abortions are to teenagers, and more than four-fifths are to unmarried mothers.

The Alan Guttmacher Institute, Abortion in the United States, Facts in Brief, 1994; and Henshaw, S.K. and J. Van Vort, editors, Abortion Factbook, 1992 Edition: Readings, Trends, and State and Local Data to 1988 The Alan Guttmacher Institute, April, 1992, pp. 176-177.

The “adoption demand,” though a large problem, could theoretically be erased or at least drastically reduced if more pregnant women chose adoption rather than abortion.

From In Focus, IF95L2AD, Family Research Council, 700 Thirteenth St. NW Suite 500 Washington DC 20005, (202) 393-2100 FAX (202) 393-2134

The trend is undeniable. The rate of adoptions declined dramatically after abortion was made legal. Before 1973, about one in five premarital births to white women was placed for adoption; but by the late 1970s, this proportion had shrunk to less than one in ten, and by the late 1980s, to one in thirty.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Centres for Disease Control, National Center for Health Statistics, Report to Congress on Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing. Hyattsville, Maryland: September 1995, p. 55. Taken from data published by Bachrach, C. et al, Relinquishment of Premarital Births: Evidence from National Survey Data. Family Planning Perspectives 24 [1]:27-33, 1992.

From In Focus, IF95L3AD, Family Research Council, 700 Thirteenth St. NW Suite 500 Washington DC 20005, (202) 393-2100 FAX (202) 393-2134 Canadian Statistics.

In 1970, 12,000 abortions were performed in Canada, and 20,500 children were placed for adoption. In 1990, there were 94,000 abortions and 8,900 adoptions.

(ProLife News) as found in Mennonite Brethren Herald Volume 36, no. 21, Nov. 7, 1997 p. 6

3. Abortion common in organized prostitution - The statement made after awareness gleaned from various articles, books - reading done prior to work on this position paper; reading that made an impact and opened my eyes to a world that is far removed from my own, but very real to those who live in it. I realize it would be helpful to have documented sources.

4. Records kept by abortionists themselves indicate vast majority are carried out for reasons of convenience

According to Dr. Martin Haskell, an abortionist who has performed more than 1,000 partial-birth abortions about 80 percent are done for “purely elective” reasons. The other 20 percent are done for “genetic reasons,” which includes such non-life-threatening conditions as having a cleft palate or Downs syndrome.

(Shock-tactic Ads Target Late-term Abortion Procedure, American Medial News, July 5, 1993.) from In Focus, IF96D2LF 4/22/96 Family Research Council, 700 Thirteenth St. NW Suite 500 Washington DC 20005, (202) 393-2100 FAX (202) 393-2134

Abortion in the United States for rape, incest, to protect the life of the mother, or to void a defective fetus comprise less than five percent of all abortions. The rest are performed just for convenience.

C. Everett Koop, M.D. as told to Dick Bohrer in Deception-on-Demand, Moody Monthly Pro Life section, May 1980

## **Biblical Position**

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The biblical position on homosexuality is straightforward and consistent throughout. The Scriptures declare that God created us male and female (Gen. 1:27). Furthermore, the biblical record shows that sexual union was established by God exclusively within the context of a male-female relationship (Gen. 2:24), and formalized in the institution of marriage. The partner for man was woman. Together they were to be one flesh. This union between a man and his wife was to be kept inviolate. For a man to have sexual union with another man is considered by Scripture as detestable (Lev. 18:22).

In the New Testament, the Word of God is even more explicit in condemning the practice of homosexuality as sinful (Rom. 1:18-32). On the other hand, everywhere in Scripture the sexual relationship between man and woman, within the bonds of marriage, is viewed as something natural and beautiful.

The Apostle Paul, while strong in his condemnation of the practice of homosexuality, also testifies that those who once engaged in homosexuality were now among those who were forgiven and changed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:9-11). This declaration offers hope both for forgiveness and for healing, for redemption and change.

## **Societal Considerations**

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In today's society we are being asked to reinterpret biblical revelation and accept the following considerations: homosexuality is genetically and biologically based; is a healthy, normal lifestyle which harms no one; is an orientation which cannot be changed. Further, that human sexuality is a private matter, a civil rights issue and not a moral issue. That gay and lesbian orientation is to be considered alongside race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, age, sex, marital or family status as a protected ground against discrimination.

## **Fellowship Conclusions**

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We believe that homosexuality is not an inherited condition in the same category as race, gender or national origin, all of which are free from moral implication. We believe that homosexuality is a sinful deviation from the Creator's plan for human sexuality.

