

Official Statements of Open Bible Churches

ADOPTED BY OPEN BIBLE STANDARD CHURCHES

The position papers (official statements) adopted by Open Bible Standard Churches are expressions of conscience outside the parameters of the constitution, bylaws, Articles of Faith and code of ethics.

ABORTION

We affirm, as Open Bible Standard Churches, our position that the moral issue of abortion is more than a question of the freedom of a woman to control the reproductive functions of her own body. It is rather a question of those circumstances under which a human being may be permitted to take the life of another. We believe that all life is a gift of God, so that neither the life of the unborn child nor the mother may be lightly taken. We believe that God Himself, in Scripture, has told us what our attitude should be towards the unborn. Several times it is specifically stated that He conferred divine blessing upon unborn infants (Psalm 139:13, 16; Luke 1:31-33, 41). He also provided penalties for actions which result in the death of the unborn.

Therefore, we deplore in the strongest possible terms the decision of the U. S. Supreme Court which has made it legal to terminate a pregnancy.

We believe that the cause of morality is not furthered if men attempt to undermine God's authority by speculating with their own finite minds as to what circumstances might justify the killing of an unborn child.

In the extreme case where the life of the unborn child threatens the life of the mother, we reaffirm that the doctor has two patients and should try to save both lives if at all possible.

Adopted 1980

Amended 1984, 1985

AIDS

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the most serious public health problem in the world. In this decade, tens of thousands of Americans have contracted AIDS and more than a million Americans are carriers of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). For those who have contracted AIDS, currently there is no known medical cure, and thus the results are fatal. The evidence is not clear concerning the long-term results for those who are carriers of the HIV. The Surgeon General of the United States has called AIDS the most serious matter any health official of any nation has ever faced.

Although there is the urgent need for education regarding AIDS, education without reference to values ignores the moral dimensions of the problem. Therefore, government or private sector programs that deny the moral element of the problem are inadequate remedies. While there are innocent sufferers of the disease, the fact remains that the two primary groups of individuals infected with the HIV are practicing homosexual men and drug addicts who share needles. The link between immoral behavior and the spread of AIDS is self-evident.

Furthermore, AIDS is first and foremost a public health concern, not a civil rights issue. Hence, any proposed legislation that would confer special "civil rights" on persons infected with HIV is totally unacceptable. We believe appropriate legislation regarding this epidemic would require testing as a requirement for marriage licenses, testing of high risk groups, reporting of those with the disease to public health officials on the same basis as other sexually-transmitted diseases, and closing facilities that encourage promiscuous sexual activity.

But legislation and the best efforts of public health officials have their limits. Our Christian faith offers hope for positive virus tested victims.

Also, our faith offers a realistic way of life which will curb the tragic spread of this virus in that our faith calls for chastity before marriage and fidelity in marriage. For this reason, Open Bible Standard Churches calls upon its churches to proclaim the hope that God has provided in Jesus Christ and to promote the practice of biblical sexual morality. We encourage pastors to request couples coming to them for marriage to consider HIV screening and to share the results with each other before marriage. We further urge that with Christian compassion, we offer the hope of Christ's redemption, grace and healing power to victims of AIDS. We cannot permit fear or apathy to keep us from bringing the life-changing resources of our Christian faith and love to those who suffer from this dread disease.

Adopted 1989

ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO

The historic position of Open Bible Standard Churches concerning the use of alcohol and tobacco has been one of abstinence. We hereby publicly reaffirm that position with regard to OBS believers in the United States of America.

Reasons:

1. National studies on drug abuse conclude that alcohol and tobacco are the two greatest drug abuse problems in the

Official Statements of Open Bible Churches

United States.

- (a) The potential social and health hazards of each are commonly accepted among the American public.
- (b) Both are generally perceived as associated with a permissive life-style not most becoming for a Christian.
- (c) Appearance is a valid biblical factor for consideration (I Thess. 5:22).
- (d) Example must be sensitively set by believers (Romans 14).

2. There are strong scriptural injunctions against the use of alcoholic beverage (Prov. 23:31-32; 20:1; 31:4-5). These passages weigh heavily against biblical teaching on moderation (Phil. 4:5) or alcohol for medicinal use (I Tim. 5:23, which also implies that Timothy had conscientiously chosen the position of abstinence). Also to be considered are the options available to us as compared to our biblical counterparts.

3. II Corinthians 7:1 is certainly applicable to tobacco.

4. Habits or practices that have the potential to dominate and control are best avoided (I Cor. 6:12).

5. The biblical instruction to "do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31) speaks loudly to us in light of the serious problems we are having with alcohol and tobacco in America.

We believe our Christian testimony is best served by a position of abstinence regarding the use of alcohol and tobacco.

