

SJ&G

The Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel

I

Scripture

WE AFFIRM that the Bible is God's Word, breathed out by him. It is inerrant, infallible, and the final authority for determining what is true (what we must believe) and what is right (how we must live). All truth claims and ethical standards must be tested by God's final Word, which is Scripture alone.

WE DENY that Christian belief, character, or conduct can be dictated by any other authority, and we deny that the postmodern ideologies derived from intersectionality, radical feminism, and critical race theory are consistent with biblical teaching. We further deny that competency to teach on any biblical issue comes from any qualification for spiritual people other than clear understanding and simple communication of what is revealed in Scripture.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 2:18-25; PSALM 19:7-10; 1 CORINTHIANS 2:14-15; EPHESIANS 5:22-33; 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-4:5; HEBREWS 4:12; 13:4; 1 PETER 1:25; 2 PETER 1:19-21

II

Imago Dei

WE AFFIRM that God created every person equally in his own image. As divine image-bearers, all people have inestimable value and dignity before God and deserve honor, respect and protection. Everyone has been created by God and for God.

WE DENY that God-given roles, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, sex or physical condition or any other property of a person either negates or contributes to that individual's worth as an image-bearer of God.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 1:26-30; 2:18-22; 9:6; 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17; COLOSSIANS 1:21-22

III

Justice

WE AFFIRM that since he is holy, righteous, and just, God requires those who bear his image to live justly in the world. This includes showing appropriate respect to every person and giving to each one what he or she is due. We affirm that societies must establish laws to correct injustices that have been imposed through cultural prejudice.

WE DENY that true justice can be culturally defined or that standards of justice that are merely socially constructed can be imposed with the same authority as those that are derived from Scripture. We further deny that Christians can live justly in the world under any principles other than the biblical standard of righteousness. Relativism, socially-constructed standards of truth or morality, and notions of virtue and vice that are constantly in flux cannot result in authentic justice.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 18:19; ISAIAH 61:8; MICAH 6:8; MATTHEW 5:17-19; ROMANS 3:31

IV

God's Law

WE AFFIRM that God's law, as summarized in the ten commandments, more succinctly summarized in the two great commandments, and manifested in Jesus Christ, is the only standard of unchanging righteousness. Violation of that law is what constitutes sin.

WE DENY that any obligation that does not arise from God's commandments can be legitimately imposed on Christians as a prescription for righteous living. We further deny the legitimacy of any charge of sin or call to repentance that does not arise from a violation of God's commandments.

SCRIPTURE: DEUTERONOMY 10:4; ROMANS 6:14, 10:5; GALATIANS 2:16, 3:10, 12; COLOSSIANS 2:14-17; HEBREWS 10:1

V

Sin

WE AFFIRM that all people are connected to Adam both naturally and federally. Therefore, because of original sin everyone is born under the curse of God's law and all break his commandments through sin. There is no difference in the condition of sinners due to age, ethnicity, or sex. All are depraved in all their faculties and all stand condemned before God's law. All human relationships, systems, and institutions have been affected by sin.

WE DENY that, other than the previously stated connection to Adam, any person is morally culpable for another person's sin. Although families, groups, and nations can sin collectively, and cultures can be predisposed to particular sins, subsequent generations share the collective guilt of their ancestors only

if they approve and embrace (or attempt to justify) those sins. Before God each person must repent and confess his or her own sins in order to receive forgiveness. We further deny that one's ethnicity establishes any necessary connection to any particular sin.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 2:16, 17, 3:12,13-15; PROVERBS 29:18; ISAIAH 25:7, 60:2-3; JEREMIAH 31:27-34; EZEKIEL 18:1-9, 14-18; MATTHEW 23:29-36; ROMANS 1:16-17, 3:23, 5:12, 10:14-17; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-11; 2 CORINTHIANS 11:3; GALATIANS 1:6-9; TITUS 1:12, 13; REVELATION 13:8

VI

Gospel

WE AFFIRM that the gospel is the divinely-revealed message concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ—especially his virgin birth, righteous life, substitutionary sacrifice, atoning death, and bodily resurrection—revealing who he is and what he has done with the promise that he will save anyone and everyone who turns from sin by trusting him as Lord.