While homosexuals as individuals are entitled to civil rights, including protection of the law, the Fellowship opposes legislation which would extend special consideration to such individuals based upon

"their sexual orientation." Such legislation inevitably is perceived as legitimizing the practice of homosexuality and elevates that practice to the level of an accepted moral standard.

With respect to speech and other expressions, the Fellowship defends our rights as a religious body to express our sincerely held religious beliefs in a manner consistent with guidelines applicable to all other speech.

Since the position and practice of the Fellowship regarding homosexual behavior is determined by biblical teaching and religious conviction, it will not be the practice or the position of the Fellowship to ordain a practicing homosexual or to allow that individual to pastor a Fellowship church. The religious liberty of the Fellowship may not be infringed upon by the requirement of acceptance of homosexual conduct on the part of an individual while carrying out the duties of the Fellowship, since such conduct is in clear violation of biblical teaching as well as the statement of beliefs and practices of the Fellowship.

## **Individual and Corporate Responsibility**

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Individual Christians, ministers and congregations within the Fellowship should compassionately proclaim the Good News of forgiveness and redemption in Christ Jesus and encourage those involved in homosexual practices to cease those practices, accept forgiveness and pray for deliverance. Further, we should accept them into fellowship upon confession of faith and repentance, as we would any other forgiven and changed sinner (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

We further call upon our pastors and Fellowship leaders to work with others in the Christian community to expand research on the factors which give rise to homosexuality and to develop therapy, pastoral care and congregational support that will lead to complete change and restoration.

#### **Article 1**

**WE AFFIRM** that God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and his bride the church.

**WE DENY** that God has designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship. We also deny that marriage is a mere human contract rather than a covenant made before God.

#### **Article 2**

**WE AFFIRM** that God's revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage.

**WE DENY** that any affections, desires, or commitments ever justify sexual intercourse before or outside marriage; nor do they justify any form of sexual immorality.

#### **Article 3**

**WE AFFIRM** that God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in his own image, equal before God as persons, and distinct as male and female.

**WE DENY** that the divinely ordained differences between male and female render them unequal in dignity or worth.

#### **Article 4**

**WE AFFIRM** that divinely ordained differences between male and female reflect God's original creation design and are meant for human good and human flourishing.

**WE DENY** that such differences are a result of the Fall or are a tragedy to be overcome.

#### **Article 5**

**WE AFFIRM** that the differences between male and female reproductive structures are integral to God's design for self-conception as male or female.

**WE DENY** that physical anomalies or psychological conditions nullify the God-appointed link between biological sex and self-conception as male or female.

#### **Article 6**

**WE AFFIRM** that those born with a physical disorder of sex development are created in the image of God and have dignity and worth equal to all other image-bearers. They are acknowledged by our Lord Jesus in his words about "eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb." With all others they are welcome as faithful followers of Jesus Christ and should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known.

**WE DENY** that ambiguities related to a person's biological sex render one incapable of living a fruitful life in joyful obedience to Christ.

#### **Article 7**

**WE AFFIRM** that self-conception as male or female should be defined by God's holy purposes in creation and redemption as revealed in Scripture.

**WE DENY** that adopting a homosexual or transgender self-conception is consistent with God's holy purposes in creation and redemption.

#### **Article 8**

**WE AFFIRM** that people who experience sexual attraction for the same sex may live a rich and fruitful life pleasing to God through faith in Jesus Christ, as they, like all Christians, walk in purity of life.

**WE DENY** that sexual attraction for the same sex is part of the natural goodness of God's original creation, or that it puts a person outside the hope of the gospel.

#### **Article 9**

**WE AFFIRM** that sin distorts sexual desires by directing them away from the marriage covenant and toward sexual immorality— a distortion that includes both heterosexual and homosexual immorality.

**WE DENY** that an enduring pattern of desire for sexual immorality justifies sexually immoral behavior.

#### **Article 10**

**WE AFFIRM** that it is sinful to approve of homosexual immorality or transgenderism and that such approval constitutes an essential departure from Christian faithfulness and witness.

**WE DENY** that the approval of homosexual immorality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.

#### **Article 11**

**WE AFFIRM** our duty to speak the truth in love at all times, including when we speak to or about one another as male or female.

**WE DENY** any obligation to speak in such ways that dishonor God's design of his image bearers as male and female.

#### **Article 12**

**WE AFFIRM** that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

**WE DENY** that the grace of God in Christ is insufficient to forgive all sexual sins and to give power for holiness to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin.

#### **Article 13**

**WE AFFIRM** that the grace of God in Christ enables sinners to forsake transgender self-conceptions and by divine forbearance to accept the God-ordained link between one's biological sex and one's self-conception as male or female.