Adopted 1982

CREATIONISM

Whereas evolution is a theory based upon a great deal of speculation, and

Whereas creationism based on scientific concepts offers a viable alternative about the subject of origins, and

Whereas public education is designed to present available information and stimulate inquiry, and Whereas there are numerous resource materials (books, films, filmstrips, tapes) available on the scientific concepts of "The Creation Model,"

Be it resolved that the 50th National Convention of the Open Bible Standard Churches go on record this 5th day of July, 1982, to strongly support and urge local school districts to provide material based on the scientific concepts of creationism in their resource libraries and that these concepts be taught in the classroom.

Adopted 1982

FAMILY

Due to the present day attack upon the family in many various forms, the acceptance of greatly loosened moral standards, the subsequent breakdown of the home in the overwhelming ratio of divorce and its resulting hazards upon children and society in general, and

Due to the recent White House Conference on the Family where the participants could not define the modern family according to biblical standards,

We, the members of the 48th National Convention of Open Bible Standard Churches hereby declare our position on the family.

Whereas "the biblical family" is defined as a male (husband) and a female (wife) coming together in legal fashion and becoming one, both spiritually and physically (Gen. 2:24) and the resulting children that come from that union either biologically or by legal adoption becoming part of that family,

We, therefore, wish to reaffirm our belief that the "family" according to this definition is God-ordained and blessed.

We wish to state that any other union of a couple or group does not constitute a "biblical family" (Rom. 1:26-27).

Furthermore, we recommend that the pastors and church leaders of Open Bible Standard Churches continue to speak out very strongly in favor of the biblical standard for the family and oppose just as fervently those voices that would do violence or weaken God's plan for the family.

Adopted 1980

GAMBLING

Gambling is a parasite feeding on both the individual and society. Unhealthy behavior patterns are developed by the person who gambles. The "thrill" element in gambling produces an unrealistic view of life and a distorted concept of personal responsibilities. Gambling has a destructive effect upon the moral fabric of society because of its "something for nothing" philosophy.

The ruse of promoting gambling and lotteries for the purpose of subsidizing education is an attempt to gain respectability and acceptance as an honorable and productive business. However, this has by actual experience

Official Statements of Open Bible Churches

proven costly to the public. The contribution to the purported cause has been minimal in proportion to the cost of promotion and administration of the enterprise. In addition, the fringe dangers of graft, subterfuge and infiltration by the criminal element make such a program suspect.

Open Bible Standard Churches endorses the principle that public programs and projects should be publicly supported and opposes legalized lotteries. We oppose the weakening of laws to permit state-sponsored gambling. Open Bible Standard Churches encourages a program of education regarding the evils of gambling by both the church and other community agencies. We also encourage our law enforcement agencies on local, state and national levels in the carrying out of their responsibilities regarding the control of gambling.

Adopted 1983

HOMOSEXUALITY

Whereas one of the by-products of the increasing mood of permissiveness in our society is a growing awareness of a community not previously recognized, namely, the practicing homosexuals in our midst, and

Whether the result of moral looseness, social instability or physiological change, the number of homosexuals seems to be increasing.

The Bible speaks out strongly in condemnation of sin and unrighteousness in all forms. The Scriptures explicitly pronounce judgment on sexual deviance. The first chapter of Romans refers to the guilt of mankind expressed in shameful worship, perverted passions and corrupted minds.

Nevertheless, we must remember that all men regardless of their offenses need God's love as manifest in Jesus Christ. All too often we have both overtly and covertly rejected the person of the sexual deviant.

Therefore, we resolve as the Open Bible Standard Churches

(1) to stand firm in the belief that the Holy Scriptures condemn practicing homosexuality and give no basis for approving this as an acceptable lifestyle, and

(2) to extend the healing ministry of the entire Christian community to individuals who seek forgiveness and deliverance from the sin of homosexuality.

Adopted 1980

Amended 1984

LEADERSHIP AUTHORITY

Organization, leadership and authority are common threads woven throughout God's creation--the animal kingdom, the human kingdom and the spiritual kingdom--whether it be the human body, the nuclear family, the local church, civil government or God's eternal Kingdom. Leadership authority is necessary to good order, smooth function and accomplishment. The alternative is disorder, chaos, anarchy....

All authority begins with God. Leadership, with delegated authority, is God-ordained. "Let...man...rule over the fish...the birds...the livestock, over all the earth and over all the creatures..." (Genesis 1:26). This Godly order is evident in earthly relationships: husband/wife, parent/child, leader/community, leader/church, employer/employee.... Leadership authority, especially within the church, falls into two primary categories--positional authority and spiritual authority.

Positional Authority

There is a parental authority within the family which God expects children to recognize on the basis of position.

"Honor your father and your mother..." (Exodus 20:12). "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Honor your father and mother..." (Ephesians 6:1-2). While there is a qualification with the word obey, there is no qualification with the word honor. You honor your parents because they are your parents--not because they are Christians, wise, good.... Full respect for your parents is a separate consideration and one which must be earned.