WE DENY that anything else, whether works to be performed or opinions to be held, can be added to the gospel without perverting it into another gospel. This also means that implications and applications of the gospel, such as the obligation to live justly in the world, though legitimate and important in their own right, are not definitional components of the gospel.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 3:15; PROVERBS 29:18; ISAIAH 25:7, 60:2, 3; ROMANS 1:16-17, 10:14,15,17; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-11; GALATIANS 1:6-9; REVELATION 13:8

VII

Salvation

WE AFFIRM that salvation is granted by God's grace alone received through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. Every believer is united to Christ, justified before God, and adopted into his family. Thus, in God's eyes there is no difference in spiritual value or worth among those who are in Christ. Further, all who are united to Christ are also united to one another regardless of age, ethnicity, or sex. All believers are being conformed to the image of Christ. By God's regenerating and sanctifying grace all believers will be brought to a final glorified, sinless state of perfection in the day of Jesus Christ.

WE DENY that salvation can be received in any other way. We also deny that salvation renders any Christian free from all remaining sin or immune from even grievous sin in this life. We further deny that ethnicity excludes anyone from understanding the gospel, nor does anyone's ethnic or cultural heritage mitigate or remove the duty to repent and believe.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 3:15; ACTS 20:32; ROMANS 3-4; EPHESIANS 2:8-9; GALATIANS 3:28-29; 1 JOHN 2:1-2

VIII

The Church

WE AFFIRM that the primary role of the church is to worship God through the preaching of his word, teaching sound doctrine, observing baptism and the Lord's Supper, refuting those who contradict, equipping the saints, and evangelizing the lost. We affirm that when the primacy of the gospel is maintained that this often has a positive effect on the culture in which various societal ills are mollified. We affirm that, under the lordship of Christ, we are to obey the governing authorities established by God and pray for civil leaders.

WE DENY that political or social activism should be viewed as integral components of the gospel or primary to the mission of the church. Though believers can and should utilize all lawful means that God has providentially established to have some effect on the laws of a society, we deny that these activities are either evidence of saving faith or constitute a central part of the church's mission given to her by Jesus Christ, her head. We deny that laws or regulations possess any inherent power to change sinful hearts.

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 28:16-20; ROMANS 13:1-7; 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-3; 2 TIMOTHY 4:2; TITUS 1:9; 1 PETER 2:13-17

IX

Heresy

WE AFFIRM that heresy is a denial of or departure from a doctrine that is essential to the Christian faith. We further affirm that heresy often involves the replacement of key, essential truths with variant concepts, or the elevation of non-essentials to the status of essentials. To embrace heresy is to depart from the faith once delivered to the saints and thus to be on a path toward spiritual destruction. We affirm that the accusation of heresy should be reserved for those departures from Christian truth that destroy the weight-bearing doctrines of the redemptive core of Scripture. We affirm that accusations of heresy should be accompanied with clear evidence of such destructive beliefs.

WE DENY that the charge of heresy can be legitimately brought against every failure to achieve perfect conformity to all that is implied in sincere faith in the gospel.

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 14:6; ACTS 4:12; GALATIANS 1:6-9; 1 JOHN 4:1-3, 10, 14, 15; 5:1, 6-12

X

Sexuality and Marriage

WE AFFIRM that God created mankind male and female and that this divinely determined distinction is good, proper, and to be celebrated. Maleness and femaleness are biologically determined at conception and are not subject to change. The curse of sin results in sinful, disordered affections that manifest in some people as same-sex attraction. Salvation grants sanctifying power to renounce such dishonorable

affections as sinful and to mortify them by the Spirit. We further affirm that God's design for marriage is that one woman and one man live in a one-flesh, covenantal, sexual relationship until separated by death. Those who lack the desire or opportunity for marriage are called to serve God in singleness and chastity. This is as noble a calling as marriage.