**WE DENY** that the grace of God in Christ sanctions self-conceptions that are at odds with God's revealed will.

#### **Article 14**

**WE AFFIRM** that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners and that through Christ's death and resurrection forgiveness of sins and eternal life are available by divine grace alone through faith alone, through Jesus Christ alone.

**WE DENY** that the Lord's arm is too short to save or that any sinner is beyond his reach.

For more detail, information, Scripture references and signatories, visit:

<https://cbmw.org/nashville-statement/>

## **Introduction**

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This position paper sets forth our understanding of the distinction, as established by Scripture, between the ministry roles of men and women in the local church. It is based on our belief that biblical teaching consistently holds three truths in correlation: (1) men and women are equal before God; (2) they are distinct and have distinctive roles to assume in the home and in the church; (3) both men and women are gifted of God to participate in many forms of ministry in the local church.

Biblical teaching about men and women in their role relationships and respective participation in religious activities was not based on contemporary cultural perceptions and practices. Careful historical studies have confirmed that this was true in both the Old and the New Testaments.

For example, our Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles demonstrated by their teaching and actions that they held women in high esteem. Both men and women were taught by Christ and were among His followers. Both participated actively and broadly in the ministry of the early local church. This was in stark contrast to the religions and cultures of their time. Some contemporary Jewish rabbis even taught that women were incapable of learning.

This “counter-culture” approach was firmly and consistently grounded in the biblical teaching about the creation of mankind. The creation narrative reveals that although man and woman were given distinctive roles at the time of creation, they were created fully equal in essence and were co-rulers over nature.

In coming to conclusions about this subject, we must be careful not to take our cues either from the prevailing contemporary culture or from long-standing evangelical tradition. Conclusions must be based on a consistent interpretation of the Bible which we hold as our absolute, inerrant and timeless authority in matters of faith and practice.

## **Biblical Position**

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Three New Testament passages explicitly set forth, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the role relationship that should exist between men and women in the Church. They are 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 and 1 Corinthians 14:33b-38. The teaching on role relationships presented in these

passages is consistent with the predominant pattern of all Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, and is not based on the personal opinions of the human author, local traditions or customs.<sup>1</sup>

Neither is it founded upon Jewish rabbinical thought or cultural considerations of that era. Rather, in each case, it is based on a God-ordained role relationship established even before the fall of man into sin (1 Timothy 2:13; 1 Corinthians 11:8 & 9<sup>2</sup>). This teaching on role relationships is presented as being the “Lord’s command” (1 Corinthians 14:37), and as such it must be considered as an authoritative revelation from God. It applies to all local churches in all cultures and eras (1 Corinthians 11:16; 14:33b).

The only distinction concerning the ministry of men and women in the church is the clear instruction that a woman is not “to teach or to have authority over a man” (1 Timothy 2:12; 1 Corinthians 14:33b & 34). We believe that this refers to the leadership role assigned to elders in the local church (sometimes referred to as the *ruling-teaching office*). The responsibilities set forth for the office of elders indicate that they are called upon to **direct** (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Peter 5:2), **shepherd** (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2) and **teach** (1 Timothy 3:2 & 5:17) the local congregation. However, according to Ephesians 4:11, teaching and shepherding (“pastor” means “shepherd”) are inherent in the pastoral function. Because these same responsibilities are also assigned to the elder role (see Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2; 1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17), this indicates that the pastor is one of the elders whose primary responsibility is teaching. All elders (including pastors) are to be men according to the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

We conclude, therefore, that God has assigned to men alone the responsibilities of the eldership and pastoral roles.

We believe that “**to have authority over a man**” refers to participation in the leadership body (i.e. Board of Elders) of the local church which exercises spiritual oversight and the overall leadership of the life of the church as a whole. That is clearly the role of elders.

In a similar way “**to teach ... a man**” refers to the teaching role of elders when they are called upon to ensure that correct doctrine is accurately defined and taught; that error is clearly exposed and refuted (cf. Acts 15:1-29, especially vv. 2 & 6).<sup>3</sup> It does not refer to sharing the Word with one another, general exhortations, or leading a Bible discussion group.

However, Scripture never implies that men are in any way superior to women. Both are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). They are spiritually equal before God, have equal access to God for

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<sup>1</sup>This claim is made only for the teaching on role relationships presented in these passages. We do not understand cultural customs such as head coverings to be timeless commands from God. Rather, these are local customs which, in the culture of the day, reflected role relationships which are timeless.

<sup>2</sup>Note how Paul uses the creation account as the foundation of his teaching in these two passages.