However, the latter does not negate the former.

The same is true of government position. "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves" (Romans 13:1-2). We are also instructed to pray for leaders (1 Timothy 2:2).

OFFICIAL STATEMENTS

Similarly in the church: "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account" (Hebrews 13:17).

There is an authority, although limited, which goes with leadership position. Voluntary submission to this authority "as unto the Lord" brings blessing (Colossians 3:18-25; Ephesians 6:2). Disrespect of it brings judgment (Leviticus

Official Statements of Open Bible Churches

20:9; 1 Samuel 24:6; Numbers 12, 14, 16; Romans 13:2; 1 Samuel 15:23). Submission to God-ordained leadership honors God. Of course, there is a place for the exercise of conscience and conviction (Daniel 3, 6; Acts 5:29), but not to be used as a loophole.

Spiritual Authority

In addition to positional authority, there is a spiritual leadership authority based upon one's spiritual gift, one's walk with God, one's anointing, integrity, faith, obedience, servant attitude. This leader has a following built upon trust, consistency, competence and results. Followers recognize the gifts of God in the servant of God and voluntarily respond. This spiritual authority is not in conflict with positional authority. Ideally, they complement each other. Important to the progress of Open Bible Churches is an understanding and application of the biblical principle of authority. May our response enhance God's blessing upon our movement.

Adopted 1995

NON-TRINITARIANS

Several groups who hold non-trinitarian religious beliefs are attempting to thrust themselves into the arena in which evangelical pastors and chaplains minister.

The Articles of Faith of Open Bible Standard Churches state that God is present in the Eternal Godhead; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Any requirement to jointly lead worship services with those who hold non-trinitarian beliefs is contrary to these Articles of Faith.

Therefore, Open Bible Standard Churches strongly supports any pastor or chaplain who chooses not to participate in the communal conduct of worship with non-trinitarian religious worship leaders. In areas of ministry apart from religious worship a pastor or chaplain is free, as his or her conscience directs, to cooperate with other leaders to enhance the religious life of the community.

Adopted 1993

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Among the foremost problems of our time are substance abuse problems surrounding the use of drugs and alcohol. A 1986 survey¹ shows that 70 million Americans have at some time engaged in the illicit use of a drug. Thirty-seven million said they had used illegal drugs in the previous year, and 23 million in the month prior to the survey. Sixty-five percent of 18-25 year-olds have experience with illicit drugs. The survey also established a correlation between drug and alcohol use. Eighteen percent of our population will exhibit dependency problems with alcohol or other drugs during their lifetime. Traffic and safety authorities estimate that alcohol is involved in 50 percent of all fatal automobile accidents in the United States.

The trend to use cocaine, heroin, marijuana, PCP, alcohol and other drugs as entertainment or as an escape mechanism not only speaks of the pressures under which we live, but also indicates something of the moral and spiritual conditions of our time. Equally serious is the idea that so-called "mind expanding drugs," such as PCP and marijuana, should be legalized. Above all, those engaged in the production and distribution of alcoholic beverages continue their massive and largely successful promotional efforts to make Americans a drinking people.

Open Bible Standard Churches believes the evidence is clear that the use of drugs has become a leading factor in the soaring crime rate, and that such use increasingly results in the loss of lives and the destruction of property. The total costs to our society are astronomical (\$160 billion annually)². Forty percent of hospital admissions involve drug or alcohol related diseases.

We deplore the evidence that at high levels and from many quarters immense pressure is exerted to encourage more people to drink, and at an earlier age. Sixty-six percent of high school seniors consume alcoholic beverages. By age 13, thirty percent of boys drink on a regular basis. Thirty percent of ten-year-olds experience pressure to drink alcohol.

We hereby record our firm condemnation of efforts aimed at abrogating the laws restricting the possession and use of narcotics, hallucinogens, amphetamines, barbiturates and alcohol. We commend those who continue to consider it their duty to prosecute violators of existing laws, whether it be in regard to sale, possession or use of such drugs. Specifically, we encourage the framing and passage of new laws that will make it easier for enforcement agencies to apprehend and convict drinking drivers who are the primary cause of highway fatalities. It is our understanding that among such desirable laws are the "implied consent" laws which facilitate the detection and identification of drinking and drunken drivers through various tests conducted by arresting officers.

We also urge our churches to take seriously the problem of the use of alcohol and other drugs, educating their members to the dangers of such use and encouraging them to make abstinence a part of their personal Christian

Official Statements of Open Bible Churches

testimony. As evangelicals we affirm that even such extreme problems as those represented here are subject to the power of the Holy Spirit, and to solution through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. National Institute on Drug Abuse, Statistical Series, Annual Data 1986

2. Chemical People Institute Newsletter, Nov/Dec 1987

Adopted 1989

UNITY

Unity is powerful.