WE DENY that human sexuality is a socially constructed concept. We also deny that one's sex can be fluid. We reject "gay Christian" as a legitimate biblical category. We further deny that any kind of partnership or union can properly be called marriage other than one man and one woman in lifelong covenant together. We further deny that people should be identified as "sexual minorities"—which serves as a cultural classification rather than one that honors the image-bearing character of human sexuality as created by God.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 1:26-27, 2:24, 4:1, 19:24-28; MATTHEW 19:3-6; ROMANS 8:13; 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11; 1 TIMOTHY 1:10; JUDE 7

XI

Complementarianism

WE AFFIRM that God created mankind both male and female with inherent biological and personal distinctions between them and that these created differences are good, proper, and beautiful. Though there is no difference between men and women before God's law or as recipients of his saving grace, we affirm that God has designed men and women with distinct traits and to fulfill distinct roles. These differences are most clearly defined in marriage and the church, but are not irrelevant in other spheres of life. In marriage the husband is to lead, love, and safeguard his wife and the wife is to respect and be submissive to her husband in all things lawful. In the church, qualified men alone are to lead as pastors/elders/bishops and preach to and teach the whole congregation. We further affirm that the image of God is expressed most fully and beautifully in human society when men and women walk in obedience to their God-ordained roles and serve according to their God-given gifts.

WE DENY that the God-ordained differences in men's and women's roles disparage the inherent spiritual worth or value of one over the other, nor do those differences in any way inhibit either men or women from flourishing for the glory of God.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 1:26-28, 2:15-25, 3:1-24; EPHESIANS 5:22-33; 1 CORINTHIANS 11:7-9; 1 TIMOTHY 2:12-14; TITUS 2

XII

Race / Ethnicity

WE AFFIRM God made all people from one man. Though people often can be distinguished by different ethnicities and nationalities, they are ontological equals before God in both creation and redemption. "Race" is not a biblical category, but rather a social construct that often has been used to classify groups of people in terms of inferiority and superiority. All that is good, honest, just, and beautiful in various ethnic backgrounds and experiences can be celebrated as the fruit of God's grace. All sinful actions and their results (including evils perpetrated between and upon ethnic groups by others) are to be confessed as

sinful, repented of, and repudiated.

WE DENY that Christians should segregate themselves into racial groups or regard racial identity above, or even equal to, their identity in Christ. We deny that any divisions between people groups (from an unstated attitude of superiority to an overt spirit of resentment) have any legitimate place in the fellowship of the redeemed. We reject any teaching that encourages racial groups to view themselves as privileged oppressors or entitled victims of oppression. While we are to weep with those who weep, we deny that a person's feelings of offense or oppression necessarily prove that someone else is guilty of sinful behaviors, oppression, or prejudice.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 1:26-28; ACTS 17:24-26; 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7; 2 CORINTHIANS 12:16-18

XIII

Culture

WE AFFIRM that some cultures operate on assumptions that are inherently better than those of other cultures because of the biblical truths that inform those worldviews that have produced these distinct assumptions. Those elements of a given culture that reflect divine revelation should be celebrated and promoted. But the various cultures out of which we have been called all have features that are worldly and sinful—and therefore those sinful features should be repudiated for the honor of Christ. We affirm that whatever evil influences to which we have been subjected via our culture can be—and must be—overcome through conversion and the training of both mind and heart through biblical truth.

WE DENY that individuals and sub-groups in any culture are unable, by God's grace, to rise above whatever moral defects or spiritual deficiencies have been engendered or encouraged by their respective cultures.

SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 1:18-32; EPHESIANS 4:17-24; COLOSSIANS 3:5-11

XIV

Racism

WE AFFIRM that racism is a sin rooted in pride and malice which must be condemned and renounced by all who would honor the image of God in all people. Such racial sin can subtly or overtly manifest itself as racial animosity or racial vainglory. Such sinful prejudice or partiality falls short of God's revealed will and violates the royal law of love. We affirm that virtually all cultures, including our own, at times contain laws and systems that foster racist attitudes and policies.

WE DENY that treating people with sinful partiality or prejudice is consistent with biblical Christianity. We deny that only those in positions of power are capable of racism, or that individuals of any particular ethnic groups are incapable of racism. We deny that systemic racism is in any way compatible with the core principles of historic evangelical convictions. We deny that the Bible can be legitimately used to foster or justify partiality, prejudice, or contempt toward other ethnicities. We deny that the contemporary evangelical movement has any deliberate agenda to elevate one ethnic group and subjugate another. *And*

we emphatically deny that lectures on social issues (or activism aimed at reshaping the wider culture) are as vital to the life and health of the church as the preaching of the gospel and the exposition of Scripture. Historically, such things tend to become distractions that inevitably lead to departures from the gospel.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 1:26-27; DEUTERONOMY 10:17; ACTS 10:34; ROMANS 2:11; EPHESIANS 6:9; GALATIANS 3:28; JAMES 2:4

Addendum

For more detailed consideration of some of the issues raised in this statement, we recommend the following two documents:

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<https://blacklivesmatter.com/what-we-believe/>

What We Believe

Four years ago, what is now known as the Black Lives Matter Global Network began to organize. It started out as a chapter-based, member-led organization whose mission was to build local power and to intervene when violence was inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes.

In the years since, we've committed to struggling together and to imagining and creating a world free of anti-Blackness, where every Black person has the social, economic, and political power to thrive.

Black Lives Matter began as a call to action in response to state-sanctioned violence and anti-Black racism. Our intention from the very beginning was to connect Black people from all over the world who have a shared desire for justice to act together in their communities. The impetus for that commitment was, and still is, the rampant and deliberate violence inflicted on us by the state.

Enraged by the death of Trayvon Martin and the subsequent acquittal of his killer, George Zimmerman, and inspired by the 31-day takeover of the Florida State Capitol by POWER U and the Dream Defenders, we took to the streets. A year later, we set out together on the Black Lives Matter Freedom Ride to Ferguson, in search of justice for Mike Brown and all of those who have been torn apart by state-sanctioned violence and anti-Black racism. Forever changed, we returned home and began building the infrastructure for the Black Lives Matter

Global Network, which, even in its infancy, has become a political home for many.

Ferguson helped to catalyze a movement to which we've all helped give life. Organizers who call this network home have ousted anti-Black politicians, won critical legislation to benefit Black lives, and changed the terms of the debate on Blackness around the world. Through movement and relationship building, we have also helped catalyze other movements and shifted culture with an eye toward the dangerous impacts of anti-Blackness.

These are the results of our collective efforts.

The Black Lives Matter Global Network is as powerful as it is because of our membership, our partners, our supporters, our staff, and you. Our continued commitment to liberation for all Black people means we are continuing the work of our ancestors and fighting for our collective freedom because it is our duty.

Every day, we recommit to healing ourselves and each other, and to co-creating alongside comrades, allies, and family a culture where each person feels seen, heard, and supported.

We acknowledge, respect, and celebrate differences and commonalities.

We work vigorously for freedom and justice for Black people and, by extension, all people.

We intentionally build and nurture a beloved community that is bonded together through a beautiful struggle that is restorative, not depleting.

We are unapologetically Black in our positioning. In affirming that Black Lives Matter, we need not qualify our position. To love and desire freedom and justice for ourselves is a prerequisite for wanting the same for others.

We see ourselves as part of the global Black family, and we are aware of the different ways we are impacted or privileged as Black people who exist in different parts of the world.

We are guided by the fact that all Black lives matter, regardless of actual or perceived sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, economic status, ability, disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status, or location.

We make space for transgender brothers and sisters to participate and lead.