<sup>3</sup>Elders are assigned the task of protecting the flock from false teachings (Titus 1:9 & Acts 20:28-30).

salvation by faith in Jesus Christ and are equally justified,<sup>4</sup> sanctified and empowered for ministry. Just as Christ's submission to God the Father did not in any way diminish the reality of His full deity (1 Corinthians 11:3), even so, submission to male leadership in no way diminishes the reality of a woman's worth, equality to man or giftedness for service (see also 1 Peter 3:7).<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, the Bible teaches, demonstrates and implies that both men and women were involved in many of the ministries of the church:

- teaching situations (Titus 2:3-5)
- deacon type ministries (Romans 16:1 & 1 Timothy 3:11<sup>6</sup>)
- private teaching ministry (Acts 18:26)
- public prayer (1 Corinthians 11:5)
- prophesying in public (1 Corinthians 11:5; Acts 2:17 & 21:7-10)<sup>7</sup>
- missionary activities (Acts 18:18,19; Romans 16:7, 12; 1 Corinthians 9:5; Philippians 4:2,3).

Thus, Scripture allows for and promotes the full use of gifts by women in the church but in contexts other than the ruling-teaching office.

## Societal Considerations

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Our present-day culture asks us to consider Scriptural teaching on this subject as a reflection of **past** cultural standards rather than as God-ordained. We are being asked to revise our interpretation of Scripture in the light of **present** cultural trends. Some go so far as to say that the biblical authors were mistaken. Some Bible scholars also teach that since men and women were created equal, and since women have been gifted of God for leadership and teaching, the church should respect the principle of egalitarianism<sup>8</sup> in function. According to these scholars, any attempt to prevent women from serving as elders and/or pastors is considered contrary to God's creative order. According to them, such an attempt denies women the opportunity to use the gifts with which God has endowed them and promotes ongoing male domination of women which, they say, grew out of the fall and not out of God's created order. Role distinctions are often seen as a clear case of sexual discrimination against women.

This egalitarian viewpoint has had serious consequences in society. Role relationships between men and women have been blurred and strained. Many men and women no longer know how to relate to each other in the home, the church and society at large. This viewpoint is contributing to the unraveling of

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<sup>4</sup>Galatians 3:28 does not refer to *role relationships* in the church but to *standing before God*, that is, the fact that all come to Christ on an equal footing.

<sup>5</sup>1 Peter 3:7 states (in Greek) that wives are "co-heirs" of salvation with their husbands, thus fully equal in God's sight.

<sup>6</sup>There is good textual evidence that the most consistent interpretation of the word "women" in 1 Timothy 3:11 (it is "women," not "wives" in Greek) is that they are neither the wives of deacons nor of elders but a group of women in the church who were entrusted with responsibilities similar to that of deacons.

<sup>7</sup>We believe "**prophecy**" (in the context of these passages) refers to revelations which the Spirit of God sovereignly gave to individuals to pass on to God's people. This was at a time when not all of the New Testament was committed to writing. However, all alleged prophecies were to be carefully evaluated as to their origin (see 1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:20, 21; 1 John 4:1). The gift of prophecy did not include determining whether a prophecy was genuine or not. Ultimately, it was the responsibility of elders to make that judgement.

<sup>8</sup>*Egalitarianism* is the viewpoint which states that since men and women are created equal, their roles should be interchangeable; that is, there should be no distinction in their roles. It is in contrast to the *Complementary* viewpoint which states that men and women are indeed created equal, but God intended their roles to be different.

the fabric of marriage. Men have reacted by reinforcing unhealthy domineering patterns or by passivity and even total abdication of their leadership responsibilities. Such abdication on the part of men has, at times, been the reason why women assumed responsibilities which God has given to men. This in turn has contributed to confusion concerning the sexual identities of men and women.

At the same time it is undeniable that many evils have been perpetrated and perpetuated by men who misunderstood the nature of God's ordained order and/or who abused the authority which is inherent in that order. They have used their power and authority to suppress, mistreat and abuse women in the home, the church and society at large.

## **Fellowship Considerations**

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On the basis of biblical teaching, we believe that limiting the teaching-leadership office (eldership) to men in the church is established by God, not a reflection of culture. We also believe that God desires to see women serve freely in other ministries of the church.

Therefore, the Fellowship will not license or ordain women as pastors or recognize the credentials of those who have been so licensed or ordained elsewhere. We ask that no FEBC church hire a woman as pastor or select a woman for the office of elder. God has given these responsibilities to men.

## **Individual and Corporate Responsibility**

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At the same time we urge all FEBC churches to make sure that they do not limit the ministry of women beyond what is declared by the Scriptures and acknowledged in this document. Bylaws should be worded so that they do not unnecessarily equate other local church roles (i.e. church treasurer, music director, committee chairs, etc.) with the scripturally defined work of elders. At all times men and women in the ministry of the church are to be godly ("spiritual") in their character and conduct in all roles of service they carry out in the church.