"The Lord said, 'If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them'" (Tower of Babel - Genesis 11:6).

"Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

"Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). We know what happened.

Unity is blessed and to be desired.

"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity...For there the Lord bestows his blessing..." (Psalm 133).

"...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you...so that the world may believe that you sent me" (John 17:21).

"...a spirit of unity...one heart and mouth...accept one another..." (Rom. 15:5-7)

Also Ephesians 2:14; 4:1-7....

What is unity?

Predominately, Christian unity is mutual identity in Christ (Galatians 3:26-29), shared spiritual life, focus and direction, which transcends difference and diversity. "Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). Unity is rooted in our common love for Christ, his Word and his mission. It manifests itself in atmosphere, attitude and action.

How do unity and diversity interrelate?

Unity is not sameness. The church is comprised of individuals distinctly different as to sex, age, race, background, temperament, preferences...(the body - 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). It is our common focus, not our likeness or our perpetual agreement, which unites us.

Uniformity is unrealistic, even undesirable.

How is unity developed?

Relationship with Jesus, commitment to Scripture and fullness of the Holy Spirit, with fruit (Galatians 5:22; James 3:17), provide the ingredients for unity. "Those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires" (Romans 8:5). Unity is of the Holy Spirit. Disunity is of the flesh. "Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

Practical steps which foster unity

1. Cultivate personal growth in the Holy Spirit (unity is of the Spirit)
2. Pray for others by name
3. Respect and appreciate the uniqueness of others who are not like you
4. Commit yourself to the well-being of others
5. Speak well of others to others
6. Keep no record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13)
7. Hold each other accountable to the above

How is unity maintained?

Christian love (unselfish commitment to each other's well-being), with genuine respect and appreciation for each other, preserves unity. The application of grace, as the inseparable partner of peace, is essential (Romans 1:7 and every Pauline epistle). Humility is another inseparable element, without which unity will not continue. "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves" (Rom. 12:10). "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2). Forgiveness is a key component.

The greatest threats to unity are those subtle invasions of ego, pride, selfishness, wanting one's own way.... "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).

The loving practice of biblical discipline (Matthew 18, 1 Timothy 5....) fosters unity. "Make every effort to keep the

Official Statements of Open Bible Churches

unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

Christian unity is essential to God's fullest blessing. The rewards are worth the effort it takes to develop and preserve unity. May unity flourish among Open Bible Churches.

Adopted 1995

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE

Physician-assisted suicide is one of the profound ethical issues confronting America today. With moral relativism directing a quality of life ethic, physician-assisted suicide is being advocated as a "right." And it is even being suggested that the lives of some people are not worth living, and accordingly they should be encouraged, for the sake of themselves, family or society, to end their lives.

The primary legal issue is whether the so-called "right to die" should be considered a liberty interest protected under Section 1 of the 14th Amendment; subsidiary legal arguments supporting physician-assisted suicide revolve around alleviating severe pain and exercising personal autonomy. But the underlying moral issue is far more profound. This matter of life and death involves our relationship with one another on the human level, and the relationship of each of us with God.

We believe that life is a gift from God, and that human life has absolute, not relative, value. Death is a significant transition that we all face. The physical and emotional suffering that may precede death can be very grievous, but it may also spiritually enrich us, and afford a last opportunity for reconciliation with friends, family, and God. While we firmly believe in mercy and compassion, that belief does not give anyone license to play God. We believe there is a profound moral distinction between allowing a person to die, on the one hand, and killing on the other (Deut. 5:17). We affirm the ethic "always to care, never to kill."

We pray earnestly that the supreme Court will not attempt to interpret the constitution as giving a right to physician-assisted suicide. We also pray that the Court will not leave this matter to the States, which would mean each State would be free to pass legislation permitting doctors to end the lives of their patients under certain circumstances. As evangelicals we deny that there are any circumstances which justify euthanasia, with or without consent. Therefore, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), expresses its firm opposition to State legislation which would legalize physician-assisted suicide. And NAE will support federal legislation to ensure that federal tax dollars will never be used to pay for or promote physician-assisted suicide.

We recognize the pressing need to alleviate the severe pain which may precede death. Medical experts say that ninety-nine percent of such pain can be adequately managed, yet twenty-five percent of those with pain do not benefit from medical treatment which would satisfactorily alleviate the pain. We appeal to the medical profession to do all in its power to close the gap between the knowledge of how to cope with pain therapeutically and the application of that knowledge to anyone needlessly suffering pain.

While for the Christian to die is gain, it is wrong to intrude upon God's prerogative by advancing that day. Rather we look to our Lord Jesus Christ to sustain us.

Copied from a Resolution Adopted by the 55th Annual Meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals.

Adopted 1997