We are self-reflexive and do the work required to dismantle cisgender privilege and uplift Black trans folk, especially Black trans women who continue to be disproportionately impacted by trans-antagonistic violence.

We build a space that affirms Black women and is free from sexism, misogyny, and environments in which men are centered.

We practice empathy. We engage comrades with the intent to learn about and connect with their contexts.

We make our spaces family-friendly and enable parents to fully participate with their children. We dismantle the patriarchal practice that requires mothers to work

"double shifts" so that they can mother in private even as they participate in public justice work.

We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement by supporting each other as extended families and "villages" that collectively care for one another, especially our children, to the degree that mothers, parents, and children are comfortable.

We foster a queer-affirming network. When we gather, we do so with the intention of freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormative thinking, or rather, the belief that all in the world are heterosexual (unless s/he or they disclose otherwise).

We cultivate an intergenerational and communal network free from ageism. We believe that all people, regardless of age, show up with the capacity to lead and learn.

We embody and practice justice, liberation, and peace in our engagements with one another.

The Cripple Gate, The Church Boy Who Never Grew Up

Posted: 02 Jul 2020 12:02 AM PDT

Over the years I have had the privilege of being in a local assembly that is brimming over with godly leadership. I have been able to observe our longtime shepherds labor and pray to see a culture of strong leadership flourish. Seeing the strength, protection, and joy that comes when godly men lead at home and in the church has only increased by desire to see biblical masculinity galvanized in more men.

This last year I was preaching through Psalms 127–128, the twin psalms written to the nation of Israel about biblical masculinity. These psalms teach God's people what type of man in his home truly knows the blessing of God. During that study, despite all the fruit I have witnessed in our assembly, I was still grieved at how often chronological men remain boyish in their habits and convictions.

As a result of that burden, I spent one afternoon writing out all the ways over the years I have observed church boys not grow up to become biblically masculine men. Below is an essay that came from that time of reflection. I pray it encourages and challenges your heart, as it does mine, to be the leaders God has called us men to be.

He wakes up each morning later than he planned because of his lack of discipline the night before. He opens his eyes unprepared for the day and immediately hits snooze. He looks at the responsibilities and leadership opportunities that each day could bring as obstacles to his happiness rather than opportunity to grow as a man of God. He spends his days mostly avoiding risk, fearful at the thought of having to make a leadership decision that could expose his weaknesses.

Discouragement and pride are his necklaces. An overpowering fear of man and unchecked sexual lust remind him he doesn't battle his sin like he should. Where he should be courageous he

shrinks back in order to protect his image. He thrives on the path of least resistance. His sexual cravings rage, and, rather than fighting the war within, his selfish desires eclipse any recent pledge to overcome those lusts.

He is known for doing the bare minimum, constantly hitting the status quo, but never pushing forward to excellence. When others are watching, he can put on a show, but when only the Lord sees, apathy, inactivity, and love for comfort are his idols of choice. He lives for his hobbies and for his down time. He can't wait to come out from under pressure. He works for the weekend rather than God. Stressful days that call for greater faith in God and growth as man become for him days he nurtures contempt for God's unfolding providence.

He thinks with no urgency. He ignores the long-term impact of his current habits. Nothing awakens him to his need for preparation and conviction-building for future battles. He figures he will cram when he needs to be spiritually minded, but sees little need to get too intense just yet. His excuse is, "God is sovereign"—a theological smokescreen to veil his sluggish heart. He is lazy on every front except in crafting excuses.

Free time is dedicated to his amusements: sleep, video games, social media, TV, shallow friends, YouTube, and hobbies. Good books, deep sermons, robust discipleship, and hours in the Word get only honorable mention for him. His time with mentors at church is only a box to be checked. Sure, he tolerates counsel from godly men, endures strong preaching, puts on veneer of godliness, but ignores putting off indwelling sin. Repentance to him is a term he uses, but not a habit he practices. His hypocrisy grows.