It is also important that a clear distinction be made in church bylaws between the eldership role (ruling-teaching office) and deacon-type roles (serving in some function other than the ruling-teaching office). According to Scripture, deacons are not synonymous with elders, neither are they called upon to give spiritual oversight and general leadership to a church (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

We gratefully acknowledge that women in our Fellowship have demonstrated their commitment to this role relationship established by God. We recognize that they have served faithfully in many roles other than the ruling-teaching office, and we wholeheartedly affirm them in these responsibilities. Our missionary women have accomplished much for the Kingdom of God, and we urge that they be given due support and recognition. We simply ask that they and their mission agencies carefully avoid violating the God-ordained role relationship for men and women in the church. Single women missionaries have found creative ways of respecting these role relationships even as they have participated in effective church planting ministries.

We call upon our local church leaders to carefully train men for spiritual leadership. We encourage youth workers to diligently train young men to assume and exercise godly leadership. We exhort the men in our churches to be willing to assume the responsibilities God has assigned to men.

Above all, we urge that all men who serve in the ruling-teaching office of our local churches do so with a true servant's heart—seeking not to dominate men and women under their care but to affirm them in the ministry roles for which God has gifted them.

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**Note:** Those who wish to deepen their understanding of this subject are strongly encouraged to read the following books which are written by competent scholars who in a loving, consistent way, defend the viewpoints set forth in this position paper in a very thorough manner:

Hurley, James B. *Man & Woman in Biblical Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981.

George W. Knight III. *The Role Relationship of Men & Women*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 1989.

Piper, John and Grudem, Wayne. *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991.

# The Danvers Statement

## *The Biblical Roles of Men and Women*

Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood  
1988

Subscribed to by the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches on July 18, 1998

### Affirmations

Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

- 1) Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood.
- 2) Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart.
- 3) Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin.
- 4) The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women.
  - \$ In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
  - \$ In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women. Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community.
6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
  - In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership.
  - In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men.
7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission-domestic, religious, or civil-ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin.
8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries. Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world.
10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

## **Rationale**

We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:

1. The widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
2. The tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;
3. The increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
4. The widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
5. The growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
6. The upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;
7. The emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness;
8. The increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts;
9. The consequent threat to Biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;
10. And behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical Biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

## **Purposes**

Recognizing our own abiding sinfulness and fallibility, and acknowledging the genuine evangelical standing of many who do not agree with all of our convictions, nevertheless, moved by the preceding observations and by the hope that the noble Biblical vision of sexual complementarity may yet win the mind and heart of Christ's church, we engage to pursue the following purposes:

1. To study and set forth the Biblical view of the relationship between men and women, especially in the home and in the church.
2. To promote the publication of scholarly and popular materials representing this view.
3. To encourage the confidence of lay people to study and understand for themselves the teaching of Scripture, especially on the issue of relationships between men and women.
4. To encourage the considered and sensitive application of this Biblical view in the appropriate spheres of life.
5. And thereby;
  - to bring healing to persons and relationships injured by an inadequate grasp of God's will concerning manhood and womanhood,
  - to help both men and women realize their full ministry potential through a true understanding and practice of their God-given roles,
  - and to promote the spread of the gospel among all peoples by fostering a biblical wholeness in relationships that will attract a fractured world.

**DEFINITION**

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Pornography is defined as material “that is predominantly sexually explicit and intended primarily for the purpose of sexual arousal.” Hard core pornography is “sexually explicit in the extreme and is devoid of any other apparent content or purpose.”<sup>1</sup> The legal definition of obscenity is important. Three conditions must all be met for material to be considered obscene:

1. “The average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the material, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interests.
2. “The work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by applicable state (or federal) law, and
3. “The work taken as a whole, lacks serious, artistic, political or scientific value.”<sup>2</sup>

**BIBLICAL BASIS**

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God created human beings as sexual creatures (Genesis 1:26-27; Matthew 19:4). God created men and women in his image, but that image was and is marred because of sin (Genesis 3:1-24; Romans 3:23). Sin has caused sex to be abused and misused (Romans 1:24-25). Scripture clearly teaches that sex is a gift from God which should be shared only within the framework of marriage (1 Corinthians 7:2-3). With few exceptions, Scripture takes a modest approach to both male and female sexual organs by using euphemisms for them. Scripture specifically condemns the practices pictured in pornography: sexual exposure (Genesis 9:21-23; Habakkuk 2:15), adultery (Leviticus 18:20<sup>3</sup>), bestiality (Leviticus 18:23), homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13), incest and pedophilia (Leviticus 18:6-18), and both male and female prostitution (Deuteronomy 23:17-18). It is sin to even dwell on Scripturally prohibited sex (Matthew 5:27, 28; Proverbs 23:26-28). God has specifically promised to punish sexual sin (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8). We are to think about things that are pure (Philippians 4:8). We are to abstain from “sinful desires (KJV *fleshly lusts*) which war against the soul...” (1 Peter 2:11).

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<sup>1</sup>*Final Report of the Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence*, U.S. Dept. of Justice, Washington, D.C. , pp 15-17.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid* p.17.

<sup>3</sup>The sexual prohibitions found in Leviticus 18 are universal prohibitions, not only for God’s people. This is evident from God’s condemnation of these practices in Egypt and Canaan (Lev. 18:1-3) and the fact that God punished the nations of Canaan for doing these things (Lev. 18:24-28). This explains why there is little discussion of these things in the New Testament: the principles of purity were already well known from Leviticus and other OT passages.

## **SOCIETAL CONSIDERATIONS**

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Pornography is one more indication of the breakdown of the moral standards of our time. Greater access to pornography is now possible because of the development of cable TV, the computer and the internet. Studies show that the rapid growth of cyberporn and its use have contributed to an increase in many current social problems. Studies show that males who view cyberporn are significantly more aggressive toward women and are less responsive to the pain and suffering of rape victims. This leads to increased coercion and violence in rape with a corresponding lack of sensitivity to sexual violence and rape.<sup>4</sup> Massive exposure to pornography encourages a desire for greater deviance in sexual practice.<sup>5</sup> States with high circulation rates of pornographic materials also had a high rate of rapes. The opposite was also true. A 23-year study of 38,000 sexual assault cases in Michigan showed pornographic materials were viewed immediately before or during the crime in 41 percent of the cases.<sup>6</sup> The use of pornography also contributes to the breakdown of marriage, leads to child abuse, murder, and other social problems.<sup>7</sup>

## **FELLOWSHIP CONCLUSIONS**

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We believe God created humanity as sexual beings and pronounced his created beings as very good. As originally created, Adam and Eve were made for each other, and they found complete satisfaction in each other. Any desire, whether mental or spoken, for an individual other than one's spouse is sin - just as the physical act of sex with anyone other than one's spouse is sin. Based on the clear teaching of Scripture, we condemn the use of any and all forms of pornography by believers.

## **INDIVIDUAL AND CORPORATE RESPONSE**

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1. Parents and churches should teach children the biblical view that sex, used within the boundaries God has set, is wholesome and good, a gift from God.
2. Each of us is encouraged to set personal boundaries which minimize our own exposure to sexually explicit media, magazines, television programs, and music. Job set an example by making a covenant with his eyes not to look lustfully at a girl (Job 31:1-3). Parents can strengthen their children morally by discussing with them why stories, programs and songs are morally wholesome or unwholesome.

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<sup>4</sup>Edward Donnerstein, "Pornography and Violence Against Women," *Annals of the New York Academy of Science*, 347 (1980) 277-88.

<sup>5</sup>Dolf Zillman and Jennings Bryant, "Pornography, Sexual Callousness, and the Trivialization of Rape." *Journal of Communication*, 32 (1982): 10-21.

<sup>6</sup>David Alexander Scott, "How Pornography Changes Attitudes" in *Pornography: The Human Tragedy*, ed. Tom Minnery (Wheaton, IL, Tyndale House Publishers).

<sup>7</sup>*The Final Report*, ed. McManus, XVI-XVII.

3. Parents should seriously consider the dangers of internet access and monitor their child's access to the internet. Families may want to use screening software to block access to cyberporn. Another strategy is to locate computers in family areas so that parents can easily see what is being viewed.
4. Churches are encouraged to teach their congregations the biblical view of human sexuality as well as the dangers of pornography. All members need to be encouraged to flee sin and pursue a life of purity based on biblical principles.
5. Christians may choose to participate in local decency groups organized to fight pornography. They can also choose to not patronize businesses producing and selling pornographic materials.
6. In light of God's purpose for human government to punish evildoers (Romans 13:4), it is appropriate to express our concerns to local officials about adult book stores and movie theaters in the community. State or provincial and federal officials need to hear our opinions on pornography issues.
7. Any pornographic materials received by mail should be reported to the proper authorities.
8. We must recognize that the solution to pornography and other sexual sin is not government intervention, but salvation through Jesus Christ. "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5-7). Thus our primary energy and prayer should be for the salvation of those who create and distribute pornography.