When sin brings consequences—especially when it threatens his precious reputation—he sprints for a season. But his zeal fades as his consequences become less intense. His motivations for holiness are earthly and self-absorbed. He lifts his sword to battle, but once the fight proves difficult, he lowers it and then swings the flag of self-pity. When worldliness shows up in his

favorite hobbies, he ignores the warnings of his conscience. He craves to be able to sin like the world, but since too much worldliness would bring exposure, he finds subtle ways to feast on worldly morsels under the disguise of "Christian liberties."

His self-orientation plagues his life in the local church. He attends regularly, but he does not love the bride of Christ. When questioned about his lackluster approach to church life he replies with, "I am committed, but just real busy in this season." This only compounds his guilt as he adds lying and excuse making to his current neglect. Self-sacrifice is eclipsed by selfish ambition. He takes no initiative. He'll serve in the body if you push him but often with a grumbling spirit. And even when smiling on the outside during service opportunities, he is usually standing up within. Critical thinking about truth is not his thing. He has conditioned his mind to think on the lowest spiritual frequencies in order to spare himself the pain of being honest before God. People around him who strive to mortify their lusts just irritate him. Because he won't learn from the Word, God has to put in a bit and bridle to teach him by experience.

His friendships consist of sparring about unimportant things and brief moments of shallow biblical generalities to relieve his guilt-ridden conscience. He treats people as resources to consume rather than precious souls he can serve. He gravitates towards relationships that cost him little and hovers around people who don't meddle in his character weaknesses. Sure, he is as chatty as soccer mom with her latte when discussing his favorite hobbies, his job, or his political views, but the moment deep discussion about Christ and His Word is the topic, he turns his face on screen saver mode, smiles and nods.

Nobody trusts him to stand on God's Word alone or to suffer for a conviction. He has no stomach to fight for Christ because his loyalty is not to Christ—it is to himself. He will stand for truth occasionally, but only when he decides the cost is not too great. Convictions that would cost him are too much for his lust for man's approval to endure.

He wastes his late teens and 20s and is a husband and father now. He wants the benefits of marriage, but without the cost. His wife suffers under his neglect. She married a boy in a man's body. She tries to prod him, but he has nurtured self-love for too long to listen to her burdened pleas. He is full of excuses of why he can't lead like way she wants him to. He thickens more smokescreens to hide his heart of hypocrisy. She wonders where they guy went who seemed to be striving for holiness while they were dating, but now rarely talks with her about the truth. His mask is now off at home, though this does not stop his quest to protect his reputation in church.

She eventually gives up, self-feeds from the Word, struggles, and is often discouraged. The kids begin to grow up under the influence of a boy-dad. He needs his down time, his man cave, and his hobbies. He salves his conscience by providing financially and claims that he is "around more than most dads." He strives to become their friend but neglects their soul. He never sits down to prepare them for the battles ahead. Frankly, he rarely helps them work through heart issues in the moment. They are constantly caught off guard when facing temptation because of his neglect. His boy tendencies remain.

By the time the kids hit their teen years, his outbursts of anger and neglect of a godly example has cost him his credibility. His hypocrisy is acute, unmistakable, and undeniable. In his anger, he hammers his kids to strive in areas he neglects, driving their exasperation to full strength. He is too proud to seek their forgiveness in the moments they need to see humility. When they get in the way of his desires, he shouts them down rather than shepherd them. They conform and smile for a while but rebel inside. They grow up and leave him home resenting Christianity because their dad demanded they live what he would not. His relationship with his children is strained all their adult years. If he represents real Christianity, they want nothing to do with it.

On his deathbed—if he is even in Christ—he reflects with grief and sorrow on his life poorly spent. As he looks with longing eyes at a wife he never shepherded and upon kids who resented him, his final words are, “Oh, how I hated instruction and spurned reproof! I am ashamed before all. Forgive me!” So ends the tragic biography of the church boy who never grew up to be a biblically masculine man.

May the reader be warned.