## **Biblical Position**

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Several Old and New Testament words are translated *violence*. Some words refer primarily to robbery (Isaiah 10:1&2) and oppression (Jeremiah 22:17) [this includes wrongs of a violent nature], cruelty (Ezekiel 34:4) and injustice (Jeremiah 22:13). The Scriptures also cite an example of sadistic entertainment (2 Samuel 2:12-16). Violence has been a chronic evil in a godless society from man's earliest history (see Genesis 6:5,11,13; Ezekiel 8:17; Habakkuk 1:3). The Bible definitively states that God hates violence (Psalm 11:5).

The New Testament clearly emphasizes the antidote for violence. Jesus called for meekness and mercy (Matthew 5:5,7). He often reiterated the principles that guide loving relationships within the human family. The scriptures require kindness humility and non-retaliation (Romans 12:10,14). The list of the Spirit's fruit — *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control* (Galatians 5:22, 23) — is a classic example of the New Testament's challenge to renounce violence and abuse of every kind. Abusive speech and hateful attitudes among God's people have no place in any local church setting (Colossians 3:12-15). Even domestic abuse may be averted by following the injunctions directed to wives, husbands, parents and children (Colossians 3:18-21).

## **Societal Considerations**

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Violence [including physical abuse] has become the *way of life* for many in our Western Society. Abuse, generally, includes one or more of the following: verbal, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. These leave the victims deeply wounded and scarred. Family violence inflicts physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual injury. This often results in social isolation and a misconception of God's loving purposes toward all people.

Society's abnormal appetite for violence in the entertainment sector is a matter of public record:

- 1) Violence of all kinds has become the standard fare on TV menus offered nightly to the entire family. Viewers can easily conclude that the only way to get what "I want" and to have "My way" is through abusive and violent behaviour.
- 2) The grim face of violence is also seen in the daily news aired during prime viewing time.

Physical abuse is one way through which many gain the power to control others or to have some imaginary psychological need met. Some use violence as their way of dealing with stress. This is particularly true in the area of domestic violence. All of this has reduced our society to a level of utter selfishness with little compassion.

## **Fellowship Conclusions**

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We believe God established guidelines for each dimension of our lives, including marriage and family relationships. We affirm and celebrate loving, nurturing heterosexual marriages and the responsibility of parents to maintain family discipline within the guidelines of the Word of God (Proverbs 13:24, Hebrews 12:11, Eph. 6:4). Consequently, we believe that physical abuse, which generally is domestic violence, is a demonstration of selfish aggression. It is a sinful act.

It is crucial that our Fellowship preach and practice the admonitions given in Colossians 3:12-15 and other related passages. Furthermore, we must clearly re-emphasize the character-requirements for our church leaders (pastors, elders, deacons) listed in Titus 1:6-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-13. Scripture leaves no room for abusive behaviour in our homes, communities, and church families.

## **Individual and Corporate Responsibility**

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We need to acknowledge the reality of abuse and denounce it. Pastors, leaders, and other care givers should:

1. Seek to acquaint themselves with the issues of abuse, its nature and symptoms.
2. Determine what appropriate responses to take.
3. Acquaint themselves with the legal requirements concerning the reporting of abuse to the appropriate authorities.
4. Consider what part they should have in supporting facilities which serve victims of abuse.

Our churches should take steps to offer a healing environment for both the abusers and the abused.

We must defend our biblical basis for maintaining the Judeo- Christian traditions upon which sound family values are built.

Finally, all of us need to be spiritually alert to keep ourselves above reproach in speech, attitudes, and actions.

## Definition

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Sexual abuse is any unwanted physical contact, verbal communication or action that implies or demonstrates sexual activity. Sexual abuse causes the victim to feel shame while providing power, stimulation and pleasure for the abuser.

## Biblical Position

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At the creation of humanity, God made them male and female and established marriage as the proper environment for sexual activity. However, sexual abuse has existed since man's fall into sin.

Boaz recognized the rampant sexual abuse of his day. He urged Ruth to stay with his men where she would not be harmed and warned his harvesters not to "touch" (sexually abuse) her (Ruth 2:9). Naomi also recognized the commonness of sexual abuse and urged Ruth to stay in Boaz's fields because "in someone else's field, [she] might be harmed" (Ruth 2:22 NIV).

God's expectations for sexual purity are spelled out in Leviticus 18 and 20. These prohibitions clearly express God's expectations for all people. The breaking of these laws is what prompted God to punish Canaan and its inhabitants. God abhorred these practices even among the nations (Leviticus 20:23). These laws clearly prohibit sexual contact between close relatives (incest), sexual contact with children, homosexuality, and bestiality.

However, a common thread in all these prohibitions is the Hebrew term *galah `erevah*, which literally means *to expose the nakedness* of another person. Therefore, the emphasis of these passages is not on the consummation of a sexual act, but the initiation of sexual activity. God's people are to categorize as sin the desire to see the nakedness of any person to whom one is not married. This was Christ's understanding of these passages (Matthew 5:28-30). Thus, Christ defined the lustful look as sin in God's eyes, and as heinous as adultery.

In one of the key New Testament passages about sexual abuse (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8), the Apostle Paul reminds his hearers that self-control and sexual purity were topics taught early to new believers (1 Thessalonians 4:1,2,6). The point of this passage is that God has clear laws regarding sexual behavior, and that the person who breaks these laws will be punished directly by God. These laws are not spelled out here because they are so completely explained in Leviticus 18 and other Old Testament passages. Christ warns against the use of one's eye or hand for sinful purposes in the context of sexual sin (Matthew 5:28-30).

Sexual abuse begins in the mind of the abuser. For this reason, Job made a covenant with his eyes not to look lustfully at an unmarried girl (Job 31:1-4). Job also determined that he would not even allow himself the pleasure of infatuation with any married woman besides his wife (Job 31:9-11). He called such infatuation “shameful, a sin to be judged, ... a fire that burns to Destruction; it would have uprooted my harvest.”

Sexual abuse often pushes children toward behavior that is unacceptable according to God’s Word. The sexual abuser not only incurs God’s wrath for his own sin but incurs additional wrath for pushing a child into an act or a life of sin (MT 18:5-9).

## **Societal Considerations**

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Sexual abuse causes the victim to feel demoralized, dirty, guilty, and of little value. It causes the abuser to view people not as God’s handiwork, but as objects to be used for personal gratification. Victims of abuse often find it difficult to develop close, meaningful relationships with other people, thus weakening society rather than strengthening societal bonds.

The abuser has become a criminal. The abuser’s guilt tends to prevent meaningful relationships and causes the abuser to withdraw from society, thus reducing his or her ability to be a useful citizen.

## **Individual and Corporate Responsibility**

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The believer must refuse to fill his mind with sexually explicit or deviant material. Instead, he must fill his mind with the word of God (Psalm 119:9,11).

Each believer should work to develop a pure mind (Philippians 4:8). The apostle Paul affirmed the possibility of this when he said, “We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). Beginning with the truth that each person is created in the image of God, we need to develop a sense of respect and value for other persons. We cannot view any other person as a means to our selfish pleasure. At the same time, we must develop an abhorrence of sexual sin, realizing that any sexual sin is a violation of God’s law and that God will judge such a person (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8).

The individual who has been sexually abused must understand that such abuse is the result of sinful behavior on the part of the abuser. The victim can realize cleansing and healing through God’s grace. Psychotherapy alone cannot wipe away all tears. God can. Replacing bitterness and hate for one’s abuser with forgiveness and love will allow the abused to live a free and productive life.

Churches should teach what God has to say about sex, including honorable sex, illicit sex, and deviant activity. Passages such as Leviticus 18; Matthew 5:28-30; 1 Timothy 5:1,2; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; Hebrews 13:4 should form a framework for sexual instruction in our churches.

Churches must deal with the perpetrator of sexual abuse in accordance with the laws of their jurisdictions. Generally, laws require that sexual abuse be reported to authorities.

## **Fellowship Conclusions**

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We believe that each Christian should be committed to provide an environment of respect and safety for every person around them. The church itself should be a place of sanctuary, a safe haven for all who attend. This safe environment should offer privacy, respect, and protection from sexual abuse.

We stand opposed to all who would sexually abuse another person whether by word, touch, or conquest. We denounce any behavior that may lead to sexual activity outside of a marriage relationship as defined in God's Word.

We believe that God's grace and forgiveness are available to persons who have sexually abused others. It is possible for them to forsake this sin and be changed by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) and be restored to fellowship and service in the church (2 Corinthians 2:5-11).

Each church should develop a policy in an effort to protect its people from sexual abuse. An effective policy will establish definitions and standards, set boundaries for physical touch, devise ways to minimize the possibility of abuse, and establish reporting procedures. The church should also encourage both abusers and abused persons to seek help. A strict rule of confidentiality should allow persons to pour out their hearts without fear of their information being spread or misused.

Resources to help churches develop sexual abuse policies can be obtained from the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) or the Canadian Council of Christian Charities (CCCC). Additional material is available in a kit from Church Law and Tax Report called "Reducing the Risk." [[Reducing the Risk | Church Law & Tax \(churchlawandtax.com\)](#)].